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Job : hated but hedged

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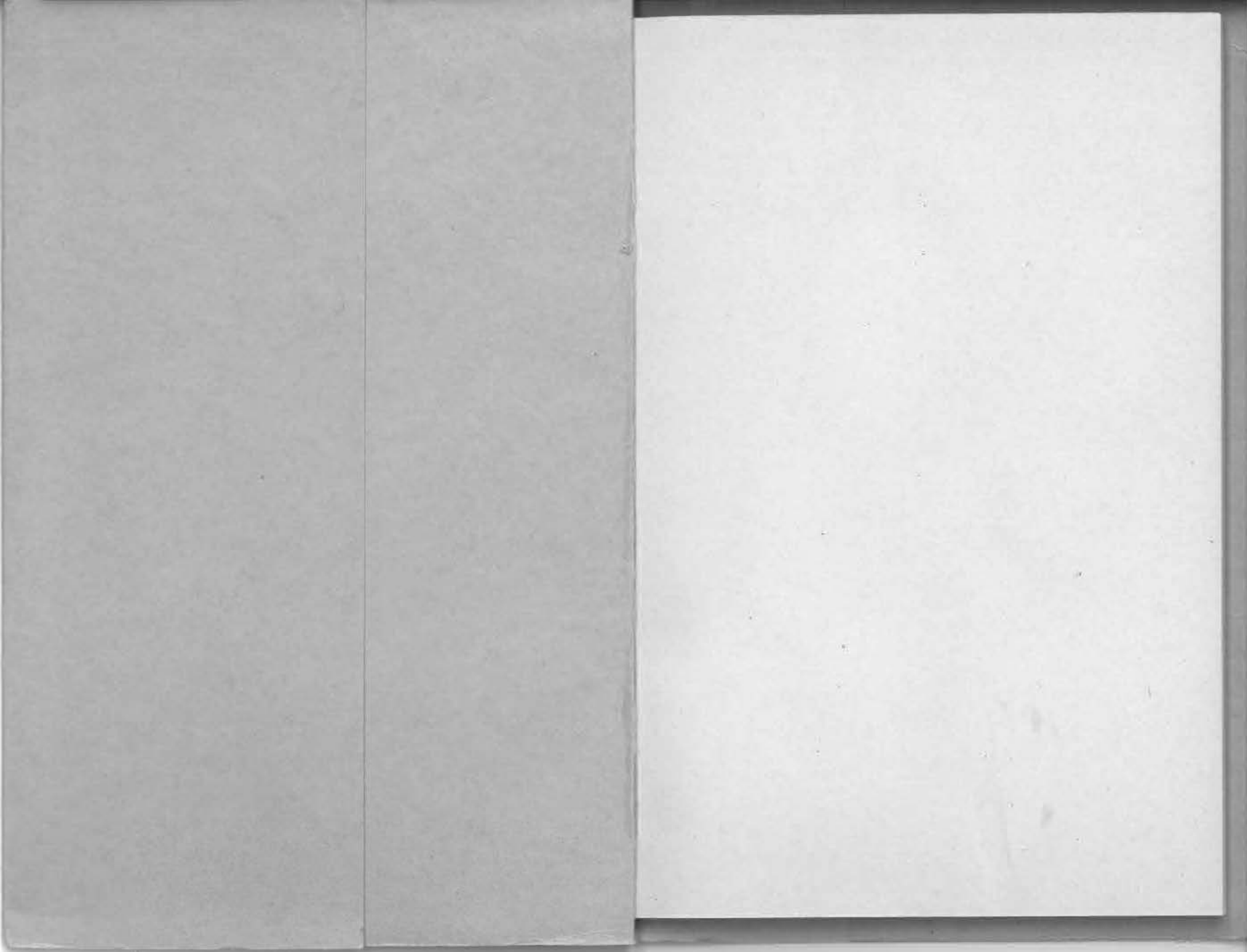
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Job

Hated but
Hedged

Messages of Comfort to Believers +
by P·W·Philpott



J o b=

Hated

but Hedged

Messages of Comfort to Believers

BY

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FOREWORD

These three sermons were delivered to the morning congregation of the Church of the Open Door, Los Angeles, California.

They are not sent forth as in any sense an exegesis of the book of Job, but as messages of comfort to believers who are passing through the furnace of affliction. They are published at the request of many who were helped by them and with the earnest prayer that some of God's dear, but perplexed children who are walking with Him in loyal obedience to His known will and who, like Paul, may be "pressed out of measure, above strength," may, through the experience of this faithful servant of God, come to know, as he did, the grace that is "sufficient."

Job— Hated but Hedged

JOB'S PROBLEM

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land: But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord” (Job 1:6-12).

There is perhaps no book in the Bible that gives us so much light on the subject of suffering and affliction as the book of

Job, and since this book is included in the inspired writings, it is obvious that the believer should have at least some knowledge of its teachings if he would be "furnished unto all good works" and receive the profit from the study that God has promised.

Before we can understand the mystery and ministry of suffering we must know something about the personality of Satan—his methods of operation, his career, and his final destiny. Some one has said that what we do not know will not hurt us, but it is equally true that what we do not know will not help us.

The Man Job is probably the oldest
Not a Myth of all the books of the Bible. It has a vital message for all believers. It throws a flood of light on some of our most difficult and mysterious experiences. Also, as we shall see, it illuminates many passages of Scripture that are frequently quoted but not fully apprehended.

Job was a real man. If he were not, his story would be of no practical value to us in the hour of trial. As a real man he had nerves and feelings and sensibilities just as we have, or he would not have suffered as he did.

Some claim that the book of Job is merely an allegory because it is written in poetic and dramatic form. We concede that the story is narrated in the form of a drama, but it would be well to remember that Shakespeare likewise tells his story of Julius Caesar and King Richard the Third in a highly dramatic and poetic form, and no one ever thinks of denying that these men were actual historic characters. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit has listed Job with such real historic characters as Noah and Daniel; and also in the Epistle of James he is cited as a living example of patience under affliction. It is very important to keep in mind the fact that Job, just as truly as Elias, was "a man of like passions as we are" (Jas. 5:17).

*The Problem
of
The Book*

The problem of the book of Job is one that has ever been of keen interest and concern to the "household of faith." The solution of the problem that is unfolded at the climax of the story has been a source of comfort and encouragement to all those who trust in God's compassion and sustaining grace, and rest in the wisdom of His blessed will.

Job was the greatest of all the men of the East, the father of ten children for whom he prayed earnestly and early every morning at the family altar. But Job had an enemy who was also the enemy of God, and who has been the adversary of every true believer down through the ages.

*Ignorance
Concerning
Satan*

Probably there is no great subject of the Scriptures or any of its characters about which there is so much ignorance, even in the church, as about the personality whom the Bible calls Satan. In fact, the world at large has almost ceased

to believe there is such a personality as Satan. This skepticism is most advantageous to the working out of his plans, and is also a striking confirmation of the Bible statement that "the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4).

From Genesis to Revelation, Satan is spoken of as a real character, possessing great power over the lives of men and Nature. This power is limited, however, and used by God's permission. As the end of the age draws near, we can see its increasing operation.

The popular conception of Satan is most unscriptural and misleading. He is pictured as a grotesque and fearsome being, with hoofs and horns and a tail. Because of this fanciful idea, he has come to be looked upon as merely a mythical character, even by many who are supposed to be the ambassadors of the Gospel. But the

Satan of the drama and the Satan of the Scriptures are two vastly different beings. Indeed, so polished and subtle a being is he that the Bible calls him "an angel of light."

The career of Satan is traced in the Scriptures, beginning in the early chapters of Genesis and concluding in the Revelation, where we see his final overthrow and his doom in the lake of fire. If we want to be able to say with Paul, "We are not ignorant of his devices," if we seek to be protected, hedged about by God as Job was, if we would be properly clad with the whole armour of God, it is necessary for us to study the Word and learn something of the power and strength and methods of our adversary. Only thus can we live in victory over him.

Bible Portrait of Satan The knowledge we are seeking carries us back to "the beginning" before the earth "became waste and void." It is the opinion of some of our most eminent students of the Bible that Ezekiel (28:11-19) pic-

tures Satan in his unfallen state. In this passage he is represented by the king of Tyrus. The language evidently goes beyond the king of Tyrus to Satan, for there is no person in history to whom the complete description could apply, while it agrees perfectly with other Scriptural portraits of Satan. His unfallen state is here described; his fall, in Isaiah 14:12-14. "The vision is not of Satan in his own person, but of Satan fulfilling himself in and through an earthly king who arrogates to himself divine honors, so that the prince of Tyrus foreshadows the Beast." Dan. 7:8; Rev. 19:20.

Notice the details given by Ezekiel:

"Thou sealest up the sum"—there is nothing left to be desired.

"Full of wisdom"—doubtless beyond all human intelligence and wisdom.

"Perfect in beauty"—in striking contrast to the popular conception of him.

"I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings . . . I will bring thee

to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee” a prophecy of the final destiny of the enemy of God and man.

Of similar import is the description given by Isaiah (14:12-14): “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!” When Lucifer said, “I will,” lifting himself up against the will of God, sin entered the universe. “For thou hast said in thine heart,

“I will ascend into heaven.

“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:

“I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation . . .

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds:

“I will be like the Most High.”

But to this proud declaration God answers: “Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”

Satan did succeed in gaining entrance into the earth and into the heart of mankind, but God at once promised that the seed of the woman should bruise Satan’s head that is, that his power would be paralyzed and his kingdom destroyed (Gen. 3:15). From that moment Satan hounded “the seed.” He assailed the Jewish nation, the family of Abraham, the tribe of Judah, the house of David, until he seemed to triumph when he saw the Christ Himself nailed to a tree. But, thank God, this wounding of the “heel” was not vital, and the woman’s Seed came forth from the tomb forever victorious over sin, Satan, death and the grave. Satan is now a conquered foe, but he is allowed to remain an agent of the Almighty, for reasons alone known to God. Sentence has been pronounced upon him and in the fulness of time judgment will fall.

Surely these pictures of the enemy are awe-inspiring. It is well for us to remember that Jesus, our precious Lord, never

spoke lightly or jestingly of him. He is called "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2), and "Michael the archangel . . . durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

When we face the fact of Satan's personality and power we will understand why Paul urged us to take unto ourselves "the whole armour of God, that" we "may be able to stand against the wiles [strategy, artifices] of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:11, 12).

*Sphere
and Methods
of Operation*

There is as great ignorance concerning Satan's sphere and his methods of operation as there is of his character. He is frequently referred to as "the

devil in hell." We should keep in mind that there is but one devil. Many times the word "devil" would be more correctly translated "demons." Hell was created "for the devil and his angels" (or demons). But, so far as the Scriptures reveal, he has never been there, nor will he be until the close of the millennial age. Rev. 20:10.

Satan's enmity, as we have said, is against God and His children. He seeks incessantly to "wear out the saints" and mar their life and service. "God so loved the world" that He redeemed it through the death of His Son. He has given to Christ a people "out of the world," but Satan is determined that he shall not lose any of his subjects; hence the unceasing warfare between Christ and Satan for the possession of the saints. This explains many of the trials the Christian must endure. How comforting it is, in the midst of it all, to recall that Christ "ever liveth to make intercession for us."

It is erroneously believed by many that the devil's chief sphere of operation is the underworld, with its murders, thefts and revellings of all kinds. According to the Scriptures, Satan is not much concerned with the lost world; it is already his. He is concerned with the Church of the living God, the "household of faith," against whom his ministers and teachers are ever busily plotting.

Three Sources of Temptation The forms or sources of temptation are, "the world, the flesh, and the devil." The sins of the flesh, therefore, can be traced directly to the flesh: "adultery, fornication, uncleanness . . . envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings," etc. (Gal. 5:19-21). As we read the history of Satan's contact with man we find him almost always, if not in every instance, on sacred soil, tempting or resisting God's people. He tempted Eve to doubt and disobey. He prompted David to number Israel, his motive being to make the king

trust in the arm of flesh rather than in the power of Jehovah. He attacked Joshua, the high priest, at the very altar. He thrust it into the heart of Judas to betray his Lord. He moved Peter to deny Him with oaths and curses. He marshalled all his power and genius against Jesus, our precious Lord, in the wilderness, attacking Him from every angle. Jesus alone of all men did not yield. In Eden, Satan wrested authority over the earth from the first Adam. In the wilderness he attempted to wrest it from the second Adam. But the bribe that he offered to the Son of man—the kingdoms of this world—was steadfastly refused. We again see Satan in Gethsemane seeking to dash the cup from the lips of the Saviour. That cup, filled with the sufferings of Calvary, if drained meant Satan's overthrow. Thank God, His angels strengthened Jesus and He drank the cup to the last drop—for us!

After this brief survey of the history of Satan, we are prepared to review more in-

telligently the life of Job. Satan loves a shining target. He set his heart upon Job, for he knew that the defeat of this good man would mean the downfall of many. Through loss, suffering and misunderstanding, he endeavored to destroy his faith in the Almighty.

JOB'S INTEGRITY

"Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly" (Job 1:20-22).

It is important that the spiritual character of Job be fully recognized if we are to receive the profit and blessing that are contained in the book. The reverses that came to him were no mark of divine disapproval. It is true that he went into the furnace of affliction by divine permission, yet his suffering was in no sense penal. Indeed there is no necessary connection between suffering and moral evil. Suffering may often be the means used by God for disciplinary purposes to increase the spiritual development of His children. It was because Job was a man of faith and integ-

urity that God permitted Satan to test and prove him in the furnace of affliction, that he might be to all subsequent generations an example of God's sustaining grace in the hour of trial.

*The Mystery
of
Suffering*

There is a mystery that we shall not attempt to explain in connection with Satan's access to the very council chamber of the Almighty—a privilege seemingly permitted for the purpose of accusing believers. He complained that Job was selfish and worshipped God for temporal gain and not purely for the glory of the Creator whom he feared and trusted. He also claimed that Job was supernaturally protected by Jehovah, and he dared to ask, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land."

What comfort for all of God's children lies in the thought that not only was Job,

the man of prayer, hedged about, but his house and all that he had were likewise protected. The Scriptures do not tell us just what the hedge was. It may have been "a wall of fire" (Zech. 2:5), or "the angel of the Lord" (Psa. 34:7). The story of Elisha (2 Kings 6:15-17) illustrates this divine protection. Elisha's servant was filled with fear and consternation when he saw the horses and chariots of the king of Syria surrounding the city of Dothan. But the prophet admonished him, "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." He prayed the Lord to open his servant's eyes and we read that "he saw: and, behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

A similar lesson is given by the Psalmist in that wonderful Ninety-first Psalm so often quoted: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. . . . He shall cover thee with his feathers, and

under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day . . . nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee . . . because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways . . . He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation" (Psa. 91).

*The Purpose
of
Suffering*

It may be asked: "Why, then, was Job required to suffer as he did?" And, "Are these Old Testament promises to be claimed by believers in this dispensation?"

Regarding the first question, we need to remember that the marvelous promises of the Psalm quoted are not fulfilled arbitrarily and unconditionally. They are given only to those who fulfil the conditions laid down in the first verse, who dwell in "the secret place of the Most High." This speaks of an abiding life which is on a higher plane than that of the average Christian life. Who can say whether or not Job met the condition? He was not spared affliction surely, but he was finally delivered, after the purpose of the trial was fulfilled. He was set on high, his life was prolonged, and he rejoiced in the salvation of Jehovah.

As to the second question, there is a sense in which believers of any dispensation may claim these promises in the hour of trial, but they have a deeper spiritual meaning for those who dwell in "the secret place of the Most High." Many believers find the beginning of their Christian experience full of joy and they may conclude that they will never again know trial and suffering.

Their new-found joy in the Lord almost blinds them to the fact of Satan's existence. Sometimes, in their exultation over their own blessed experience, they imagine that the whole world will soon turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. For them, life is filled with new interest and Nature with new loveliness. They see things from a new viewpoint, with heaven's glory upon them, so that

"Heaven above is softer blue,
 Earth around is sweeter green,
 Something lives in every hue
 Christless eyes have never seen;
 Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
 Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
 Since I know, as now I know,
 I am His, and He is mine."

But we do not travel far along Life's road before we learn that there are enemies to meet and battles to be fought and won. Therefore, we need to be equipped with "the whole armour of God" that we may

be able to "stand against the wiles of the devil." Truth and righteousness, with peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God (Eph. 6:14-17) combine to make a complete and glorious armour for the Christian soldier's use.

The Two-fold Challenge Satan was not slow to press his assault upon Job. "Put forth thine hand now," he said, "and touch all that he hath and he will curse thee to thy face." God accepted Satan's challenge, removed the protecting hedge from about His servant, and allowed the adversary to touch him and all that he possessed. A similar assault was attempted on the Apostle Peter, for our Lord told him that Satan had asked for him that he might "sift him as wheat" (Luke 22:31, 32, R. V.). It is an age-long method of the adversary of souls.

It appears that Satan went forth and marshalled his hosts, his infernal emissaries, and laid before them his plans for the taking of Job's soul, just as a general in

modern warfare makes known his plans to his subordinates. Everything was perfectly scheduled. "And it fell on a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house." Did you ever know such a day a day filled with disappointment, vexation, bad news, physical weakness—when it seemed that the sun would never shine again?

On this particular day, Job rose early in the morning according to his custom, to make intercession for his household. Suddenly there burst in upon him a messenger with the news that his oxen and asses had all been carried away by the Sabeans; also that all his servants had been slain except the one who bore to him the evil tidings.

Immediately another servant rushed in, saying that lightning had destroyed Job's seven thousand sheep and all the shepherds except the one that brought the news.

While he spoke there came another who declared that the Chaldeans had carried

away all of Job's camels and that their keepers, excepting himself, were all slain.

Job must have been stunned by these terrible blows that came upon him in such rapid succession. But Satan was not content. He reserved his next blow, which he felt would be the most effective, for Job's children who were so dear to the father's heart. The next news that came to Job was that his children were all dead (Job 1:18, 19). At that point Satan undoubtedly anticipated the collapse of the man of faith. But thank God, His grace was sufficient for His servant!

"Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Job had learned to worship God in the sorest trials. How helpless are those who have not found this secret of victory!

“Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
 Oh, what needless pain we bear,
 All because we do not carry
 Everything to God in prayer.”

We may learn a similar lesson from King David. When his little son was lying at the point of death he prayed and fasted for several days. When the child was dead his servants feared to tell him, for, they reasoned, if he grieved so while the boy lived, what will he do when he hears of his death? “When David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped” (2 Sam. 12:19, 20).

David’s sorrow became a sanctified sorrow. And such Job’s grief proved to be,

for “in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”

But the fire of affliction was not yet extinguished. Indeed, the heat of the furnace was intensified seven times. Satan now requested permission to afflict Job’s body. “Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face,” he charged.

Satan’s aim was to make Job doubt and dishonor God. To gain his end he smote him with a terrible disease, which many think was black leprosy, covering his body with boils. A pauper and an outcast, Job sat at the gate of the city, dependent, perhaps, upon charity for his livelihood. It may be that his wife came out to him from day to day, bringing food, the gift of kind-hearted friends, to keep him from perishing. But before long, privation and hardship began to eat like rust into her soul, and in her impetuous grief she exclaimed to her husband: “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die.” Satan

especially sought to destroy the integrity of this man, and the temptation to yield was the more keen because it came through the one nearest and dearest on earth. I like this wife of Job's. She did not turn away from her husband and seek a divorce when he lost his money and property. So repulsive, however, was the disease with which he suffered that she felt death would be preferable.

Job answered his wife's pleas with a firm refusal and with a reproof. He said: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

It is not necessary that we should maintain a reputation of never being misunderstood, or slandered, or poverty-stricken, or afflicted. It is important, rather, that we meet these conditions courageously, just as Job did, never questioning the wisdom and love of our heavenly Father.

JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING

"There must be thorns amid life's flowers,
you know,

And you and I, wherever we may go,
Can find no bliss that is not mixed with
pain—

No path without a cloud. It would be vain
For me to wish that not a single tear
Might dim the gladness that you hold so
dear.

"I am not wise enough to understand
All that is best for you. The Master's hand
Must sometimes touch life's saddest chords
to reach

Its sweetest music, and His child to teach
To trust His love, till the long weeping
night

Is all forgotten in the morning light.

“Trust trust Him, then, and thus shall
 good or ill
 Your trustful soul with present blessing
 fill.
 Each loss is truest gain if, day by day,
 He fills the place of all He takes away.”

JOB'S VINDICATION

“We went through fire and through water;
 but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy
 place” (Psa. 66:12). See Job 42.

There are three stages in normal Christian experience. In the first, emotion and enthusiasm figure largely and control much of our thinking. Life is vibrant with joy and beauty. Heaven seems very near. The “green pastures” and “still waters” are delightful and real, providing a quiet resting place for the soul. We may sometimes wander from our refuge, but “he restoreth” and we continue to make daily progress in “the paths of righteousness.”

The The second stage leads “through
Second the valley of the shadow,” and
Stage into it every true disciple of Jesus
 Christ must sooner or later be
 led. It is the wilderness of temptation and
 testing. For instance, Abraham, “the
 friend of God,” undoubtedly met the or-

dinary trials of life as we do. But "it came to pass that God did tempt [or test] Abraham, and he said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." At the end of that trial we read that God spoke to Abraham out of heaven, saying, "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore. . . . And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Gen. 22:16-18). Abraham's behaviour during that trial proved conclusively that he loved God more than any earthly treasure.

In like manner, Peter, at the beginning of his Christian experience, was unable to

understand why any Godly man should suffer. When Jesus began to make known to His disciples the fact that He must go to Jerusalem and there suffer many things of the Scribes and Pharisees and finally be put to death, Peter rebuked Him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." As he grew in grace, however, Peter's idea of suffering changed, so that, near the close of his earthly life, he thought it strange that any one should even think of following Christ without expecting to suffer. Affliction had wrought such a great change in this rough fisherman that he was able to say: "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the

name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Pet. 4:1, 12-14, 16).

Sorrow and suffering are a part of the life of every believer; none is exempt. Some one has said that "God had one Son without sin, but not one without suffering." The sinless One was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Queen Elizabeth commanded a royal artist to paint her portrait without the appearance of any shadows on the canvas. He replied that it could not be done. In anger, she immediately dismissed him. Like the queen, some of us are resentful when the Great Artist introduces into the painting of our lives the dark tones that compose the shadows. We forget that the Master, to use another figure, "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" (Mal. 3:3). He has un-

dertaken to present us to Himself "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). To do this, He has pledged Himself to so overrule in all life's difficult experiences that through them He perfects that which concerneth us (Psa. 138:8).

The Furnace of Affliction In the furnace of affliction, many truths were revealed to Job that he could not have learned otherwise. Besides knowledge, there came purification, the purging away of dross, and equipment for a broader ministry. Suffering may be ennobling. Paul's richest epistles were written from the dungeons at Rome. Some of our best hymns and finest literature have issued from broken hearts and lives laid down in sacrifice. "Pilgrim's Progress," which, next to the Bible, has helped more people in their Christian experience than any other book, was penned in a musty prison cell. Fanny Crosby, the author of so many excellent hymns that warm and encourage our hearts, spent her life in phys-

ical darkness. Who can say that suffering added nothing to the richness of her contributions? Dr. Moon of Brighton, at the threshold of his life work, was also smitten with blindness. To the young student the blow was a crushing one, but submitting to the will of the heavenly Father, he turned his face heavenward and said, "O God, I accept this blindness as a talent from Thee." In the use of that talent Dr. Moon spent the remainder of his life preparing a system of raised letters for the blind by means of which thousands have been led into the light of the Gospel. George Matheson, another sufferer, blind and deserted by the one he loved, sang sweetly and triumphantly:

"O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

"O Light that follow'st all the way,
I yield my flick'ring torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's glow its day
May brighter, fairer be."

In these experiences of fellow-sufferers God would have us see that His "grace is greater than our need"—greater than any experience of prosperity or adversity.

The Third Stage After the furnace of affliction comes the third stage in Christian experience. The exuberance of the first stage has passed. The fires of testing and the waters of affliction have, if we have accepted their mission, rendered us quiet and submissive. We have learned to "fear no evil," knowing that our Shepherd is with us. Upon His "rod and staff" we may safely rely, for their comfort is unailing. Following this, in the "afterward" of Christian experience, we partake of "the peaceable fruits of righteousness," borne on the trees of testing and chasten-

ing. Convictions are settled. Communion with God is a habit. Trusting, like breathing, is natural and easy. Fear is banished, like the Psalmist we sing, "My heart is fixed." As He did for Job, so God spreads for us a table in the presence of our enemies. He anoints our heads with oil. The cup of blessing overflows, and we rest in the confidence that His goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our lives, and that when our training on earth is ended the eternal home awaits us. Oh, how blessed, how full is this third stage in the Christian life!

In every period of Christian experience and until we reach the very gateway to the Eternal City, we may need the chastening hand of our God upon us. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth. . . No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:6-11). There is comfort in

the thought that all our chastening comes from One whose hands were pierced for our sakes. While Satan seeks to destroy us, He disciplines us only for our good.

*In
The School
of
Experience*

The three stages of Christian experience are clearly set forth in the history of Job. The testing period is undoubtedly the most important and the one most fully treated. The story of this man of God begins at a point where we would suppose it to finish. Job had fully declared himself. On earth and in heaven he was known as an upright man, fearing God and drawing away from evil. The account of his life up to this point covers only a few verses in the first chapter. Following the trial, Job lived one hundred and forty years; yet only brief reference is made to that long period of tranquillity. The time of testing, however, which probably lasted about a year, is treated in more than forty chapters.

In the days of his distress, Job was visited by three friends. They are often called "comforters," but in reality they were tormentors. Their desire to console was doubtless sincere, but their philosophy was "of the earth, earthy." They were religious dogmatists, giving voice to mere platitudes based upon their own experience. Theirs was the advice of tradition "proverbial wisdom and pious phrases." They could not shed any light upon Job's sad problem. They were unable to offer any real comfort in the hour of his suffering. They completely misunderstood God's dealings with His servant and judged him a hypocrite. They endeavored to make him acknowledge his guilt. But this Job would not do, for in no sense had he been untrue to God. He was not faultless, it is true, but he had reached that high plane where God deals with him as a child whom He loves, and not as a sinner to be judged. "And what son is he whom the father chasteneth **not?**"

In chapter 38 Jehovah Himself speaks to Job out of the whirlwind. It was at this point that Job answered the Lord and said, "Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" (Job 40:3, 4). "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:2, 3, 5, 6).

The Effect of Revelation The holiest of men have made constant confession of sin and shortcoming. The nearer we come to the white light of God's righteousness, the more conscious we become of the imperfections of our lives. The great men of the Bible, those who have stood the most erect before

the world, are those who bowed the lowest before God. For example, Daniel, to whom the angel Gabriel came on two occasions bringing greetings from heaven, is addressed as the "man greatly beloved" (Dan. 10:11, 19). But when Daniel saw in a vision the glorified One, he cried, "There remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength" (Dan. 10:8).

Undoubtedly Isaiah was the holiest man in Judea in his generation. As he worshipped in the temple there came to him that wonderful vision of the Lord, high and lifted up, with his train filling the temple, and when he saw the vision Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

When John, the beloved, saw his glorified Lord, he "fell at his feet as dead" (Rev. 1:17).

We shall probably find that the truest and noblest of God's servants, when they stand at last in His presence, will marvel at the grace that brought them there, and throughout eternity will confess themselves sinners saved by grace, who, at the best, have been but "unprofitable servants."

*Job Vindicated
and
Restored*

After the Lord had spoken to Job, He had something to say to the three moral philosophers. "My wrath is kindled against thee," He said to Eliphaz, the principal spokesman, "and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (Job 42:7). They were commanded to take seven bullocks for a burnt offering and go to Job requesting him to pray for them. Only thus, God said, could they be accepted of Him. Before Job's trial God had testified to the faith and integrity of His servant. After the testing, on two occasions God

vindicated him before his friends, declaring that Job had spoken the thing that was right concerning Him. Significantly, He referred to him as "my servant." And when the man of God prayed for his friends, "the Lord turned the captivity of Job . . . also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). Once more the sun rose for Job, and a glorious day dawned, a day of renewed prosperity.

*Looking
on the
Wrong Side*

The late Dr. George Pentecost told me about one of his parishioners who had lost her husband and only son within a week. Following this calamity, she suffered a complete collapse of faith. She doubted God's love. Dr. Pentecost visited her frequently for several weeks, trying to help her out of her gloom and sorrow. One day he found her doing some fancy-work, and in the course of the conversation she dropped the embroidery in her lap. The doctor, pointing to it, said,

"I am surprised that a woman of your intelligence should be working with a foolish thing like that! I never saw such a jumble of yarns and colors; there is no pattern, no plan. It is perfectly absurd."

The lady was highly indignant. In her amazement she even forgot her sorrow. Turning the work over quickly she replied, "I am surprised at you, Dr. Pentecost. You are looking at the wrong side. Isn't there a pattern now? Isn't there a blend of color?"

"Yes," he answered, "there is. But, my dear sister, you are looking at the wrong side of God's work and it is all darkness and confusion to you. On His side there is perfect harmony. He has a plan and a purpose, and He is working them out."

"AFTERWARD"

Heb. 12:11

We may not see just here and now,
With vision clear the WHY and HOW
Of all that God seems to allow,
But "Afterward"!

We may not know how THAT or THIS,
Which now we fain would gladly miss,
Is working for our future bliss,
But "Afterward"!

We may not fully understand
How underneath God's chastening hand
Pain is fulfilling Love's command,
But "Afterward"!

It may not be for us to know
What portion of the seed we sow
Shall into golden harvest grow—
But "Afterward"!

We may not know when torn with care,
Why earnest and persistent prayer
Should seem to die upon the air,
But "Afterward"!

It may not be for me to see
The meaning and the mystery
Of all that God has planned for me—
But "Afterward"!

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