

THE GLORY OF A GREAT FAITH

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Job 13:15.

This is one of the supreme sayings of Scripture. It rises, like an alpine summit, clear above all ordinary heights of speech, it pierces the clouds, and glistens in the light of God. Such immovable confidence and unstaggering reliance are not products of mere nature, but rare flowers of rich grace.

God delights to honor a true man. He takes pleasure in placing him where the world may see the excellence of his character and feel the power of his life. But before He sets him in a regal place and encircles his brow with a crown of glory He suffers him to be tried. God saw in His servant Job a man in whom He was well pleased. He said, "There is none like him on the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil." Such integrity could not be permitted to dwell in obscurity. It had to be exalted and made visible to men of every land and age. But as a preparation for such exaltation, it was necessary for Job to pass through great tribulation. After he did so, Job will ever stand forth as a supreme example of human suffering and victorious faith.

Our attention is arrested by the faith of Job as expressed in the words of our text. His was not an ordinary faith. Faith is of different kinds -- saving faith, sustaining faith, suffering faith and dying faith, but it seems that Job had all of them. However, he did not always have this manifold faith, but it was the fruit of many experiences and many years of trouble. He passed through experiences far worse than any of those you have had, or perhaps will ever endure.

Job lived an intensely human life, a life marked by tragedy, suffering and pathos, yet in the underdepths there was the peace born of true faith. Among all of his statements, there is none finer than this one, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." His attitude towards life at this point is heroic and he exercised an unconquerable faith in God.

In this passage is locked the secret of his life, a secret which we sorely need to discover. From him we learn that the trials of life reveal character and demonstrate the quality and value of past training. The misfortunes of life not only test but reveal. Upon the altar of fretfulness we often sacrifice our peace, our joy, and our talents for service. I am not denying the existence of real sorrow, but I am pleading for an optimistic faith that will look beyond swirling wintry clouds and see the summer that is yet to be. We need to carry the torch of confidence into our darkest cellars. Let us note some of the things which tested the faith of Job.

I. The Loss of All His Property.

Because of his character and integrity God had greatly blessed Job. He was rich; rich in sons and daughters, in flocks and herds, in friends, and in a model home. Although he was a rich man, calamity after calamity came until he was left penniless. The richest man in the East became a bankrupt. That in itself would have driven many a person into despair. The loss of all property is a shock that the faith of many cannot endure. Some of us cannot bear prosperity and for that reason we must remain poor, but a greater test of our faith is to have property and lose all of it suddenly. Suppose you should, by some misfortune, lose all you have today, what would be the effect upon you as a Christian? The test of the pocketbook is often the test of one's faith,

spirit, character, and self. Such experiences as Job had, in the loss of all his property, are where the souls of men are tried, and surely where the faith of men is tested to the limit. Those who are called to pass through such a trial need the sympathy and prayers of their brethren, for many have gone down in such times.

Now Job faced such an hour, and others turned their eyes upon him to see what effect it would have upon his life, his character, and his faith in God. This is the very point where the devil said he would fail God. He admitted that Job was a good man, but said that any man would be good if God would pay him as much as he had paid Job. The devil told God that if He would take Job's property away from him He would see what would become of his goodness and his faith. But Job's faith was made, not just for the fair weather, but for the storm, and with a courage that was glorious in its steadfastness, he lifted his head above the wreck of his ruined fortune and said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

II. The Loss of All His Children.

This test was even much more trying than the first one. Job had ten children, and each year they came together in the home of one of their number for a reunion, and on one such occasion when they were feasting and having a glorious time a cyclone came and killed all of them. The passing of a loved one is always a test of one's faith, but when a tragedy takes two at the same time it is enough to stagger one, but what if it takes ten at one stroke? That was Job's lot. He looked upon ten cold faces side by side all his own, and they were his all. Many a man has lost his moorings and his bearings under far less strain than that, but what did Job do? The grace of the Lord enabled him to say calmly, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." What a timely and helpful lesson for some of us who have lost the Christian spirit because we have lost a loved one. I would not minimize such a sorrow, but I would call every Christian to the feet of Job to learn how to bear such sorrow when it comes. Let this man who gave up ten children at one time, but who clung the tighter to the Lord because of it, be our example and our teacher. He lifted his head above the ruins of a fallen fortune, and above the tombs of his mangled children and said, "I will cling to God." "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

III. The Loss of His Health.

A loathsome disease crept over his body from head to foot. Boils innumerable plagued his body. To learn to bear sickness, suffering and sorrow in the spirit of Christ is perhaps the highest earthly achievement of a Christian. But Job learned it centuries before Christ came and taught men how to live and how to suffer. It requires more than saving grace to enable one to bear sickness in this spirit. Some, who are faithful Christians while they are well and strong, and in the midst of the blessings of a joyful life, make very poor sufferers for God. John the Baptist had that weakness. As long as he was well, free and successful he was as bold as a lion, and as courageous as a prophet from heaven; but when he was thrown into prison, and his friends turned away from him, and he was cut off from the activities of life, he fell into gloom and doubts, and came almost to the breaking point; and to reassure himself, he sent a committee to see Christ for one word of encouragement. John had one more court of appeal, but Job did not; he had come to the last. If any man ever had any reason to think that God had turned against him, Job had various reasons. His case was an extreme one, but God preserved it that all who are called to pass through extreme conditions may know that God is able to deliver out of the most extreme afflictions of life. He is not only the God of the well man, but of the sick and afflicted Job's love for God and his faith in God were not conditioned upon the possession of wealth, the welfare of his children or the condition of his own health, but upon God alone. Therefore, it must have been

one of the high hours in heaven when he lifted his voice and said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

IV. The Loss of His Friends.

Fair-weather friends always get ship-wrecked in a storm like this. In the days of his prosperity there were three men who entered closely into the life of Job, and token they had enjoyed sweet counsel. It was not just that his friends had failed him in the hour of greatest need, but they had turned to be his bitterest foes. Instead of comfort they had brought censure and condemnation. They had misunderstood him, they had falsely accused him, and their words cut deeper and lasted longer than any words that could have been spoken by common foes. The stab of a friend is a mortal wound. Few things sting the soul more keenly than the dart thrown by the hand of one you trusted and befriended. Christ faced many men in His day who hated Him to death, but no Pharisee ever cut His heart as deep as Judas Iscariot. Many bitter oaths fell upon His ears, but none ever hurt like the oaths from the lips of Peter, one of His own disciples. When Caesar fell into the net of his enemies he forgot them all when he saw the face of Brutus among them, for he had counted him one of his trusted friends. The accusations of these men who came to torment Job was a matter of little concern, but the fact that such words should come from the lips of men who had been counted his friends was a blow that he could hardly survive. The words of an enemy may fall like a club upon the head, but the criticisms of a friend burn like fire. Now that Job was left penniless, childless, healthless, jobless and friendless, what could he do? By the same grace and in the same glorious faith he lifted his voice and said: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

In the midst of his troubles Job was urged by those closest to him to renounce and to denounce God. That suggestion came from one to whom he was deeply devoted -- Mrs. Job. Poor fellow! Hindered in his religious life by his own family. God pity the person who has to stumble over his own family in his effort to be loyal to the royal in his soul! "Curse God, and die." Isn't that some advice to give a man who is fighting for his faith in a desperate hour? At any rate, Job must have realized that religious faith does not guarantee material prosperity. Some people have grown up with the impression that a confession of faith in Christ and membership in a church ought to automatically immunize them against hardship, sickness and failure. They are like the man Aunt Het told about. She said, "Jim gave the preacher ten dollars last year and hail ruined his crop anyway, so he's about lost faith in religion." I don't know where people get such an idea about religion; certainly it does not come from the New Testament, or from Christ Jesus. He never promised it. Christianity is not a comfortable detour around trouble.

God hath not promised
Skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways
All our lives through;
God hath not promised
Sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow,
Peace without pain.

But God hath promised
Strength for the day,
Rest for the labor,
Light for the way,
Grace for the trials,
Held from above,
Unfailing sympathy,
Undying love."

What was there about Job's faith which enabled him to triumph in such a remarkable fashion?

1. His invincible confidence in God.

"I Know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day on the earth."

2. His conviction that God would some day make right all things that seemed so wrong.

Herein is the sure defense against all the storms that may beat upon your life. If God permits Satan to carry off some cherished treasure it is in order that He may give us a new and fuller revelation of His grace and power.

3. His patience that could wait for the divine unfolding.

He had an unyielding faith in the promises of God, and an unfaltering dedication to the task to which he had been assigned.

4. His resumption of his service for God.

For those men who had rebuked him and misrepresented him he began to pray, and when he forgot himself in the needs of others the flood of blessing flowed into his own soul. Bury your sorrow in the needs of those about you, and it will soon come forth with new joys for your own heart.

An artist invited a special friend to his home to see one of his recent paintings. The guest was shown into a very dark room where he was left for several minutes alone. In a little while the artist appeared and conducted the man into the studio where he looked upon the great painting. When he was about to take his leave the artist said, "I guess you thought it a little strange that you were left alone in that dark room." The guest admitted that he had a feeling of disappointment. The artist then told him that he could not appreciate the painting if he rushed into the studio with the glare of the street in his eyes, so he was led into the dark room to prepare him for the real beauties of the picture. It may be that this is God's plan with us. We may often wonder why we are led into the dark rooms of this world, and it seems that sometimes we have been forgotten, and are left there indefinitely, but by and by God comes and calls us out and leads us into the presence of His great glories, and we are better able to appreciate them after having been so long in the dark room. Come what may, remember that God's way is always best. Trust in Him both for grace and for glory. Trust in Him will prepare you for life here and hereafter.