

## THE MAN UPON WHOM THE DEVIL WAS TURNED LOOSE

### Job 1 and 2

God was proud of Job. He delighted in his sincerity and unselfish devotion. When He looked down into Job's heart, He did not see any alloy in the gold of his loving service. When Satan came into the presence of God after journeying over the earth, he was asked if he had seen Job. In the sight of God, Job was the most prominent and attractive person, so He asked Satan if he had considered him.

Satan answered with a sneer, saying, "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." In all probability the devil thought that he was telling the truth. Evil cannot understand goodness, and being utterly selfish, Satan could not appreciate genuine, loving service. He believed that every man could be bought, and that all human conduct is built upon selfishness. His followers are like him in this respect. Those who cry that every man has his price, and that no woman is pure, are just like Satan, unable to apprehend true honesty and essential purity. All that they prove when they echo this age-long lie is that they are for sale themselves, and that their lives are rotten.

God answered Satan's challenge. He knew that Job was sincere in his service, and that the devil could not break the bond between Him and a good man, upheld by His abounding grace. God affirmed that a good man with an abiding faith in Him was more than a match for Satan. Job knew nothing about all this discussion. God told the devil that he could go out and touch all that Job had, but to keep his hands off of Job's person. The slanderer had said that Job was serving God for what he could get, and so God allowed him to deal with the possessions and family of Job, and see what he could do.

It has pleased God to bless Job with eminent prosperity. His wealth was abundant, his station in life exalted, his influence extensive; and he had used all of them as a faithful steward of God. The abundance by which he was surrounded, the family connections with which he was blessed, the respect and gratitude with which he was honored, the security of his possessions, and the success of his enterprises were all crowned with the enjoyment of a good conscience and the favor of God.

Seemingly, all the stores of earthly happiness were poured at his feet. He was a king and father to his countrymen. The hills were covered with his countless flocks, and the valleys were white with his waving harvests. Gold and silver were his in abundance; and he was the greatest of all of the men of the East. His domestic felicity was superb. His wife and his children were about him. His mind and his body were in the prime of manly vigor and dignity. He was conscientious in the discharge of all the duties of life. He kept a conscience void of offense both towards God and man. He was without hypocrisy toward God or double-dealing towards man.

Job's first trial was due to his character; the occasion of it was Satan. God had declared that there was none like His servant, Job, in all the earth. Satan disputed what God said. Satan 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 payed Job. Satan contended that Job served God from motives of self-interest, and that if the wages of his service, so to speak, are withdrawn he will renounce his allegiance. He 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. Thus Satan stood before the Lord and endeavored to impugn Job's motives because he hated his holiness and envied his happiness. Not to gratify this false and malignant accuser, but to confound and to defeat him, God permitted the trial of His servant's integrity; and Satan went forth with permission to touch him in every enjoyment, restricted only as to laying his hand on his person. But remember that God suffered Job to be most violently assaulted, only that the excellency of his character might be more clearly manifested, and the devil confounded in his purpose.

Satan did his best, which was at the same time his worst. A messenger came to Job and told him that as the oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them, a band of Sabeans fell upon them and drove them off and slew all his servants except the teller of the bad tidings. That was bad news indeed for those animals were necessary for the cultivation of Job's extensive domains. But he remembered his thousands of sheep and camels, and perhaps said to himself, "I still have much left and much to be thankful for." Then came a second blow. Fire fell from heaven and consumed the sheep and the shepherds. That, too, was bad, for the sheep represented one of Job's chief sources of prosperity. But he thought of his camels. They were worth a great deal of money, and with them for capital he could purchase more sheep and more oxen to replace those that had perished.

While he was thinking on this a third messenger came and told him that a band of Chaldeans had made a raid and driven off all his camels. That, indeed, was bad. All Job's worldly possessions were gone in one day. But Job remembered his family. He still had his wife, his seven sons, and his three daughters. They would care for him in his adversity, and help him to start life over again. But while he thought on this a fourth messenger came and brought him the worst news of all. A cyclone had smitten the house of his eldest son, where Job's seven sons and three daughters were feasting and having a glorious time, and it fell upon them and killed all of them. Job looked upon ten cold faces, all his own, and they were his all. Thus were his expectations of support and comfort from his offspring instantly defeated.

How did Job bear the shock? Did his faith in God and in goodness stand firm, or did he, as Satan had predicted, renounce God to His face? Nothing can be more beautiful than the behavior of the patriarch. The man who arose in the morning the richest and the most envied man in all the East, who looked into the faces of seven manly sons and three lovely daughters, sat down in the shadows of the evening a childless pauper. However, as God's hero thought of his empty fields, gazed into the cold faces of his children, he could not abstain from expressions of his grief, but he acquiesced in the will of God and completely yielded to Him. He arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground and worshipped, saying, "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." This was a rude shock to Satan, for he had felt absolutely sure that Job's faith would be wrecked. The devil is completely bewildered every time he meets true steadfastness on the part of God's children, and the evident power of His sustaining grace.

Reviewing his losses, Job acknowledged that all was of God; what had been freely given might be withdrawn at will; and God had only exercised His sovereign rights in stripping him of all. Afflictions draw any godly man nearer to God, instead of driving him away. Our greatest trials and losses are often our richest mercies. To bless God in prosperity is only natural; to bless Him in adversity and trouble is music that fills heaven and earth with gladness. To bless God in our comforts is the way to have them increased; to bless Him in our afflictions is the way to have them removed. In all these trials Job kept from sinning, which was contrary

to what Satan desired and expected. It was a glorious triumph of grace to keep from sinning in such circumstances. Job did not impute and injustice or impropriety to God. He did not make a single foolish or impious murmur against God. Neither did he ascribe anything to God unworthy of His justice, goodness and wisdom. He did not entertain a dishonorable thought, or utter a murmuring word against Him. To murmur against God's dealings is as foolish as it is wicked. To misconstrue God's character and conduct is the great sin to be guarded against under heavy trials.

Thus far Satan had failed in his contention and his attempt. God reminded him that Job had been faithful, and that his attempt to break his allegiance had failed. Satan admitted the failure, but insisted that the trial had not been sufficiently severe. He argued that it had reached but the outskirts of Job's life. He maintained that if it touched the center of his being, and affected his very self, that the result would be different. Listen to his further argument: "And Satan answered the Lord, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." Job 2:4-5. It was as if Satan had said, "Job still holds to his faith, although he has lost his possessions and his family. But take away his health from him, leave him in pain and agony of body, and he will no longer believe." That contention was based upon ignorance and vileness. Any man worthy to live has things which mean more to him than life, and in the case of Job Satan was gloriously refuted.

Permission was granted to Satan to stretch forth his hand and touch Job's body, but with this limitation, he could not take his life. And that limitation was the mystery to Job when the blow fell upon him. Job wondered why God, who permitted his suffering, did not end his life.

Satan went about his second venture with a determination to succeed. He did not mean to be defeated again. All his ingenuity was called into play, and he tried to make Job as miserable as possible. God had forbidden him to touch the man's life, but he had a wide latitude; he might do anything he liked, but he could not endanger his life. Any pain or discomfort might be employed. He, therefore, smote Job with a most painful and loathsome disease, affecting his whole body from the soles of his feet unto the crown of his head. It is hardly possible to conceive of anything which would cause more suffering and inconvenience than such a large number of boils.

Let us take a look at this rare spectacle. The holiest man was sitting alone upon a heap of ashes; all his property was gone, leaving him without any money or any source of income. His children had died and his body was one repulsive mass of corruption. He sat there in the ashes and wondered and suffered. Satan watched with demonic glee, entirely convinced that Job was going to deny his faith and forsake his God. Job was bewildered, knowing that he had been loyal to God. He could not understand why he had to endure all that he did.

His wife, who, above all others, should have been his comforter in trouble, broke under the strain, and advised Job to renounce his faith in God and to die. It looked to her as though God had deserted them, and that there was nothing left to which they could cling. But Job still held fast. 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?" He realized that God had a perfect right to inflict on him what He pleased. Although he could not understand why he was afflicted, he absolutely refused to rebel against God.

From a comparison of our case with that of Job, we should take occasion to acknowledge our great obligations to the God of all mercies. He hath indeed "dealt bountifully" with us. How numerous are our blessings! How few and light are our sufferings! Are our possessions still with us, and our children flourishing around us? Let us bear in mind always to whom we are indebted for them. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies:" Psalm 103:1-4. Let us praise the Lord for ~~mixing~~ so many of His favors with our trials.

Job's three friends came to mourn with him and to comfort him. They were doubtless good men, but they had the mistaken idea, which some people still have, that suffering and misfortune come only as a result of sin. So, they argued that Job might have been guilty of secret sins, for which the judgment of God had fallen upon him. Their contention was, that under the righteous government of God, there is always in this life an exact agreement between sin and punishment, and that the calamities of Job could only be accounted for on the assumption of great sin on his part. Deprived of all earthly good, he might have hoped for sympathy from his friends, but even this was denied him.

Knowing that his purposes and aims were right, Job refused to admit that secret sins were the cause of the dire things which had befallen him. Greatly discouraged, Job actually longed for death, but he would not surrender his trust in God; To him the future looked bleak and hopeless, but he maintained his faith in God.

Although Job was under adversity, bereavement, disease, and reproach, he refused to sin with his lips. By his attitude and actions, he told us that God is too great to be complained against by man; also, that God is to be obeyed and trusted.

Here we come to the greatness and victory of Job. Turning from the admonitions of friends who only darkened their counsel with a multitude of words, and forgetting for an instant his own sorrows and suffering, he steadfastly exercised his faith in God saying, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Job 13:15. Here we find the supreme lesson in the career of Job, namely, that God's true child trusts Him when he does not know, and holds on by faith when he cannot see. Among all of Job's statements, there is none finer than this one, "Thou He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." In this verse is locked the secret of his life, a secret which we sorely need to learn. I am not denying the existence of real sorrow, but I am pleading for an optimistic faith that will look beyond the swirling wintry clouds and see the summer that is yet to be.

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

#### L. His Invincible Confidence in God.

Job's sorrow, which he endured through the long night, was followed by the morning of light and triumph, and up from that ash heap of pain rose the loftiest note of the Old Testament:—"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Job 19:25-27. It was worth all the poverty, sorrow, and loneliness to give the world a word like that. If Job had said nothing else,

that statement alone would have made him immortal.

2. His Conviction That God Would Some Day Make Right All Things That Seem 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, it will soon come forth with new joys for your own heart.

When Satan heard Job say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him", he slunk away and we hear no more of him in the story. Satan did his utmost to destroy Job, but he knew full well that he was defeated, for no man who thus speaks in such an hour can ever fail.

Job trusted God when he could not understand. He stands before the world as an example of what may be achieved by every trusting child of God. He had been robbed of all earthly sources of happiness, and when those about him cried out that God had deserted him, he kept on believing and walked out where there seemed to be no path for his feet. There is no such thing as crushing men like Job. They look at the unseen and step out in the darkness to find themselves led by the light of infinite love. God put in His Book the story of this good man on whom the devil was turned loose that men may learn the secret of his victory, and remember that God watches over His own with tender love and infinite compassion while they pass through the refining furnace. Job defeated the devil on his own battlefield, and God placed his name on the honor roll, and He will put beside it the name of any-one however humble who wins a victory like that.

Trust in God both for grace and for glory. Trust in Him will prepare you for life here and hereafter.