

A VEXED SOUL COMFORTED

NO. 2557

A SERMON
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“The Almighty, who hath vexed my soul.”
Job 27:2

THE word “who” was put into this verse by the translators, but it is not wanted, it is better as I have read it to you, “The Almighty hath vexed my soul.” The marginal reading is perhaps a more exact translation of the original, “The Almighty hath embittered my soul.” From this we learn that a good man may have his soul vexed, he may not be able to preserve the serenity of his mind. We think, and think rightly, that a Christian man should “glory in tribulations also,” and rise superior to all outward afflictions, but it is not always so with us. There is a needs-be, sometimes, that we should be “in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Not only are the temptations needed for the trial of our faith, but it is even necessary that we should be in heaviness through them.

I hardly imagine that the most quiet and restful believers have always been unruffled, I can scarcely think that even those whose peace is like a river have always been made to flow on with calm and equable current. Even to rivers there are rapids and cataracts, and so, I think, in the most smoothly flowing life, there surely must be breaks of distraction and of distress. At any rate, it was so with Job. His afflictions, aggravated by the accusations of his so-called friends, at last made the iron enter into his very soul, and his spirit was so troubled that he cried, “The Almighty hath embittered my soul.”

It is also clear, from our text, that a good man may trace the vexation of his soul distinctly to God. It was not merely that Job's former troubles had come from God, for he had borne up under them, when all he had was gone, he had still blessed the name of the Lord with holy serenity. But God had permitted these three eminent and distinguished men, mighty in speech, to come about him, to rub salt into his wounds, and so to increase his agony.

At first, too, God did not seem to help him in the debate, although afterwards He answered all the accusations of Job's friends, and put them to the rout, yet, for a time, Job had to stand like a solitary champion against all three of them, and against young Elihu too, so he looked up to heaven, and he said, “The Almighty hath embittered my soul.’ That is the end of the controversy, I can see whence all my troubles comes.”

Advancing a step further, we notice that, in all this, Job did not rebel against God, or speak a word against Him. He swore by that very God who had vexed his soul. See how it stands here, “As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment, and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul.” He stood fast to it that this God was the true God, he called Him good, he believed Him to be almighty, it never occurred to Job to bring a railing accusation against God, or to start aside from his allegiance to Him.

He is a truly brave man who can say with Job, “‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’ Let God deal with me as He will, yet He is good, and I will praise His name. What if He has vexed my soul? He has a right to vex me, so I will not kick against the pricks. Let Him grieve me, let Him put gall and wormwood into my cup if so it shall please Him, but still will I magnify His name, for He is good, and only good.” Here is the strength of the saints, here is the glory which God getteth out of true believers—that they cannot and will not be soured against their God.

Now go another step, and notice that this embittering of Job's soul was intended for his good. The patriarch was to have his wealth doubled, and he therefore needed double grace that he might be able to

bear the burden. He was also to be a far holier man than he had been at the first, perfect and upright as he seemed to be, he was to rise a stage higher. If his character had been deficient in anything, perhaps it was deficient in humility. Truly, Job was no proud man, he was generous, and kind, and meek, but possibly, he had a little too high a notion of his own character, so even that must be taken away from him.

Other graces must be added to those he already possessed, he must have a tenderness of spirit which appears to have been lacking, he must become as gentle as a maid as he had been firm as a man of war, and consequently, this bitterness of soul was meant to help him towards perfection of character. When that end was accomplished, all the bitterness was turned into sweetness. God made the travail of his soul to be forgotten by reason of the joy that came of it. Job no longer thought of the dunghill, and the potsherd, and the lost sheep, and the consumed camels, he only thought of the goodness of God who had restored everything to him again, and given him back the dew of his youth, and the freshness of his spirit.

Child of God, are you vexed and embittered in soul? Then, bravely accept the trial as coming from your Father, and say, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Press on through the cloud which now lowers directly in your pathway, it may be with you as it was with the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, "they feared as they entered the cloud," yet in that cloud they saw their Master's glory, and they found it good to be there. Fear not, have confidence in God, all your sorrows shall yet end in joy, and the thing which you deplore today shall be the subject of tomorrow's sweetest songs. The Egyptians whom you have seen today you shall see no more forever. Wherefore, be of good courage, and let your hearts be strengthened.

I am going to take the text right away from its connection, having explained it as it relates to Job, and those like Job, I want to use it for the benefit of anyone else who can fitly use the expression, "The Almighty hath vexed my soul." My sermon will be like an archer's arrow, God knows where the heart is at which I am aiming. I draw the bow at a venture, the Lord will direct the bolt between the joints of the harness of the one it is intended to strike.

I. First, I shall speak upon A PERSONAL FACT.

Many a person has to say, "The Almighty hath embittered my soul."

This happened to you, dear friend, perhaps, *through a series of very remarkable troubles*. Few persons were happier than Job, and few have found misfortunes tread so fast upon one another's heels. What were the troubles in your case? It may be that one child was taken away, and then another, and yet a third, or perhaps, your infant was carried to the grave, to be soon followed by its dear mother, and you are left to mourn alone. Bereavement has followed bereavement with you until your very soul is embittered.

Or it may be that there is one ill at home, and you fear that precious life cannot be preserved, your cup seems full of trembling. Or possibly, you have had a series of disasters in business such as you could not have foreseen or prevented. It seems, indeed, to you as if no man was ever so unsuccessful, you have not prospered in anything, wherever you have put your hand, it has been like the hoof of the Tartar's horse which turns the meadow into a desert, nothing goes well with you.

Perhaps you have desired to be a man of learning, you have worked very hard, and now your health is failing you, so that you cannot go through the examination for which you have been preparing. You would willingly die at your post if you had a hope of gaining the honor to which you aspire, but this is denied you, on the very doorstep of success, you are stopped, God seems to have embittered your life.

Or you, of the tender heart, have been disappointed and rejected, and your love has been thrown away. Or you, of the energetic spirit, have been foiled and driven back a score times, till you perceive that your attempts are fruitless. Or you, a man of true integrity, have been cruelly slandered, and you feel as if you could not bear up under the false charge that is in the air all around you. Ah, I know what that

means! There are many like you, with whom the Almighty is dealing in all wisdom and goodness, as I shall have to show you.

It may be, however, that you have not had a succession of troubles, but you have had *one trial constantly gnawing at your heart*. It is only one, and that one you are half-ashamed to mention, for it seems so trifling when you try to tell it to another, but to you it is as when a wasp stings, and continues to sting, it irritates and worries you. You try patience, but you have not much of that virtue. You seek to escape from the trouble, but it is always boring into your very heart, it is only some one little thing—not the devil, only a messenger of Satan, one of his errand boys, one of the small fry of trouble.

You cannot make out how you can be so foolish as to let it worry you, but it does. If you rise up early, or if you sit up late, it is still there tormenting you, you cannot get rid of it, and you cry, “The Almighty hath embittered my soul.” Time was when you would have laughed at such things, and put them aside with a wave of your hand, but now they follow you into business, they are with you at the desk, they come home with you, they go to bed with you, and they worry you even in your dreams.

Perhaps I have not yet hit the mark with you, my friend. It is neither a succession of troubles nor yet any one trouble, in fact, you have no trouble at all in the sense of which I have been speaking. Your business prospers, you are in fine health, your children are about you, everyone holds you in good esteem, yet your very soul is embittered. I hope that it has become saddened *through a sense of sin*. At one time you did not think that there was any fault to be found with you, but you have had a peep in the looking glass of the Word, the Spirit of God holding the candle, you have had a glimpse of yourself, your inner life, and your condition before God, and therefore your soul is vexed. Ah, many of us have gone through that experience, and wretched as it is, we congratulate you upon it, we are glad that it is so with you.

Is it more than a sense of sin? Is it *a sense of wrath* as well? Does it strike you that God is angry with you, and has turned His hand against you, and does this seem to loosen the very joints of your bones? Ah, this is a dreadful state of heart indeed—to feel God’s hand day and night upon you, till your moisture is turned into the drought of summer! Yet again I congratulate you on it, for the pilgrim path to heaven is by Weeping Cross, the road to joy and peace is by the way of a sense of sin and a sense of the Lord’s anger.

It may be that this is not exactly your case, but you are *restless and weary*. Somehow, you cannot be easy, you cannot be at peace. Someone recommended you go to a play, but it seemed such a dull piece of stupidity, you came away worse than you went. Your doctor says that you must have a change of air. “Oh!” you cry, “I have had fifty changes of air, and I do not improve a bit.” You are weary even of that in which you once delighted. Your ordinary pursuits, which once satisfied you, now seem to be altogether stale, flat, and unprofitable. The books that charmed your leisure have grown wearisome, the friends whose conversation once entranced you now seem to talk but idle chit-chat and frivolity.

Besides all that, there is *an undefined dread upon you*. You cannot tell exactly what it is like, but you almost fear to fall asleep, lest you should dream, and dreaming should begin to feel the wrath to come. When you wake in the morning, you are sorry to find that you are where you are, and you address yourself sadly to the day’s business, saying, “Well, I will go on with it, but I have no joy in it at all. ‘The Almighty hath embittered my soul.’”

This happens to hundreds, and they do not know what it means, they cannot understand it, but I hope that I may be privileged to so explain it that some may have to say that never did a better thing happen to them than when they fell into this state—that never in all their lives did they take so blessed a turning as when they came down this darksome lane, and began to murmur, “The Almighty hath embittered my soul.”

II. From this personal fact of which I have spoken, I want to draw AN INSTRUCTIVE ARGUMENT, which has two edges.

The first is this. If the Almighty—note that word, “Almighty”—has vexed your soul as much as He has, *how much more is He able to vex it!* If He has embittered your life up to the present point, and He is

indeed almighty, what more of bitterness may He not yet give you! You may go from being very low in spirit to being yet more heavy even unto despair. You may even come to be like Bunyan's man in the iron cage, or like the demoniac wandering among the tombs. Remember what God has done in the case of some men, and if He can do that on earth, what can He not do in hell! If this world, which is the place of mercy, yet contains in it men so wretched that they would rather die than live, what must be the misery of those who linger in a state of eternal death, and yet from whom death forever flies?

O my God, when my soul was broken as between the two great millstones of Your justice and Your wrath, how my spirit was alarmed! But if You could do this to me here, what could You not have done to me hereafter if I had passed out of this world into the next with sin unforgiven? I want everyone who is in sore soul-trouble to think over this solemn truth, and consider what God can yet do with him.

Now turn the argument the other way. If it be the Almighty who has troubled us, *surely He can also comfort us*. He that is strong to sink is also strong to save. If He be almighty to embitter, He must also be almighty to sweeten. Draw, then, this comfortable conclusion—"I am not in such a state of misery that God cannot lift me right out of it into supreme joy." It is congenial to God's nature to make His creatures happy. He delights not in their sorrow, but if, when He does make them sorrowful, He can make life unendurable—if His anger can fill a man with terror so that he fears his own footfall, and starts at his own shadow—if God can do that on the one hand, what can He not do on the other?

He can turn our mourning into music, He can take off from us the ashes and the sackcloth, and clothe us in beauty and delight. God can lift up your head, poor mourner, sorrowing under sin and a fear of wrath. I tell you, God can at once forgive your sin, and turn away all His wrath, and give you a sense of perfect pardon, and with it a sense of his undying love. Oh, yes, that word "Almighty" cuts both ways! It makes us tremble, and so it kills our pride, but it also makes us hope, and so it slays our despair. I put in that little piece of argument just by the way.

III. Now I come to my third point, which is more directly in my road, and that is this. Here is A HEALTHFUL INQUIRY for everyone whose soul has been vexed by God.

The inquiry is, first, *is not God just in vexing my soul?* Listen. Some of you have long vexed Him, you have grieved His Holy Spirit for years. Why, my dear man, God called *you* when you were but a boy! Or very gently He drew you while you were yet a young man, you almost yielded to the importunity of a dying friend who is now in heaven. Those were all gentle strokes, but you heeded them not, you would not return unto the Lord, and now, if He should see fit to lay His hand very heavily upon you, and vex you in His hot displeasure, have you not first vexed Him, have you not ill-used Him? If you would not come to Him in the light, it is very gracious of Him if He permits you to come in the dark. I do not wonder if He whips you to Himself, seeing that you would not come when, like a father beckoning a little child, He smiled at you, and wooed you to Him.

I might say to others, if God brings you to Himself by a rough road, you must not wonder, for have not you many a time vexed your godly wife? When seeing friends who come to join the church, I am often struck with the way in which converts have to confess that, in former days, they made it very hard for their families. There are some men who cannot speak without an oath, and at the very name of Christ they begin to curse and to swear. They seem as if they hated their children for being good, and could not be too hard upon their wives because they try to be righteous in the sight of God. Well, if you vex God's people, you must not be surprised if He vexes you. He will give you a hard time of it, it may be, and if it ends in your salvation, I shall not need to pity you however hard it may be for you.

There is one thing more you may say to yourself, and that is, "It is much better to get to heaven by a rough road than to go singing down to hell. O my God, tear me in pieces, but do save me! Let my conscience drive me to the very borders of despair, if You will but give me the blood of Christ to quiet it. Only make sure work of my eternal salvation, and I will not mind what I have to suffer." I shall bless God for you, dear friend, and you will bless God for yourself too, if you be but brought to Him, even though you have to say, "The Almighty hath vexed my soul."

Another point of inquiry is this, *What can be God's design in vexing your soul?* Surely He has a kind design in it all. God is never anything but good. Rest assured that He takes no delight in your miseries, it is no pleasure to Him that you should sit, and sigh, and groan and cry. I mean that such an experience in itself affords Him no pleasure, but He has a design in it, what can that design be?

May it not be, first, to make you think of Him? You forgot Him when the bread was plentiful upon the table, so He is going to try what a hungry belly will do for you when you would fain fill it with the husks that the swine eat. You forgot Him when everything went merry as a marriage peal, it may be that you will recollect Him now that your children are dying, or your father is taken away, these trials are sent to remind you that there is a God.

There are some men who go on, by the space of forty years together, and whether there be a God or not, is a question which they do not care to answer, at least, they live as if there were no God, they are practically atheists. This stroke has come that you may say, "Yes, there is a God, for I feel the rod that He holds in His hand. He is crushing me, He is grinding me to powder, I must think of Him."

It may be, too, that He is sending this trial to let you know that He thinks of you. "Ah!" you say, "I did not suppose that He thought of me, I thought that surely He had forgotten such a one as I am." But He does think of you, He has been thinking of you for many a day, and calling and inviting you to Him, but you would neither listen nor obey, and now that He has come, He means to make you see that He loves you too well to let you be lost. You are having His blows right and left, to let you know that He thinks of you, and will not let you perish.

When God does not care for a man, He flings the reins onto His neck, and says, "There! Let him go." Now see how the horses tear away, you need not lash them, they will go as though they had wings, and could fly. Leave a man to himself, and his lusts drag him post haste to hell, he pants to destroy himself, but when God loves a man, He pulls him up, as you might pull your horse on to his haunches. He shall not do as he wills, the eternal God will not let him, in infinite mercy, He tugs at the rein, and makes the man feel that there is a mightier than he who will not let him ruin himself, but who will restrain him from rushing to his destruction.

Am I speaking to any who are in this plight? Let them not kick against God, but rather be grateful that He condescends thus to meddle with their sinful souls, and check them in their mad career. I have spoken lately with some who were about to join this church, who, if friends had said, five or six months ago, that they would have been sitting on that chair talking to me about their souls, would have cursed them to their faces, yet they were obliged to come. The Lord had hold of them, they tried to break away, but He had them too firmly. They were served by my Lord and Master as a good fisherman will serve a salmon if once it takes his bait, he lets it run for a while, and then pulls it up a bit, and then lets it go again, but he brings it to land at last, and I have had the pleasure of seeing many sinners thus safely caught by Christ. It may be, dear friend, that the Almighty is vexing you to let you see that He loves you.

May it not be also for another reason—that He may wean you entirely from the world? He is making you loathe it. "Oh!" you used to say, "I am a young man, and I must see life." Well, you have seen it, have you not? And do you not think that it is wonderfully like death and corruption? That which is called "London life" is a foul, loathsome, crawling thing, fit only for the dunghill. Well, you have seen it, and you have had enough of it, have you not?

Perhaps your very bones can tell what you gained by that kind of life. "Oh!" you said, "but I must try the intoxicating cup." Well, what did you think of it the morning after you tried it? "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contention? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine."

I saw a man of that kind in the street, the other day. Once, he was a most respectable man, who could consort with others, and be esteemed by them. Now he is dreadfully down at the heel. I think I saw a toe through each of his shoes, and he looked like the wretched being that he is. He shuffled from place to place as if he did not wish to be seen, and he did not lift himself up until he got into the gin palace to

take another draught of hell-water, and then he seemed for a minute to be drawn straight again by that which made him crooked. You know the man, is he here tonight? Dear sir, have you not had sufficient strong drink? God has let you have enough of it that you may hate it from this hour, and flee away from it, never to desire to go back to it again.

I heard, at Boulogne, the story of a Frenchman who had been drinking heavily, and who threw himself into the harbor. Some sailors plunged in, and rescued him. The man was on the deck of a ship, and in a minute he broke away from his keepers, and jumped in again. It was not pleasant to be trying to save a madman again and again, yet they did get him out, and took him down below, but he rushed on deck, and jumped in a third time.

A man there said, "You leave him to me." So he jumped overboard, and seized hold of him, put his head under the water, and held him there, when he managed to get his head up again, his rescuer gave him another ducking, and then another, till he just about filled him up with water. He said to himself, "I will sicken him of it, so that he will never jump in here again." He just diluted the *eau-de-vie* the man had taken, and then he dragged him on board ship, and there was no fear of his jumping overboard any more.

And I believe that, sometimes, the Lord acts like that with men. He did so with me, He made sin to be exceeding bitter to my soul, till I loathed it, and it has often given me a trembling even to think of those sins that then were pleasurable to me. It is a blessed thing to be plucked out of the water, and saved once for all, but a little of that sailor's style of sousing the drunkard, a little of those terrors and alarms that some of us felt, is not lost, and when the Lord thus deals with sinners, it is with the design that they may never want to go back to those sins anymore. They have had their full of them, and henceforth they will keep clear of them. It may be that the Almighty vexed some of you for this cause, that you might thenceforth hate sin with a perfect hatred.

Do you say, my friend, that I have not been describing you? You are still a gentleman, an excellent well-to-do man, you have done nothing wrong in the way of vice, but still you cannot rest? No, and God grant that you never may rest till you come humbly to the Savior's feet, confess your sin, and look to Him alone for salvation! Then you shall rest with that deep "peace which passeth all understanding," which shall "keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus" forever and ever.

I think I hear someone say (and with that I will finish), "As the Almighty hath vexed my soul, *what had I better do?* I thought, sir, when I came in here that I was a castaway, but I see that I am the man you are looking after. I thought that I was too wretched to be saved, but now I perceive that it is to the wretched that you are preaching. It is for the mourning, the melancholy, and the desponding, what had I better do?" Do? Go home, and shut your door, and have an hour alone with yourself and God. You can afford that time, it is Sunday night, and you do not need the time for anything else. That hour alone with God may be the crisis of your whole life, do try it!

"And when I am alone with God, what had I better do?" Well, first, tell Him all your grief. Then tell Him all your sin—all you can remember. Hide nothing from Him, lay it all, naked and bare, before Him. Then ask Him to blot it all out, once for all, for Jesus Christ's sake. Tell Him that you can never rest till you are at peace with Him. Tell Him that you accept His way of making peace, namely, by the blood of the cross. Tell Him that you are willing to trust His dear Son for everything now, and to accept salvation freely as the gift of sovereign grace. If you do so, you will rise from your knees a happy man, and what is more, a renewed man, I will stand bondsman for God about this matter.

If there be this honest confession, this hearty prayer, and this simple acceptance of Christ as your Savior, the days of your mourning are ended, the daylight of your spirit shall be beginning, and I should not wonder if many of your present troubles come to an end, certainly, your heart-ache shall be ended, and ended at once. Oh, that you would accept my Savior!

Sometimes, when I am thinking about my hearers and my work, I seem to take God's part instead of yours, and to say, "O God, I have preached Christ to them, I have told them about Your dear Son, and

how Your fatherly heart parted with Him that He might die that men might live, yet they do not care for Him. They will not have Your Son, they will not accept the pardon that Jesus bought.”

If the Lord were to say to me, “Then never go and say another word to them, they have so insulted Me in refusing such a gift,” I have at times felt as if I would say, “Lord, that is quite right, I do not want to have anything more to do with them as they treat You so shamefully.” But we have not reached that point yet, so once more I put it to you, have you not long enough delayed? Have you not long enough questioned? Have you not long enough turned away from the Savior? And now that the arrows of God are sticking in you, will you not ask Him to draw them out? Will you not plead that the precious blood of Christ may be balm to heal your wounds?

Oh, come to Him! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I beseech you, come! By amazing love and amazing pity, by wondrous grace that abounds over sin, come and welcome! Jesus said, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” Then, come unto Him, and come now. Blessed Spirit, draw them, draw them now, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOB 27

Remember that Job’s friends had accused him of having committed some great sin which would account for his great sorrows. The good man is naturally very indignant, and he uses the strongest possible language to cast away from himself with horror the charges which they brought against him in the day of his grief.

Verses 1-4. *Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; all the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.*

He felt that it would be wicked for him to confess to what he had never done, it would be deceit for him to acknowledge crimes which he had never committed. Therefore he most solemnly asseverates, by the living God, that he never will permit the falsehood to pass his lips. He had not transgressed against God in the way his friends insinuated, and he would not own that he had.

5. *God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me.*

We are bound to keep to the truth. No man is permitted, with mock humility, to make himself out to be what he is not. Job was right, so far, in standing up for the integrity of his character, for he was a man of such uprightness that even the devil could not find fault with him. He was such a holy man that God could say to 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 eschews evil?”

And all that the devil could do was to insinuate that he had a selfish motive for his goodness. “Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has 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.”

Job was upright, yet we are never so right but what there is a mixture of wrong with our right. A man may very easily become self-righteous when he is defending his own character, there may be a lack of admissions of faults unperceived, there may be a blindness to faults that ought to have been perceived, and something of that imperfection, doubtless, was in the patriarch.

6. *My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.*

There he went too far, for he had not yet seen God as he afterwards saw Him. Before man, there was nothing with which he needed to reproach himself, but how he changed his tone when God drew near to him! Then he said, “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.” If we knew more of God, we would think less

of ourselves. If those who consider themselves perfect had any idea of what perfection is, their comeliness would be turned in them to corruption.

7-8. *Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?*

That is a very solemn, searching question, if a man tries to play fast and loose with God, if he be a hypocrite, and if he should gain by his hypocrisy all that he tries to gain, namely, repute among men, “what is his hope when God taketh away his soul?” Then, his hope is turned to horror, for he has to stand before Him who cannot be deceived, but who reads him through and through, and casts him away because he has dared to insult his Maker by attempting to deceive omniscience. Oh, may you and I never play the hypocrite’s part! There cannot be a more foolish thing, and there cannot be a more wicked thing.

9. *Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?*

That is one of the tests of the hypocrite, “Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?” Will the hypocrite cry to God at all? Will he not give up even his profession of religion when he loses his prosperity? And if he does cry, will God hear the double-tongued man?

10. *Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?*

These questions, while they condemn those who are hypocrites, are comforting to many a sincere heart. Dear friend, do you delight yourself in God? Do you really admire Him, love Him, and seek to glorify Him? Then you are no hypocrite, for no hypocrite ever found delight in religion, and especially no hypocrite ever found delight in God Himself.

“Will he always call upon God?” No, there are certain times when he will cease to pray. Pleasure enchants him, and he will not pray, or perhaps he is so discouraged and despairing that he cannot pray. There are times when the hypocrite gives up praying, but the Christian cannot give it up, it is his vital breath, he *must* pray. No sorrow is so deep as to take him off it, no joy is so fascinating as to seduce him from prayer, but as for the hypocrite, “Will he always call upon God?” No, you may rest assured that he will not.

11. *I will teach you by the hand of God:*

Or better, as the margin runs, “I will teach you *being in the hand of God.*” Being himself chastened, and experiencing the teaching of God, Job says to his friends, “I will teach you.”

11-14. *That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it; why then are ye thus altogether vain? This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.*

If God does not visit the hypocrite with punishment in his own person, it will certainly fall upon the next generation.

15-18. *Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep. Though he heaps up silver as the dust, and prepares raiment as the clay; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh.*

“He buildeth his house as a moth,” which makes its home in the cloth, but the servant’s brush knocks it all out, and destroys the moth’s children, too. “And as a booth that the keeper maketh.” The hypocrite’s house is no better than that little shanty which the keeper of a vineyard puts up with a few boughs or mats, to sit under it from the heat of the sun. God save us from being such poor builders as this! May we build a house that is founded on the rock!

19. *The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not.*

He has grown rich by oppression, he has become great in the land by his hypocrisy; but he speedily goes down to the grave. God looks at him, and he is gone.

20. *Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night.*

This is a parallel passage to that word of our Lord, “But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

21. *The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth; and as a storm hurls him out of his place.*

These are your great ones, your proud ones, your strong men that ail nothing, and would insure their own lives to a certainty for the next twenty years, see how they go. Shadows are not more evanescent, a poor moth is not more easily crushed.

22. *For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand.*

The man would escape from God if he could. It was Job’s glory, as we read just now, that he was in God’s hand, but the hypocrite would fain flee out of God’s hand, yet that is altogether impossible.

23. *Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.*

Such ignominy shall be poured upon the hypocrite at last that all mankind shall endorse the sentence of God which condemns him, and shame and everlasting contempt shall be his portion. The Lord save all of us from such an awful doom, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—605, 592, 555

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