

WHY SOME SINNERS ARE NOT PARDONED

NO. 2705

A SERMON
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“And why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?”
Job 7:21

NO man should rest until he is sure that his sin is forgiven. It may be forgiven, and he may be sure that it is forgiven, and he ought not to give rest to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, till he has been assured, with absolute certainty, that his transgression is pardoned, and that his iniquity is taken away.

You, dear friends, may be patient under suffering, but not patient under sin. You may ask for healing with complete resignation to the will of God as to whether He will grant it to you, but you should ask for pardon with importunity, feeling that you must have it. You may not be sure that it is God's will to deliver you from disease, but you may be quite certain that it is His will to hear you when you cry to Him to save you from sin. And if at your first crying unto Him, you are not saved, seek to know the reason why He is refusing to grant you the boon you so much desire. It is quite legitimate to put this question to God again and again, “Why do You not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?”

We ought also to press this matter home upon our own heart and conscience, to see whether we cannot discover the reason why pardon is for a while withheld from us, for God never acts arbitrarily and without reason, and depend upon it, if we diligently search by the light of the candle of the Lord, we shall be able to find an answer to this question of Job, “Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?” Job's question may sometimes be asked by a child of God, but it may be more frequently asked by others who, as yet, are not brought consciously into the Lord's family.

I. I shall first take our text as A QUESTION THAT MAY BE ASKED, AS IN JOB'S CASE, BY A TRUE CHILD OF GOD, “Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?”

Sometimes, beloved friends, this question is asked under a misapprehension. Job was a great sufferer, and although he knew that he was not as guilty as his troublesome friends tried to make out, yet he feared that, possibly, his great afflictions were the results of some sin, and therefore, he came before the Lord with this sorrowful inquiry, “Why dost thou continue to me all this pain and agony? If it be caused by sin, why dost thou not first pardon the sin, and then remove its effects?”

Now I take it that it would have been a misapprehension on Job's part *to suppose that his afflictions were the result of his sin*. Mark you, brethren, we are by nature, so full of sin that we may always believe that there is enough evil within us to cause us to suffer severe affliction if God dealt with us according to justice, but do recollect that in Job's case, the Lord's objective in his afflictions and trials, was not to punish Job for his sin, but to display in the patriarch, to His own honor and glory, the wonders of His grace by enabling Job with great patience, still to hold on to God under the direst suffering, and to triumph in it all.

Job was not being punished, he was being honored. God was giving to him a name like that of the great ones of the earth. The Lord was lifting him up, promoting him, putting him into the front rank, making a great saint of him, causing him to become one of the fathers and patterns in the ancient church of God. He was really doing for Job such extraordinarily good things that you or I, in looking back upon his whole history, might well say, “I would be quite content to take Job's afflictions if I might also have Job's grace, and Job's place in the church of God.”

It may happen to you, beloved, that you think that your present affliction is the result of some sin in you, yet it may be nothing of the kind. It may be that the Lord loves you in a very special manner because you are a fruit bearing branch, and He is pruning you that you may bring forth more fruit.

As Rutherford said to a dear lady in his day, who had lost several of her children, “Your ladyship is so sweet to the Well-beloved that He is jealous on your account, and is taking away from you all the objects of your earthly love that He may absorb the affection of your whole heart into Himself.” It was the very sweetness of the godly woman’s character that led her Lord to act as He did towards her, and I believe that there are some of the children of God who are now suffering simply because they are gracious.

There are certain kinds of affliction that come only upon the more eminent members of the family of God, and if you are one of those who are thus honored, instead of saying to your Heavenly Father, “When will thou pardon my sin?” you might more properly say, “My Father, since You have pardoned my iniquity, and adopted me into Your family, I cheerfully accept my portion of suffering, since in all this, You are not bringing to my mind the remembrance of any unforgiven sin, for I know that all my transgressions were numbered on the Scapegoat’s head of old. Since You are not bringing before me any cause of quarrel between myself and You, for I am walking in the light as You are in the light, and I have sweet and blessed fellowship with You, therefore will I bow before You, and lovingly kiss Your rod, accepting at Your hands whatever Your unerring decree appoints for me.”

It is a blessed thing, dear friends, if you can get into this state of mind and heart, and it may happen that your offering of the prayer of the text may be founded upon a complete misapprehension of what the Lord is doing with you.

Sometimes, also, a child of God uses this prayer *under a very unusual sense of sin*. You know that in looking at a landscape, you may so fix your gaze upon some one object that you do not observe the rest of the landscape. Its great beauties may not be seen by you because you have observed only one small part of it.

Now, in like manner, before the observation of the believer, there is a wide range of thought and feeling. If you fix your eye upon your own sinfulness, as you may well do, it may be that you will not quite forget the greatness of almighty love, and the grandeur of the atoning sacrifice, but yet, if you do not forget them, you do not think so much of them as you should, for you seem to make your own sin in all its heinousness and aggravation, the central object of your consideration.

There are certain times in which you cannot help doing this, they come upon me, so I can speak from my own experience. I find that sometimes, do what I will, the master thought in my mind concerns my own sinnership—my sinnership even since my conversion, my shortcomings and my wanderings from my gracious God, and the sins even of my holy things.

Well now, it is well to think of our sin in this way, but it is not well to think of it out of proportion to other things. When I have gone to a physician because I have been ill, I have of course, thought of my disease, but have I not also thought of the remedy which he will prescribe for me, and of the many cases in which a disease similar to mine has yielded to such a remedy?

So, will it not be wrong to fix my thoughts entirely upon one fact to the exclusion of other compensating facts? Yet, that is just how many of us sometimes act, and then we cry to God, as did Job, “Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?” when indeed, it is already pardoned and taken away. If we try to look at it, there flows before us that sacred stream of our Savior’s atoning blood which covers all our guilt, so that, great though it is, in the sight of God it does not exist, for the precious blood of Jesus has blotted it all out forever.

There is another time when the believer may, perhaps, utter the question of our text, that is, *whenever he gets into trouble with his God*. You know that after we are completely pardoned—as we are the moment we believe in Jesus—we are no longer regarded as criminals before God, but we become His children.

You know that it is possible for a man, who has been brought before the court as a prisoner, to be pardoned, but suppose that after being forgiven, he should be adopted by him who was his judge, and taken into his family so as to become his child. Now after doing that, you do not suppose that he will bring him up again before the judgment seat, and try him, and put him in prison. No, but if he becomes the judge's son, I know what he will do with him, he will put him under the rules of his house, to which all the members of his family are expected to conform. Then, if he misbehaves as a son, there will not be that freeness of communication and communion between himself and his father that there ought to be.

At night, the father may refuse to kiss the wayward and disobedient child. When his brethren are enjoying the father's smile, he may have a frown for his portion—not that the father has turned him out of his family, or made him to be any the less a child than he was, but there is a cloud between them because of his wrongdoing.

I fear, my dear friends, that some of you must have known at times, what this experience means, for between you and your Heavenly Father—although you are safe enough, and He will never cast you away from Him—there is a cloud. You are not walking in the light, your heart is not right in the sight of God. I would earnestly urge you never to let this sad thing happen, or if it does ever happen, I beg you not to let such a sorrowful state of affairs last for even a day. Settle the quarrel with your God before you go to sleep. Get it put right, as I have seen a child do after he has done wrong.

Perhaps he has been pouting and scowling, and his father has had to speak very roughly to him, for a long while he has been too high-spirited to yield, but at last, the little one has come and said, "Father, I was wrong, and I am sorry," and in that moment there was perfect peace between the two. The father said, "That is all I wanted you to say my dear child. I loved you even while you were naughty, but I wanted you to feel and own that you were doing wrong, and now that you have felt it, and owned it, the trouble is all over. Come to my bosom, for you are as much loved as all the rest of the family."

I can quite imagine that when any of you have been at cross purposes with God, He has refused, for a time, to give you the sense of His fatherly love in your heart. Then, I beseech you, go to Him, and I suggest that you cannot pray to Him more appropriately than in the words of the text, "Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?" Or pray, as Job did a little later, "'Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,' for I wish to be at peace with thee, and there can be no rest to my newborn spirit while there is any cause of quarrel between us."

Thus far have I spoken to the children of God. Now I ask for your earnest prayers that I may be guided to speak wisely and powerfully to others.

II. THE QUESTION IN OUR TEXT MAY BE ASKED BY SOME WHO ARE NOT CONSCIOUSLY GOD'S CHILDREN, "Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity?"

And first, I think that I hear somebody making this kind of inquiry, "*Why does not God pardon my sin, and have done with it?* When I come to this place, I hear a great deal about atonement by blood, and reconciliation through the death of Christ, but why does not God just say to me, 'It is true that you have done wrong, but I forgive you, and there is the end of the matter?'" With the utmost reverence for the name and character of God, I must say that such a course of action is impossible. God is infinitely just and holy, He is the Judge of all the earth, and He must punish sin.

You know, dear friends, that there are times, even in the history of earthly kingdoms, when the rulers say by their actions, if not in words, "There is sedition abroad, but we will let it go on, we do not want to seem severe, so we will not strike the rebels down." What is sure to be the consequence of such conduct? Why, the evil grows worse and worse, the rebellious men presume upon the liberty allowed them, and take still more liberty, and unless the lawgiver intends that his law shall be kicked about the street like a football, unless he means that the peace and safety of his law abiding subjects should be absolutely destroyed, he is at last obliged to act, and so he says, "No, this state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. I shall be cruel to others unless I draw the sword, and make justice to be respected throughout my realm."

I tell you, dear friends, that the most awful thing in the universe would be a world full of sin, and yet without a hell for its punishment. The most dreadful condition for any people to be in is that of absolute anarchy, when every man does what he pleases, and law has become utterly contemptible. Now if, after men had lived lives of ungodliness and sin, of which they had never repented, and from the guilt of which they had never been purged, God were just quietly to take them to heaven, that would be the end of all moral government, and heaven itself would not be a place that anybody would wish to go. If ungodly people went there in the same state as they are in here, heaven would become a sort of antechamber of hell, a respectable place of damnation, but that can never be the case.

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” He has devised a wondrous plan by which He can pardon the guilty without to the slightest degree shaking the foundations of His throne, or endangering His government. Will you be saved in that way or not? If you reject God’s way of salvation, you must be lost, and the blame must lie at your own door. God will not permit anarchy in order that He may indulge your whims, or vacate the throne of heaven that He may save you according to your fancy.

At the infinite expense of His heart’s love, by the death of His own dear Son, He has provided a way of salvation, and if you reject that, you need not ask Job’s question, for you know why He does not pardon your transgression, and take away your iniquity, and upon your own head shall lie the blood of your immortal soul.

Perhaps somebody else says “Well, then, if that is God’s way of salvation, let us believe in Jesus Christ, and let us have pardon at once. *But you talk about the need of a new birth*, and about forsaking sin, and following after holiness, and you say that without holiness no man can see the Lord.” Yes, I do say it, for God’s Word says it, and I repeat, that for God to give pardon, and then allow men to go on in sin just as they did before, would be a curse to them instead of a blessing.

Why, if the dishonest man prospers in the world, is that a blessing to him? No, certainly not, for he only becomes the more dishonest. If a man commits licentiousness, and he escapes the consequences of it in this life, is that a blessing to him? No, for he becomes the more licentious, and if God did not punish men for their sin, but permitted them to be happy in the sin, it would be a greater curse to them than for Him to come and say to them, “For every transgression of My righteous law, there shall be due punishment, and for all moral evil there shall also be physical evils upon those who commit it.”

I thank God that He does not permit sin to produce happiness, I bless Him that He puts punishment at the back of evil, for so it ought to be. The curse of sin is in the evil itself rather than in its punishment, and if it could become a happy thing for a man to be a sinner, then men would sin, and sin again, and sin yet more deeply, and this God will not have.

“Well,” says another friend, “that is not my trouble. I am willing to be saved by the atonement of Christ, and I am perfectly willing to be made to cease from sin, and to receive from God a new heart and a right spirit, why then, does He not pardon me, and blot out my transgressions?” Well, it may be, first, *because you have not confessed your wrongdoing*. You remember that the apostle John says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”

Do you ask, “To whom shall I confess my sins?” Shall you come to me with your confession? Oh no, no, no! I could not stand that. There is an old proverb about a thing being “as filthy as a priest’s ear.” I cannot imagine anything dirtier than that, and I have no wish to be a partaker in the filthiness. Go to God, and confess your sin to Him, pour out your heart’s sad story in the ear of Him against whom you have offended, say with David, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.”

Dear anxious friend, if you say to me, “For months I have sought the Lord, but I cannot find Him, or get peace of conscience,” I advise you to try the effect of this plan, shut yourself up in your room alone, and make a detailed confession of your transgression. Perhaps confessing it in the bulk may have helped you to be hypocritical, so try and confess it in detail, especially dwelling upon those grosser sins which most provoke God, and most defile the conscience, even as David prayed, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God.” That was his great crime, he had been the cause of the death of Uriah, so he confessed that he was guilty of blood, and prayed to be delivered from it.

In like manner, confess your sin, whatever it has been. I am persuaded that often, confession to God would relieve the soul of its load of guilt. Just as when a man has a gathering tumor, and a wise physician lets in the lancet, and that which had gathered is removed, and the inflammation subsides, so often would it be with what the conscience has gathered if, by confession the heart were lanced, and the accumulated evil dispersed. How can we expect God to give rest to our conscience if we will not confess to Him our sin?

May it not be possible also, dear friends who cannot obtain pardon and peace, that *you are still practicing some known sin*? Now, your Heavenly Father means to give you mercy in a way that shall be for your permanent benefit. What are you doing that is wrong? I do not know you so intimately as to be able to tell what is amiss with you, but I have known a man who never could get peace with God because he had a quarrel with his brother, and as he would not forgive his brother, it was not reasonable that he should expect to receive forgiveness from God.

There was another man, who sought the Lord for a long while, but he never could get peace for this reason, he was a traveling draper, and he had what was supposed to be a yard measure, but it was not full length, and one day during a sermon, he took up his short measure in the place of worship, and just snapped it across his knee, and then he found peace with God directly he gave up that which had been the means of his wrongdoing. He had sought for pardon in vain all the while that he had persevered in evil, but as soon as that was given up, the Lord whispered peace to his soul.

Do any of you take “a drop too much” at home? Is that your besetting sin? I mean women as well as men when I ask that question. You smile at the suggestion, but it is no laughing matter, for it is only too true that many, who are never suspected of such a thing, are guilty of drinking to excess. Now it may be that there will never be peace between God and your soul until that glass goes. It will have to go if God is to forgive your sin, so the sooner it goes, the better will it be for you.

Perhaps, in your case, the sin is that you do not manage your family right. Are your children never checked when they do wrong? Are they in fact, allowed to grow up to be children of the devil? Do you expect God and you to be agreed while it is so? Think what a quarrel God had with His servant Eli over that matter, and remember how that quarrel ended, because Eli mildly said to his sons, “Why do ye do such things?” but restrained them not when they made themselves vile.

Look, dear friends. God will not save us because of our works, salvation is entirely by grace, but then that grace shows itself by leading the sinner upon whom it is bestowed to give up the sin in which he had formerly indulged. Which, then, will you have—your sin or your Savior? Do not try to hold sin with one hand, and the Savior with the other, for they cannot both of them be yours, so choose which you will have. I pray that God may show to you what the sin is which is keeping you from peace, and then grant to you the grace to give it up.

“Well,” you say, “I do not know that this is my case at all, for I really do, from my heart, endeavor to give up all sin, and I am sincerely seeking peace with God.” Well friend, perhaps you have not found it *because you have not been thoroughly earnest in seeking it*. You seem to be in earnest while you are here on a Sunday night, but how earnest are you on Monday night? Perhaps you are fairly so then because you come to the prayer meeting, but how about Tuesday, and Wednesday, and the rest of the week? When a man really wants to have his soul saved, he should let everything else go until he gets that all-important matter settled. Yes, I will venture to say as much as that.

Recollect what the woman of Samaria did when she had received Christ’s word at the well at Sychar. She had gone to the well for water, but look at her as she goes back to the city. Is there any water pot on her head? No, the woman left her water pot, she forgot what had been to her a necessary occupation when once she had been brought seriously to think about her soul and her Savior.

I do not want you to forget that, when you have found Christ, you can carry your water pot, and yet cleave to Christ, but until you have really received Him by faith, I should like to see you so fully absorbed in the pursuit of the one thing needful that everything else should be put into the second place, or even lower than that, and if you were to say, “Until I am saved, I will do absolutely nothing, I will get

to my chamber, and I will cry to God for mercy, and from that room I will never come until He blesses me," I would not charge you with fanaticism, nor would anybody else who knew the relative value of eternal things and things of time and sense.

Why, man, in order to save your coat, would you throw away your life? "Nay," you would say, "the coat is but a trifle compared with my life." Well then, as your life is of more value than your coat, and as your soul is of more value than your body, and as the first thing you need is to get your sin forgiven that your soul may be saved, until that is done, everything else may well be let go.

God give you such desperate earnestness that you must and will have the blessing! When you reach that resolve, you shall have it, when you cannot take a denial from God, you shall not have a denial.

There is still one more thing that I will mention as a reason why some men do not find the Savior, and get their sins forgiven, and that is, *because they do not get off the wrong ground on to the right ground*. If you are ever to be pardoned, dear friend, it must be entirely by an act of divine, unmerited favor. Now perhaps you are trying to do something to recommend yourself to God, you would scorn with derision the doctrine of being saved by your own merits, but still, you have a notion that there is something or other in you that is to recommend you to God in some measure or degree, and you still think that the ground of your forgiveness must lie to some extent with yourself.

Well now, you never can have forgiveness in that way. Salvation must be all of works, or else all of grace. Are you willing to be saved as a guilty, hell deserving sinner—as one who does not deserve salvation, but on the contrary, deserves to endure the wrath of God? Are you willing that, henceforth, it shall be said, "That man was freely forgiven all his trespasses, not for his own sake, but for Christ's sake alone?" That is good ground for you to stand upon, that is solid rock.

But some men seem to get one foot upon the rock and they say, "Yes, salvation comes by Christ." Where is that other foot of yours, my friend? Oh! he says that he has been baptized, or that he has been confirmed, or that he has in some way or other done something in which he can trust. Now, all such reliance as that is simply resting on sand, and however firmly your other foot may be planted on the rock, you will go down if this foot is on sand. You need good standing for both your feet, dear friends, and see that you get it. Let this be your language—

*"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find."*

Do not look anywhere else for anyone or anything that can save you, but look to Christ and to Christ alone. Are you too proud to do that? You will have to humble yourself beneath the mighty hand of God, and the sooner you do so, the better will it be for you. "Oh, but I, I—I must surely do something!" Listen—

*"Till to Jesus' work you cling
By a simple faith,
'Doing' is a deadly thing,
'Doing' ends in death.*

*Cast your deadly 'doing' down,
Down at Jesus' feet,
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete!"*

This is the Gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." You will never see up in heaven a sign bearing the names "Christ, and Co." No, it is Christ, and Christ alone, who is the sinner's Savior. He claims this for Himself, "I am Alpha and Omega," that is, "I am A, and I am Z. I am the first letter of the alphabet, and I am the last letter, and I am every other letter from the first down to

the last.” Will you make Him to be so to you, dear friend? Will you take Him to be your Savior now? “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.”

A friend told us, at one of our prayer meetings, that “H-A-T-H spells got it.” “He that believeth on the Son” is a saved sinner, he has got that everlasting life that can never die, and can never be taken away from him. Therefore, beloved friends, believe in Jesus, and you too shall have this eternal life, you shall have pardon, you shall have peace, you shall have God, and you shall have heaven itself to enjoy before long. God do so unto you, for His great mercy’s sake in Christ Jesus! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOB 7 AND JOHN 3:14-17

Job was sorely troubled by the cruel speeches of his friends, and he answered them out of the bitterness of his soul. What we are first about to read is a part of his language under those circumstances.

Job Chapter 7. Verse 1. *Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?*

Is there not a certain time for each one of us to live? Is there not an end to all the trouble and sorrow of this mortal state? “Woe is me,” says Job, “will this sad condition of things never come to a close? Must it always be thus with me?”

2. *As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow,—*

When the day shall close, and he can go to his home,—

2-3. *And as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work: so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.*

If that is the case with any of you, dear friends, you ought to be comforted by the thought that a better man than you are underwent just what you are enduring, and underwent it so as to glorify God by it. Remember what the apostle James wrote, “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” But if our case is not as bad as Job’s was, if we are in good health, and surrounded by God’s mercy, let us be very grateful. Every morning that you wake after a refreshing night’s rest, praise God for it, for it might have been far otherwise, for you might have had wearisome nights through pain and suffering.

4-5. *When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day. My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.*

Such was the dreadful disease under which this man of God labored, for the worst of pain may happen to the best of men. Sometimes God ploughs His best fields most, and why should He not do so? Do not men try to do most with that which will yield most? And so God may most chasten those who will best repay the strokes of His hand. It is no token of displeasure when God smites us with disease, it may be an evidence that we are branches of the vine that bring forth fruit, or else He would not have taken the trouble to prune us.

6. *My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and are spent without hope.*

His spirits are sunk so low that he had not any hope at all left—at least, there was none apparent just then. O you poor tried children of God, I beseech you once again to see that you are only walking where others have gone before you! Mark their footprints, and take heart again.

7-8. *O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good. The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not.*

As if God only looked at him and the very look withered him, or as if there was only time for God just to look at him, and then he disappeared as though he had been but a dream, an unsubstantial thing. It

is good, my brethren, sometimes to know what vanities we are, and if we complain that things around us are vanity, what are we ourselves but the shadows of a shade?

9-12. *As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?*

Am I such a big thing, such a dangerous thing, that I ought to be watched like this, and perpetually hampered, and tethered, and kept within bounds? Ah, no! Job, you are neither a sea nor a whale, but something worse than either of them. So are we all—more false than the treacherous sea, harder to be tamed than the wildest of God’s creatures. God does set a watch over us, and well He may. But hear Job’s complaint—

13-15. *When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint; then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions: so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.*

Were you ever in this terrible place, dear friend? Some of us have been there, and we have used the very language of Job, and yet, for all that, we have been brought up again out of the utmost depths of despondency into the topmost heights of joy. Therefore, be comforted, you poor prisoners. Through the bars and grating of your soul dungeon, we would sing unto you this song—the Lord that has brought us forth, can bring you forth also, for “the LORD looseth the prisoners.” The God of Job is yet alive, strong as ever for the deliverance of such as put their trust in Him.

16-17. *I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity. What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?*

Job seems to say, “I am too little for God to notice me, why does He make so much of me as to chasten me so sorely?”

18-19. *And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?*

Blow followed blow in quick succession. Pain came fast upon the heels of pain till Job seems to have had no rest from his anguish. This is the mournful moaning of a man on a sickbed, worn out with long continued grief. Do not judge it harshly. You may have to use such words yourself one day, and if you ever do, then judge not yourself hardly, but say, “I am only now where that eminent servant of God, the patriarch Job, once was, and the Lord who delivered him will also deliver me.”

20. *I have sinned; what have I done unto thee, O thou preserver of men?*

We did not expect him to call God by that name, yet sorrow has a quick memory to recall anything by which it may be cheered. “Thou Preserver of men,” says Job, “I have sinned: what shall I do?”

20. *Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?*

“Drawing Thy bow, and directing all Thine arrows against my poor heart. Hast Thou no butts that thou must needs make me Thy target, and test Thy holy archery upon me?”

20. *So that I am a burden to myself?*

Oh, what heavy words, “a burden to myself”!

21. *And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.*

Speaking after the manner of man, he seems to think that, if God does not pardon him soon, the pardon will come too late, for if God comes in mercy by and by, he will be dead and gone, and God may seek him, but he shall not be found. This is how men talk when they get a little off their head through the very extremity of grief. We too, may perhaps talk in the same fashion one day, so let us not condemn poor Job.

Now let us read a few verses in the third chapter of the Gospel according to John, that we may be comforted. If any of you are laboring under a sense of sin, I would take you straight away to sin’s only cure.

John Chapter 3. Verses 14-15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

“Whosoever.” Note that word, for it means you, and it means me. No matter though you are near to death’s door, crushed and broken, bruised and mangled, look to the Crucified One, and looking, you shall find that there is eternal life for you. Though your soul has been ready to choose strangling rather than your life, yet there is a better life for you by trusting in Christ. Choose that, and rest in Him. Say, from your heart, the last lines of the hymn we sang just now—

*“Jesus, to Thy arms I fly;
Save me, Lord, or else I die.”*

16-17. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

Now this, which is good teaching for those who have but lately come to Christ, or for those who are seeking to come to Him, is the very same teaching which will bring comfort to the most advanced and best instructed of the saints. How I love to continually begin with Christ over again as I began at the first! They say when a man is sick, it is a good thing to take him to his native place, and when a true believer’s soul gets faint and unbelieving, let him breathe the air of Calvary over again.

The learned Grotius, who had spent the most of his life in theological disputations—not always or yet often on the right side—when he was dying said, “Read me something,” and they read him the story of the publican and the Pharisee. He said, “And that poor publican I am, thank God, that publican I am. ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’” That was the word with which the great scholar entered into heaven, and that is the way in which you and I must come to God. May the Holy Spirit help us to come to Him thus! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—296, 606, 607

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