

PATIENT JOB, AND THE BAFFLED ENEMY

NO. 2172

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 28, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”
Job 1:22.

THAT is to say, in all this trial and under all this temptation, Job kept right with God. During all the losses of his estate and the deaths of his children he did not speak in an unworthy manner. The text speaks admiringly of “all this.” And a great “all” it was! Some of you have many troubles—but what are they compared with those of Job? Your afflictions are mole-hills contrasted with the Alps of the patriarch’s grief. “All this”! He was suddenly reduced from a peer to a pauper—from a man of great wealth to a person in absolute poverty—from a happy father to a childless mourner! Who can measure or fathom “all this”? Yet, “In all this Job sinned not.” Here was the triumph of a gracious spirit. Ah, dear friends, if God could uphold Job in all this, you may be sure that He can support *you!* Look to Him for this divine support.

“All this” also alludes to all that Job did and thought, and said. He was full to bursting with swelling grief. He shaved his head and tore his garments. And he lifted up his voice unto the Lord his God—but, “In all this Job sinned not.” He rose up, for he was a man of action, a man of a sensitive and powerful mind, a man of poetic energy who could not fail to express his emotions in striking symbols—but “In all this Job sinned not.” This is a great deal to say of a man when you see him in the extreme of trial. If in patience he can possess his soul when all the arrows of affliction are wounding him, he is a man, indeed.

May we ourselves so live that it may be said of us in the end: “In all this he sinned not. He swam through a sea of trouble. The roll of his life story is written within and without with lamentations—but in all this he did not dishonor the name of his Lord. He did and said many things—but in them all he was patient, resigned, obedient and never uttered a rebellious word.” Let us think of the wonderful case of Job in a practical way, desiring the Holy Spirit to make us like he was!

I. Our first head shall be, IN ALL OUR AFFAIRS THE MAIN THING IS NOT TO SIN. It is not said, “In all this Job was never spoken against,” for he was spoken against by Satan in the presence of himself and very soon he was falsely accused by men who should have comforted him. You must not expect, dear friend that you will pass through this world and have it said of you in the end, “In all this no one ever spoke against him.” I heard say of one man, “He was a man who never had an enemy.” I ventured to add, “Or a friend.” He has no friend who never had a foe. Those who secure zealous lovers are pretty sure to call forth intense adversaries. A man who is such a chip in the porridge that he never offends, is pretty sure to be equally flavorless in the other direction. The trimmer may dodge through the world without much censure, but it will seldom be so with an out-and-out man of God. Because he is not of the world, the world will hate him! The blessed and holy Lord Jesus was slandered to the utmost. God, the ever-blessed, was Himself libeled in Paradise, itself, by an old servant who had turned into an old serpent! Therefore you must not wonder if you are also abused! To go through life without calumny is not a thing to be expected—but it is anxiously to be desired that we may go through every phase of joy or of sorrow without falling into sin.

Neither is it a chief point for us to seek to go through life without suffering, since the Lord’s servants, the best of them, are ripened and mellowed by suffering. Amos, the herdsman, was a bruiser of sycamore figs—a kind of fig that never ripened in Palestine unless it was struck with a rod and thus was bruised. I fear there are very few of the godly who will fully ripen without affliction. The vine bears but little fruit unless it makes the acquaintance of the knife and is sternly pruned. I fear that much fruit will

seldom be forthcoming without much tribulation. A high character might be produced, I suppose, by continued prosperity, but it has very seldom been the case. Adversity, however it may appear to be our foe, is our true friend and, after a little acquaintance with it, we receive it as a precious thing, the prophecy of a coming joy. It should be no ambition of ours to traverse a smooth path without thorn or stone. Rather let us ask—

*“Shall Simon bear the cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No, there’s a cross for everyone,
And there’s a cross for me.”*

Dear friends, I think, also that it should not be our ambition to go through the world without sadness of heart. It is true that heaviness of heart is worse than bodily suffering—“A wounded spirit who can bear?” Some persons, however, seem to endure terrible trouble without much feeling. They are case-hardened, stout-hearted, thick-skinned persons—and truly I have half envied them at times and almost prayed to lose that sensitiveness which causes fear—but it would be a very doubtful blessing. We need to be tender that we may feel the slightest touch of God’s hand. “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.” The apostle says, “Though now for a season, if need be, *you are in heaviness* through manifold temptations.” Many read it as if there were a necessity for the trial and so, indeed, there is. But the necessity in the passage has reference to *being in heaviness*. If you can bear trial without ever being heavy, it is scarcely a trial to you. “The blueness of a wound cleanses away evil.” It is the ache of the ache—it is the sting of the wasp which works effectively on the heart. If we do not smart under the rod, what is the use of it to us? Therefore I would not have you ask that you may be kept from sadness of soul—but I would have you pray seven times a day from the very heart of your being, “Lord, keep me from sin.” May it be said at the last, of every one of us, that in all this we sinned not!

Remember, if the grace of God prevents our affliction from driving us into sin, then *Satan is defeated*. Satan did not care what Job suffered, so long as he could but hope to make him sin. And he was foiled when he did not sin. He must have regretted that he tried him, when he found that he could not make him sin. I think I hear the Fiend muttering, “Give him back his camels. Give him back his sheep, if by the loss of these his patience and resignation are made manifest.” If he could not extract a rebellious speech from Job, the tempter had lost all his cruel efforts—his malice had spent itself without result. If he could not make the good man sin, nor charge God foolishly, he was defeated and God was glorified! If in enduring your particular trouble, my dear friend, you do not fall into sin, you are more than a conqueror over him that hates you. The arch-enemy will fly away confounded from you if you are able to resist him while darkness covers your soul. If you conquer him in your hour of grief, you conquer, indeed! May your conflict with Apollyon be like that of Christian in “*Pilgrim’s Progress*,” and to you, also, may a monument be erected, bearing this inscription—

*“The man so bravely played the man,
He made the fiend to fly;
Whereof a monument I stand
The same to testify.”*

If you do not sin while under the stress of heavy trouble, *God will be honored*. He is not so much glorified by preserving you from trouble as by upholding you *in* trouble. He allows you to be tried that His grace in you may be tested and glorified. When one Winstanley, years ago, built a lighthouse on the Eddystone Rock, he said that he was sure that it would stand any storm that ever blew and he should himself like to be in it in the fiercest tempest that ever drove adown the Channel. It came to pass that he *was* in his own lighthouse one night and there came a tremendous blast which swept him and his lighthouse clean away so that he was never heard of again. He courted trial because he believed in his work—God permits trial because He knows that His wisdom and divine grace have made us able to bear it. The lighthouse which was afterwards built on the Eddystone has had all manner of storms beating upon it but it has outlived them all, and therefore its builder’s name is held in honor. Even thus our God is glorified in every trial of His saints when their grace enables them to endure with patience. “There,”

says He, “see what grace can do, what suffering it can endure, what labors it can perform!” Grace is like an athlete performing before the great King and His heavenly court. A cloud of witnesses look down upon the feats of faith and note with joy how it achieves everything which the Lord appoints it to perform. It even enters into contest with Satan, the fiend of hell, and gives him a signal overthrow—and He that made the athlete and trained him for the contest is honored thereby. If you do not sin in your trouble, your endurance of trial will bring glory to God!

Remember, furthermore, that if you do not sin, *you yourself will be no loser by all your tribulations*. Sin alone can injure you. But if you remain steadfast, though you are stripped, you will be clothed with glory! Though you are deprived of comfort, you will lose no real blessing. True, it may not seem a pleasant thing to be stripped and yet if one is soon going to bed it is of no great consequence. It is no easy thing to part with wealth—but if thereby you are unburdened—the loss is a gain. A child of God may have the knife sharply cutting him, but if it only removes the superfluous wood, it may be of the utmost benefit to the fruitage of the tree—and that is the main thing. If the metal in the pot loses none of its gold, all that it does lose is well lost and is, indeed, really gained. Though you are reduced in circumstances, what does it matter if you are enlarged in spirit? Though you are sick in body, what does it matter if your soul’s health is furthered? To sin would be terrible—to abide in holiness is triumph! In all our affliction may there be no defection. The Lord may send us a ton of trouble, but this will be better than an ounce of sin! Do not let all your prayer run after deliverance from sorrow, but first of all pray, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” Seek first the kingdom of God and obedience to Him, and then deliverance shall be added unto you. We are permitted to say, “Lord, keep us from trouble,” but we are *commanded* to pray, “Deliver us from the evil one.” Should trials come to us, even like those which happened to Job, it shall be well with our souls if our hearts are not drawn or driven into sin.

II. And, now, a second thought arises out of the text. **IN ALL TIME OF TRIAL THERE IS SPECIAL FEAR OF OUR SINNING.** It is well for the child of God to remember that the hour of darkness is an hour of danger. Suffering is fruitful soil for certain forms of sin. Hence it was necessary for the Holy Spirit to give a testimony to Job that, “In all this he sinned not.” It looked as if he *must* sin but yet he did not sin—and this is recorded by inspiration as a memorable fact. He still held fast his integrity and bowed before the will of the Lord. Dear friends, if you are approaching a season of trouble, watch and pray that in entering upon trial you may not also enter upon sinning. Many have sorely grieved their God by what they have said and done in the hour of sorrow.

For instance, we are apt to *grow impatient*. We murmur against the Lord. We think our trial is too long, or that prayer is not answered when it ought to be. If God is faithful, why does He not hasten to deliver His child? In the olden time He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind—why are His chariots now so long in coming? The feet of His mercy seem shod with lead. Petulance and complaining are sins which easily beset those who are severely tried. Men are apt to have bitter thoughts of God when He puts His hand into the bitter box and brings out the quinine of sorrow. Of the two sexes, women usually carry the prize for patience, especially in bodily sickness. As for us, who are made of rougher stuff, it is to our shame that we are, as a rule, very impatient of pain. We do not so much lose our patience as show that we have none! Job, under his first set of trials was not swift to complain, for you have heard of the patience of Job which the Holy Spirit takes care to mention in the New Testament.

We are even tempted to *rebellion* against God. I have met with cases in which rebellious words have been uttered and even spoken again and again. One said in my hearing, “God has taken away my mother and I shall never forgive Him. I can never think of Him as a God of love as once I did.” Such words will cause a child of God more pain than the loss, itself, would have occasioned. I heard one say of his dying child, whom I was called in to visit, that he could not believe that God would be so unjust as to take his daughter from him. Indeed, he spoke so rebelliously that I, with all gentleness, but with deep solemnity of soul, admonished him that I feared the Lord would visit him for such proud speeches. It was clear that his child would soon die and I feared that he would die himself, when the shock came, because he so stoutly quarreled with the Lord. I said to myself, “A child of God cannot speak in this way about his

Father without coming under further chastisement.” It came to pass as I expected and he, himself, was laid low. Grieved as I was, I was by no means surprised. How can we rebel against God and hope to prosper in that rebellion? With the stubborn He will show Himself stubborn and we shall find out what a world of misery *that* will bring us! Oh, for divine grace not only to yield because we must, but because we trust! May we say, “It is the Lord—let Him do what seems good to Him”! Before that temptation Job did not fall, for in this respect he sinned not.

We may also sin by *despair*. An afflicted one said, “I shall never look up again. I shall go mourning all my days.” Dear friend, why not be cheerful again? Are God’s mercies clean gone forever? You are bid to believe *always*. “Who is among you that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” In the dark is the place for trust, not for despair! A child that is sullen will probably make for himself 10 times more misery than the rod, itself, would cause him. Who dares despair while God bids him trust? Come, if you are as poor as Job, be as patient as Job and you will find hope ever shining like a star which never sets.

Many sin by *unbelieving speeches*. I have repeated one or two naughty things that God’s children have said, but Job said nothing of the kind. He bravely said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Men have been driven into *a kind of atheism* by successive troubles. They have wickedly argued—“There cannot be a God, or He would not let me suffer so.” Beloved, you must not speak as the foolish do—and such speech is sheer folly. Your mouth would be greatly defiled if you were thus to vex the Holy Spirit. Has the Lord saved you and will you speak against Him? I have no time to say more where so much might be added. The Lord preserve us in trying times from sinning either with heart, or hands, or lips.

III. Notice, thirdly, that IN ACTS OF MOURNING WE NEED NOT SIN. Listen—you are allowed to weep. You are allowed to show that you suffer by your losses. See what Job did. “Job arose and tore his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped.” And “in all this Job sinned not.” The mother wept much over her child and yet she may not have sinned—a mother’s grief and a mother’s love are sacred things. When a dear child is mourned over, those may have been not only perfectly natural tears, but even holy tears. The husband lamented sorely when his beloved was taken from him. He was right. I should have thought far less of him if he had not done so. “Jesus wept.”

But there is a measure in the expression of grief. Job was not wrong in tearing his garment—he might have been wrong if he had torn it into shreds. He was not wrong in shaving his head—he would have erred had he torn out his hair, as some have done whom despair has turned into maniacs. He deliberately took the razor and shaved his head—and in this he sinned not. You may wear mourning—saints did so in other times. You may weep, for it may, perhaps, be a relaxing of your strained emotions. Do not restrain the boiling floods. A flood of tears without may assuage the deluge of grief within. Job’s acts of mourning were moderate and seemly—toned down by his faith. I wish that Christians did not so often follow the way of the world at their funerals, but would try to make it clear that they sorrow not even as others that are without hope. You may wear black as long as it does not become the ensign of rebellion against the will of the Lord.

Job’s words, also, though very strong, were very true—“Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return.” If we say no more than the truth, we may say it if the tone is not that of murmuring, although, perhaps sometimes it might be better to be altogether silent, like Aaron, who held his peace. David said, “I opened not my mouth; because You did it.” If we cannot maintain a golden silence, yet let our speech be silver—we must use nothing less than precious metal.

Job mourned and yet did not sin, for he mourned and *worshipped* as he mourned. This is what I commend to you who are mourning at this time. If you must fall on the ground, worship there before the Lord! If your heart is bowed down, emulate the holy ones who fall on their faces and worship God! I believe that some of the truest, purest, sweetest and strongest devotion has come to God from hearts that were breaking with grief. Remember, then, that in acts of mourning there is not, of necessity, any sin.

IV. But, fourthly, IN CHARGING GOD FOOLISHLY WE SIN GREATLY. “Job sinned not” and the phrase which explains it is, “nor charged God foolishly.” Here let me say that *to call God to our judgment seat at all is a high crime and felony!* “No, but, O man, who are you that replies against God?” Woe unto him that contends with his Maker! The Lord is absolutely sovereign and He gives no account of His matters. We are usurping fools when we pretend to sit in judgment upon the Judge of all the earth!

In the next place, *we sin in requiring that we should understand God.* What? Is God under bonds to explain Himself to us? Do we threaten to revolt unless He will put Himself right with us? Blessed be His name, He is inscrutable and I am glad to have Him so! Do you want your God to explain His dispensations? Are you not content to believe Him? The demand for explanation is unbelief! This is, indeed, making yourselves to be wiser than God! Let us bow before Him without a question. He is Jehovah and that ends the matter! He would have His children feel that what He wills is always best. Bow before God and prostrate your desires and thoughts and judgment before His throne. What He does is wise and true and kind—and of this we are sure. We can very easily charge God foolishly, but we had better not charge Him at all, for who are we that we should call the eternal to account?

We charge God foolishly *when we imagine that He is unjust.* “Ah!” said one, “When I was a worldling I prospered. But ever since I have been a Christian I have endured no end of losses and troubles.” Do you mean to insinuate that the Lord does not treat you justly? Think a minute and stand corrected. If the Lord were to deal with you according to strict justice, where would you be? If He were now to call you to account for your sins and lay bare the naked sword of justice, what would become of you? You would be at once in despair and very soon in hell! Never charge upon the Lord a failure of justice, for this is to sin with a vengeance.

Some, however, *will bring foolish charges against His love.* “How can He be a God of love if He permits me to suffer so?” You forget that word—“As many as I tenderly love,” (for that is the Greek word), “I rebuke and chasten.” The more the Lord loves you, the more surely He will rebuke any and every evil that He sees in you! You are so precious to Him that He desires to make you perfect in every good work to do His will. God prizes you much, my sister, or you would not have to be so often ground upon the wheel to take away all your warts and make the jewel of your soul to shine. “Oh,” said a worldling to me when I was in great pain and weakness of body, “is this the way God treats His children? Then I am glad I am not one.” How my heart burned within me and my eyes flashed as I said that I would take an eternity of such pain as I endured sooner than stand in the place of the man who preferred ease to God. I felt it would be hell to me to have a doubt of my adoption and whatever pain I might suffer was a trifle so long as I knew that the Lord was my God. Every child of God under such a taunt would feel exceedingly jealous for the honor of his Lord. Beloved, we are willing to take the divine love with every possible drawback that can be concerned—for the love of our Father is a weight of glory—and all the sorrows of time are but “light afflictions” and they last but for a moment. How sweet to hear the Lord say—

***“In love I correct you your gold to refine;
To make you, at length, in My likeness to shine”!***

Alas, at times, unbelief charges God foolishly with reference to His power! We think that He cannot help us in some peculiar trial. Throw to the winds such fears—they are unworthy of us and dishonoring to our Lord! Is anything too hard for the Lord? Through flood and fire He will bring us in safely.

We may be so foolish as to doubt *His wisdom.* If He is All-Wise, how can He suffer us to be in such straits and to sink as low as we do? What folly is this? Who are you, that you would measure the wisdom of God? Shall an owl begin to compute the light of the sun? Or an ant estimate the eternal hills? Shall some tiny animalcules, sporting with myriads of others in a drop of water, begin to trace the bounds of the sea? What are you? Who are you, that you should set your judgment against that of the Lord God Almighty? Less than nothing, will you censure the infinite? A worm of the dust, will you arraign the mighty God? Be this far from you! Job did not so, for he sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

V. Lastly—as I must close in haste—TO COME THROUGH GREAT TRIAL WITHOUT SIN IS THE HONOR OF THE SAINTS. If we are tried and come forth from it naked as when we were born, we need not be ashamed. And if we come out of it without sinning, then the greatness of the affliction increases the honor of our victory. “In all this Job sinned not”—the, “all this,” is a part of the glory with which grace covered him.

Suppose that your life was all ease. Suppose that you were brought up tenderly from a child. Suppose that you were well educated, left with a sufficient fortune to gratify every wish and happily married. Suppose that you were free from sickness, lifted above care, grinding labor and heavy sorrow—what then? Assuredly you could never be noted for patience! Who would ever have heard of Job if he had not been tried? None would have said of him, “In all this Job sinned not.” Only by his patience could he be perfected and immortalized! Suppose that your record should be—from birth a sufferer, throughout life a struggler. At home a wrestler and abroad a soldier and a cross-bearer—and, notwithstanding all this, full of joy and peace, through strong believing—tried to the uttermost, yet found faithful. In such a chronicle there is something worth remembering! There is no glory in being a feather-bed soldier, a man bedecked with gorgeous regimentals, but never beautified by a scar, or ennobled by a wound. All that you ever hear of such a soldier is that his spurs jingle on the pavement as he walks. There is no history for this carpet-knight. He is just a dandy. He never smelled gunpowder in his life, or if he did, he fetched out his scent-bottle to kill the offensive odor. Well, that will not make much show in the story of the nations. If we could have our choice and we were as wise as the Lord Himself, we should choose the troubles which He has appointed us and we should not spare ourselves a single pang. Who wants to paddle about a duck pond all his life? No, Lord, if You will bid me go upon the waters, let me launch out into the deep! Those who are uplifted to the heavens by the billows and then go down again to the deeps as ocean yawns—these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep! Discomforts and dangers make men of us and then we deal no more with childish things, but with eternal matters! If we had no troubles, we should in the end be dumb for lack of themes to speak upon—but now we are storing up incidents worth the telling to our brothers and sisters when we join the family circle before the throne! Tried souls can tell of the infinite mercy and love of God, who helped them, and delivered them! Give me an interesting life, after all, and if it is to be an interesting life, then it must be one that has its full share of trouble as Job’s had! Then shall it be heaven to hear the verdict of the great Judge—“In all this My servant sinned not.”

The honor of a Christian, or, let me say, the honor of God’s divine grace in a Christian, is when we have so acted that we have obeyed in detail, not forgetting any point of duty. “In all this Job sinned not,” neither in what he *thought*, or *said*, or *did*—nor even in what he did *not* say, and did *not* do—“In all this Job sinned not.” We are apt to purpose that we will shut ourselves up in our own room and never go out into the world again, or attempt to speak or act any more. Surely, that would be a great blank and a blot upon our lives. No! No! No! We must not say, “I will speak no more in the name of the Lord.” Go on speaking! Go on acting! Go on suffering! Breast the wave, Christian! Swim to the other shore and may God’s infinite mercy be seen in bringing you there! Crowd your life with action and adorn it with patience, so that it shall be said, “In all this he sinned not.” God grant us a detailed obedience, a following of the Lord fully, a perfect working out of the minute points of service!

I feel that I must add just this. As I read the verse through, it looked too dry for me and so I wet it with a tear. “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly,” and yet I, who have suffered so little, have often sinned and, I fear, in times of anguish, have charged God foolishly. Dear friends, is not this true of some of you? If so, let your tears follow mine. But yet the tear will not wash out the sin! Fly to the fountain filled with blood and wash there from sins of impatience, sins of petulance, sins of rebellion, and sins of unbelief! These are real sins and they must be washed away in the blood of the Lamb. Oh, how dear that fountain is to us! How dear to you who have often to lie in bed and suffer—for you still sin! How dear to us who have health and strength to serve God, for we see sin in our holy things and we need to be purged from its defilement! You that go into business every day and mix up

with all sorts of persons, how much you have need of daily washing! Come, beloved, let us go together and say, “Lord, forgive us.”

I should like to say a little to some of you who are not God’s people. Suppose I were to sum up your lives and wrote it out in this fashion: “Was fond of gaiety; spent many days in frivolous amusement; was sometimes drunk; occasionally would use profane language,” and so on? How falsely should I speak if I were to say, “In all this he sinned not”! Why, in all this you have done nothing else *but* sin! God has loaded your tables, clothed your backs, kept you in health and prolonged your lives—and in all this you have done nothing else but sin and act foolishly towards God! I want you to come, then, to that same fountain of which I spoke, and cry tonight, “Wash me, Savior, or I die.” You have been the very opposite of Job. You have sinned in all your comforts and your mercies, and have never shown due gratitude to the blessed God! You have only done evil against Him! The Lord bring us all to His feet and then may He help us in all future troubles to stand firm and not to sin. I know that some of you are entering upon fierce trials. You have the prospect of it on your minds, tonight, and sitting here you feel depressed about it. Do not begin to despond, but be doubly diligent in prayer! Be more concerned to be kept from sinning than from suffering and pray daily, “Lord, if You will lead me by this rough road, yet keep my feet that I stumble not, and preserve me even to the end with garments unspotted from the world! I will ask no more of You but this one thing. Holy Father, keep me as a dear child, obeying and serving You with all my heart, soul and strength, till I go up higher to dwell with You forever!” May the Lord hear you all in the day of trouble and preserve you to life’s last hour, without spot and blameless! Then shall He be glorified in you and you shall have joy. Amen, and Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job 1.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—758, 744.**

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