

LONGING TO FIND GOD

NO. 2272

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1892
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Oh that I knew where I might find him!”
Job 23:3

“OH that I knew where I might find *him!*” Observe that Job is so taken up with his one great desire, that he forgets that everybody else is not thinking in the same way, and he uses a pronoun, though he has not before uttered the name of God. The man is carried away with his desire. He does not say, “Oh that I knew where I might find God!” but “where I might find *him.*” An overwhelming passion will often speak like that.

See how the Song of Songs, that sweet canticle of love, begins, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.” There is no mention of any person’s name. We forget many things when we are taken up with one thing. We forget that, as Madame Guyon wrote—

“All hearts are cold, in every place”

and when our heart grows warm, we fancy that all other hearts are warm too.

Remember how Mary Magdalene, when she met our Lord on the resurrection morning, and “supposing him to be the gardener,” said to Him, “Sir, if thou have borne *him* hence, tell me where thou hast laid *him*, and I will take *him* away.” Nay, but Mary, you have not mentioned the name of the Person. You begin, “If thou have borne *him* hence.” How should another know of whom you speak? This is the way of a concentrated individuality. When it is set, desperately set, upon some one object, it forgets to whom it speaks, it only remembers the beloved one upon whom its affections are fixed.

Now, this is one reason why the man who is earnestly seeking after God is often misunderstood. He does not speak as one would speak who is cool and calm. His heart is hot within him, and his words are fire-flakes, so that those about him say, “The man is mad. He is not sober as he used to be, he is going out of his mind.” I would to God that many were so mad that they cried in the depths of their soul, “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” for if God knows whom you are seeking, it is of small consequence whether your fellow creatures know or do not know. If He accepts you, do not be cast down if men misunderstand you.

Thus you see, Job’s longing was all-absorbing, it was also personal, he longed to personally find God. I know many people who have great longings, but they are for things that are trivial compared with the longing of Job. Job does not sigh to comprehend the incomprehensible. He does not wish to find out the divine decree. He does not trouble about where free agency and predestination meet. He does not desire to know out of mere curiosity, or for the attainment of barren knowledge, but his cry is, “Oh that I knew where I might find him! Oh that I could get at God! Oh that I could have dealings with the Most High! Oh that I could feel at perfect peace with Him, and rest in Him, and be happy in the light of His countenance!”

Now, some of you perhaps in years gone by, were very curious and anxious about various theological questions, the time was when you would have disputed with almost anyone who came along, but you have given all that up, and now you want to find God and to be reconciled to Him. You want to know from God’s own lips that there is peace between you, and that He loves you, and will never cease

to love you. You have been perhaps for weeks trying to find a way of access to God, and though there is such a way, and it is close to you, you have not yet perceived it. This one thing occupies your mind, not that you may know about God, or split hairs about doctrinal theories concerning Him, but that you may find HIM.

I would to God it were the case with everyone in this congregation, that you either had Him or were sighing and crying after Him. This is not a point upon which any man can afford to be neutral. We must find God, for if we do not, we are ourselves lost.

On further reading the text, I feel still more pleased with Job's determination about getting to God. He says, "Oh, that I knew *where* I might find him!" He does not make any condition as to where he might find God. If it were in heaven, he would try to scale its heights. If it were in the abyss, he would hopefully plunge into the deep. If God be far away, at the uttermost ends of the earth, Job is willing to go there. If God is to be found in His temple, or for the matter of that, in the lowest dungeon, Job only wants to know where he may find Him, and if he may find Him, he will not make any conditions as to where it may be.

We noticed in our reading that Job said, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his *seat!*" He was willing to come even to God's judgement seat if he could not find Him anywhere else.

It will be a great mercy for you if you are so anxious to find God that you will not set any bounds as to where you shall find Him. You would be glad to find Him at your usual place of worship, but you would be just as glad to find Him in the midst of quite another people. You would be thankful to find Him in your own chamber when you bow your knee in prayer, but you would be quite as pleased to find Him in the midst of your business. You would rejoice to find Him whether it was in the heat of noontide, or in the cool of midnight. Your cry is, "Only let me find Him, and time and place shall be of no consequence to me."

With regard to instrumentalities also, you would be pleased to be converted to God by a learned and eloquent minister, but you would be quite as willing to find Christ by means of the most illiterate. You will be quite content with the man against whom you have been prejudiced, if God will but bless him to you. Ay, though it were your own servant girl, or some boy in the street, if they could but tell you the way of salvation so that you could find God, you would be perfectly satisfied! I know you would, for you put in no "ifs" or "buts" or conditions. Your one cry is, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

You are absorbed with that one desire, your whole soul is possessed by that one earnest longing to find God. This desire is intensely personal and practical, and it inspires you with the full determination that, at all costs and all hazards, if you can but find out where God is, you will come to Him.

Now, I am going to talk about this desire to find God. I have had it from one or two here present who are deeply anxious, that this is the cry of their spirit day and night, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" In trying to meet their case, our first inquiry will be, *What sort of desire is this?*—the desire that makes a man, or a woman, or a child cry out, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" And secondly, *What is the answer to it?* How can they find God? And thirdly, *Why are some so long in finding God?*

I. Our first question concerning this longing to find God is, WHAT SORT OF DESIRE IS THIS?

I answer, first, that *it takes many forms* according to the circumstances of the person who has the desire. In Job's case, it was a somewhat hazardous desire to come before the court of God to have his righteousness established. I have no doubt that in bitterness of soul, many a sincere man, when maligned and lampooned, has wished that he could turn to God and have the matter judged by Him. "Thou knowest," says he, "that I am not wicked, I have not been false, I have not been treacherous. Let the case against me be tried by the great Judge of all who is righteous and impartial. 'Oh that I knew where I might find him!'"

But the desire is better and more usual on the part of children of God when they have lost the light of His countenance. Beloved, the model Christian is the man who always walks in the light, as God is in the light. But how few there are of these comparatively! Many, I half fear the most of us, are at times in

the dark. We wander, we lose our first love, we grow lukewarm, and then God hides His face. Many and many a true child of God has sighed out of the depth of his spirit, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

Are any of you less happy than you used to be? Are you less holy than you used to be? Are you less in prayer than in former years? Have you less tenderness of conscience? Have you less joy in the Lord? Are you doing less for Jesus, and are you more content with the little that you do? Are you going back? Well then, if God has not hidden His face from you, in all probability He will, and then, when you are in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, you will be like the fainting hart that panteth for the brooks, and you will cry out after God.

If you do not, it will be a damning mark. If you can live without your God, you who profess to be a child of God, it will look as if you never were His child. God has spoiled some of us for the world. It is never a matter of self-denial to us to give up its pleasures, for we have no taste for them. If we do not find joy in God, we are of all men most miserable. The brooks and cisterns are dry, and if the smitten rock does not yield us water, we thirst, we faint, we die.

But beloved, I want to dwell mainly upon this cry as coming from the convicted sinner who has not yet rejoiced in God. He has a burden pressing heavily upon him, and he knows that he can never get rid of it except through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and he wants to get rid of it. So it has come to this, that day and night he says, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" I like this form of the desire best of all, and I would willingly spend and be spent that I might encourage and help any who are thus seeking God as their Savior.

Let me say this to any such who are here. *This desire is quite contrary to the desire of nature.* You feel yourself lost and yet this cry comes to your tongue, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" My dear friend, this is not a natural desire. When you were satisfied with the world, you never had this desire. Time was when it never crossed your soul for a moment.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they did not want to find God, they hid themselves among the trees of the garden. And you, while you love sin, do not want to find God. You are like Jonah, you would willingly take ship and flee from God's presence, even to Tarshish. No, the natural man, without the Holy Spirit, never said, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" I should like you to get just a ray of the light, not more, out of that remark. That ray of light might cheer you while we proceed.

I think that *this desire never comes except by grace.* It never takes full possession of any man unless it is wrought in him by the grace of God. There may be a transient desire, but it is no more a sign of spiritual health than is the hectic flush of consumption a proof that the poor patient possesses vigorous physical strength. In the excitement of a revival meeting, you may say, "I wish I were a Christian," but to carry this desire about with you, to have it always within you as a deep ground-swell of your soul, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"—this is the work of the Holy Ghost.

I trust that we have many here who feel these first pangs of the new birth, for where God begins with us by working in us this desire, He will in due time gratify it. If He gives us hunger, He gives us bread to satisfy its cravings. If He gives us a desire for Himself, He gives us Himself to satisfy that desire.

Then it is sweet to think that *this desire is met by the seeking of the Savior.* The desire of a man after God is paralleled by Christ's desire after him. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Now, when a sheep begins to seek its shepherd, and at the same time the shepherd is seeking it, it cannot be long before the two meet.

I read to you last Thursday night, a letter from a poor soul, a harlot, who had come in here on the Sabbath morning, and God had met with her. You know how easy it is to make up such a letter with the idea of asking for charity, but there was no name to this note, and it contained no request for charity. It was a true letter. There was one part of it that I commend to you. The writer said, "Before you receive this letter, I shall be home at my father's house, from which I wickedly ran away." Ah, there is the point, that going home, that getting back to the father!

Now, I have no doubt that the father had sought his girl, but when the girl began to seek him, there would be a meeting very soon.

If there is a soul here that wants Christ, Christ wants you. If you were sitting now upon Samaria's well, He would come and sit by you, and He would say to you, "Give me to drink," for you alone can assuage the Savior's thirst, the thirst to save, the thirst to forgive, the thirst to bring wanderers home to the great Father's house. Oh, friend, if this cry be your cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" I can see much to comfort you in the thought that while you are seeking the Lord, He is also seeking you.

But let me add that *it will be well if this desire never gets satisfied except by God*, for there are so many who do not seek till they find Him. A friend writing to me says, "You have taken away from me all my comfort, you have destroyed my self-righteousness, you have left me in a dreadful condition through the Word of God which you have preached to me. I used to go to early celebrations. I was at church three times a day. I thought that I took the very body and blood of Christ in the holy Eucharist. I had rested in my works, and now the whole structure is gone. I can rest in none of those things any more. My one cry is (and please to sing tonight that hymn that ends)—

"Give me Christ, or else I die!"

My dear friend, your letter gave me great delight. I was glad to give out that hymn, but I pray you do not get content till you find God, for you can come here you know, and you may even succeed in deceiving us so that you may be baptized, and join the church, and take communion, and you may rest in all that without saving faith in Christ, and you will not be an inch nearer to God than you were when you rested in the ceremonies of your former church.

It is only God who can save you, only God in Christ who can give true rest to your soul. Men may change their churches, and only change their refuge of lies, but if they come to Christ, whatever church they are in, if they have found Him, and are trusting in Him, and in Him alone, their peace will be like a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea.

God bless any here who are opening their mouths and panting with this strong desire, but do be sure that you are never comforted till Jesus comforts you! Never be fed except with the bread of heaven. Never rest until you find rest in Him whom God has appointed to be our rest, or else you will make a blunder, a fatal blunder after all.

II. Our second question, concerning this desire, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" is, WHAT IS THE ANSWER?

Well, in the first place, there is something in the desire itself that gives you comfort, for *God is near you now*. If you want God, He is everywhere, He is here, He is nearer to you than your hands and feet, nearer to you than your eye or your nerve. He is within you and round about you. You might ask with the psalmist, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" and find that task to be impossible, but if you really wish to find God, you may readily do so. He is here, you have not to pray at Jerusalem, nor at Mount Gerizim.

***"Where'er we seek Him, He is found,
And every place is hallowed ground."***

Believe it and speak to Him now, show Him your heart now, appeal to Him now, for He is truly near you at this moment.

But you wish to lay hold upon Him. Then remember that *God is apprehended only by faith*. Eyes are of no use in this case, you cannot see a Spirit. Ears are of no use in this case, you cannot hear a Spirit. Your senses may be put aside now, the new senses, the new eye, the new ear, is faith. If you believe, you shall see, and you shall hear.

Come, deal with God who is near you now, by faith. Believe that He is near you, speak to Him, gladly trust Him. Faith will apprehend all of God that can be apprehended, and out of faith shall come

many other blessed things that will make you still more familiar with your God. But now, even now, put out the arms of an inward faith and say, "I believe Thee." Faith comprehends the Incomprehensible, and takes the Infinite within itself.

But still, if what you mean is, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, in the sense of calling Him my own, and having a joyful belief in His love!" well then, I would say to you, *if you want to find Him, search His Word*. If you will read the Bible with the steady resolve to find God in Christ within its pages, I am morally certain that you will not have to read it long. There is here a holy magnetism, which if a man comes in contact with these sacred words, shall begin to operate upon him. If you will take the Book, and search it through to learn how God is to be found, you will find Him.

Then, in connection with the Word written, *go and hear the Word spoken*, for there are minds that are more affected by speech than by what they read. If you will only hear attentively a faithful Gospel minister, it will not be long before you find God. If you go to hear a man merely because he is clever, or one who will tell you stories and interest you, you may never get any good out of him. But if you go saying, "I want to find Christ during this service, I want to lay hold on God to my soul's eternal salvation," I do not think that you will long frequent some places of worship that I could mention without saying, "I have found God."

Next to that, if you do not seem to profit by the reading and hearing of the Word, *seek the Lord in prayer*. Get you to your chamber, there cry unto your God, and cease not your cry, for if you will seek Him as for silver, and search for Him as for hidden treasure, you shall surely find Him. Prayer has a wonderful effect on God. He turns at the cry that comes from the heart. He is sure to look to the man who cries to Him for mercy.

And at the same time that you are in prayer, or in connection with it, *meditate on divine things*. Especially meditate on the person of Christ, God and Man, on the work of Christ, especially His atoning sacrifice. Meditate on the promises; meditate on God's wonders of grace recorded in this delightful Book. Think and pray, and then think and pray again, and my impression is that you will not long have to say, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

Yet there is one more word for you. If you would find God, *He is to be found in Christ Jesus*, "reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Do you know the Man Christ Jesus? Can you by faith see Him? Fall at His feet, accept Him as your Savior, trust Him as the Giver and Forgiver, as saving from death and imparting life. Come and take Christ, and you have found God.

No man believes in Christ and remains without the favor of God. Oh, that you would believe in Christ now! This morning I preached about His incarnation, Immanuel, God with us. Think much on this. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." God came here among men, and took the form of a mortal creature, and here lived and died. Think of that, and believe in Him who is God and Man.

Then think much of His life, of the many that He healed, the sick ones that He relieved, the sinful that came to hear Him, to whom He spoke only words of love. Look through the life of Christ, and I am persuaded that if you are willing to do so, you will find among those who came to Him a case parallel to your own, and will find Him dealing with it in love and mercy, and while you are perusing that wondrous life of love, you will find God. But if it be not so, go a little further.

***"Go to dark Gethsemane,
Ye that feel the tempter's power."***

Stand amid the shade of the olives, hear the Son of God groaning out His very soul, His sweat, as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground. He pleaded there for sinners, for the guilty. Follow Him to Pilate's Hall, see Him scourged and spat upon, and go at length, to Calvary, and sit down there in meditation, and mark the wounds in His blessed body, those sacred founts of blood.

See His emaciated frame exposed before the sun to the gaze of cruel men. Watch Him till you hear Him cry, "It is finished." Then see the soldier set His heart abroad, for even after death, His heart for us its tribute poured, and then, as you do remember that He made the heavens and the earth, and yet did hang upon that tree for the guilty, believe you, and trust Him.

"Oh!" says one, "I cannot believe." Now it is a curious thing that when I have met with persons who find it difficult to believe, I have often been obliged to say to them, "Well now, there is a strange difference between you and me, for you cannot believe, and I cannot disbelieve." That is to say, when I see Christ, the Son of God, dying for guilty men, I cannot make myself disbelieve. It seems to me to flash its own evidence upon my soul, and I am convinced by the sight I see.

How is it that you cannot believe when the Almighty God is one with His sinful creatures, and dies to save them from eternal death? "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." When you see that marvel of marvels, how can you disbelieve? I charge you, by the living God, look to Jesus on the cross, as Israel in the wilderness, bitten by the serpents, looked to the bronze serpent, and by that look lived.

I think this is the way to find God, that is, to come to Christ, for remember that He is not dead. He is risen. Where is the Christ now? He is at the right hand of God. He makes intercession for us, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell among them. Do you believe that Christ makes intercession for sinners? Then trust yourself with Him, first as your Redeemer, and now as your Intercessor, and so, by a simple trust, you shall find your God and no more say, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!"

III. I have finished my discourse when I have very briefly answered the third question, WHY ARE SOME SO LONG IN FINDING GOD?

I answer, partly because *they are not clear as to what they are seeking*. If you want to find God, well, here He is. You yourself know that He is everywhere, so that you have found Him. But what I fear some of you want is some kind of mark, some sign, some feeling. Now, that is not seeking God, you are seeking something in addition to God. I am sure that in the hour of trial, nothing will stand a man in good stead but simple faith in God by Jesus Christ. "Oh!" says one, "I read of a man the other day, who was under most wonderful conviction, and of another who had a very remarkable dream, and of another who heard a voice speaking to him."

Yes, yes, and all these pretty things are very well when you have faith in Christ. But if you do not trust yourself to Christ, these things are not worth a penny, for some day you will say to yourself, "How do I know that I did hear that voice? Might I not have been deceived? How can I be sure that that dream meant anything? May I not have eaten something for supper that made me dream it? And that joy that I felt may have been all a delusion."

But if you want God without any of these things, you want exactly what you do need, and I pray you to come and take it by faith in Jesus. Here am I, a guilty sinner, that I know and confess. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that I know by the witness of this Book. I am told that if I trust Him, I am saved. I do trust Him, I will not ask for a dream, or a vision, or a voice, or anything. Why should I? Beggars must not be choosers.

If God gives me His salvation as He gives it to anybody else, I am perfectly happy, even though I have no striking story to tell, and shall never point a moral or adorn a tale with any anecdote about myself. I am afraid however, that many are not wanting God so much as wanting the odds and ends that sometimes go with Him.

Again, there are some who are crying after God, who are *hankering after their own idols*. Ah, me! you would like to keep some of your self-righteousness, or some of your sins. One of our friends, coming up from the Norfolk Broads, told me that when the time came to row home, he began pulling away at the oars and he thought that it was a very long way, and that the scenery was very monotonous, with the same old willow tree and everything the same as when he started, and someone going by said, "I suppose you know old fellow, that you have got your anchor down." That is exactly what he had forgotten, and he was rowing with his anchor still down.

You will not find God that way if you have an anchor still down. I do not know what your anchor is, perhaps it is the wine cup, you still take that drop too much. Perhaps it is an evil woman. Perhaps it is some trick in trade that you have been used to. Perhaps it is some secret sin that cannot be told. You cannot find God while you keep that. Achan, how can God come to your tent, unless it is for judgment, while the Babylonian garment is hidden in the ground? Away with the idols, and then shall you find the true God.

And yet again, there are some who are *waiting to feel their need more*, and they think that they cannot come to Christ till they feel more than they do at present. Now again I must get you to alter your cry. I thought that your cry was, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" But now your cry is, "Oh that I knew that I really needed Him!" Have you not had enough of that experience? Time was with me when I thought too much of it. I believe a deep ploughing does us good, but if a man is always ploughing and never sows anything, he will never have a harvest.

Some of you are looking too much to your sense of need. You are not saved by your sense of need, you are saved by the supply of that need. Come as you are. "I have not a broken heart," says one. Come to Christ for a broken heart. "I have not a tender conscience," says another. Come to Christ for a tender conscience. You are not to get half the work done yourself, and then come to Christ to have it finished. Come as you are, just as you are, hard heart and all. Come along with you, and trust yourself to Jesus, and you shall find God.

I am afraid that there are a great many also who are *clouded in their minds by the great sorrow through which they have passed*, for you can be so distressed and distracted that you do not judge clearly. You remember Hagar when the water in her bottle was spent, and her boy was dying of thirst? Just there, close behind her, was a well of water. The angel said to her, "What aileth thee, Hagar?" And we read, "God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water." Some of you have salvation at your fingertips, but you do not know it. You have it in your mouth, as Paul says, and you do not know it, or else you would swallow it down, and live by it at once.

Salvation is not up there in the heights, or down here in the deeps. The apostle puts it thus, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

So runs the Gospel. Look for no other way. Believe. I said not, "Feel," but "Believe!" Dream not, dote not, imagine not, but believe, say with thine heart, "I believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I trust Him to save me.

*"Tis done, the great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine"*

Now you shall begin a new life of obedience and holiness, wrought in you as the result of your having believed in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be the propitiation for sin. Will you have Christ or not, sinner? If you will not have Him, you must perish, if you will have Him, He gives Himself freely to you, and nothing is freer than a gift. Take Him, and go your way happy as the angels. God bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOB 23

Job is in great physical pain through the sore boils that cover him from head to foot, he is still smarting under all the bereavements and losses he has sustained, and he is somewhat irritated by the hard speeches of his friends. We read in the second chapter of this book, that "they had made an

appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.” “Job’s comforters,” even to this day, are regarded as those whose room is preferred to their company.

As the result of all the trials through which Job was called to pass, there is in this chapter, somewhat of bitterness. We need not wonder at it, the wonder is that there is not more. You ought, in estimating a man’s actions or words, to judge of his circumstances at the time. Do not take Job’s words by themselves, but consider in what condition he was, think what you would have done if you had been in his place, and you will not censure him, as you might otherwise have done.

Verses 1-2. *Then Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.*

He could not express all his pain. He felt that he did not complain too much. His stroke was heavier than his groaning. His words had bitterness in them, but he thought that they were justified by his affliction.

3. *Oh that I knew where I might find him!*

Job longed to find his God, he wanted to come to Him. He had been slandered by men, so he turns from the court of injustice below to the divine Court of King’s Bench above, where he is sure of a righteous verdict, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!”

3. *That I might come even to his seat!*

To His mercy seat, and even to His judgement seat. Job was willing to appear even there.

4. *I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.*

He felt that he dared plead before God. He was not guilty of the things laid to his charge, so he would be bold to speak even before God’s judgement seat. If Job had known a little more of God, as he did before his life ended, he might not have talked so glibly about ordering his cause before Him, and filling his mouth with arguments.

We remember how he afterwards spoke to the Lord, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Who among us would desire to come and argue our case with God without our heavenly Advocate?

5. *I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.*

He was willing to hear God’s side of the argument, patient and anxious to understand the mind of God with whom he desired to plead. So far so good. There are some who do not wish to know what God would say to them, so long as they may express their own passionate desires, they have no ear and heart waiting to hear the voice of God. Very beautiful is the next verse—

6. *Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.*

He has confidence in the Lord, that if he could have an audience with Him, God would not use His power against him, but on the contrary, would strengthen him in order that he might state his case.

Do I speak to a troubled heart here? Come to God with your burden. He will not use His power against you, but He will help you to plead with Him. Trembler, come and bow at His feet! He will not spurn you, He will lift you up. Despairing one, look to the Lord! He will not turn His wrath upon you, but He will help you to plead with Him. “Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.”

7-9. *There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:*

Job had done his best to find his God. Forward, backward, to the right, and to the left, he had gone in all directions after Him, but he could not find Him. I know there are persons here tonight who are in that condition, and you will never rest, I hope, until you find the Lord. He is not far from you. I trust that with many of you, tonight is the happy hour in which your long searching shall end in a delightful finding.

10. *But he knoweth the way that I take:*

If I do not know His way, He knows mine. If I cannot find Him, He can find me. Here is my comfort, "He knoweth the way that I take."

10. *When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

Here the true Job comes to the front. You get the gracious man once more on his feet. He staggered a little, but he stands firm now, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." So will you, my tried sister, my afflicted brother. The trial of your faith is but for a time, there will come an end to this furnace work, and when God has tried you, tested you, and taken away your dross, He will bring you forth and you will be pure gold, meet for the Master's use.

*"In the furnace God may prove thee,
Thence to bring thee forth more bright;
But can never cease to love thee:
Thou art precious in His sight:
God is with thee,
God thine everlasting light."*

11. *My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.*

Happy Job, to be able to say that, and to speak the truth, but there is a touch of self about it which we cannot quite commend. Be holy, but do not claim to be holy. Be steadfast before God, firm in your obedience to Him, but do not mention it, for your hope lies somewhere else. Yet we cannot condemn Job for declaring that he had kept God's way. His friends were pleading against him, so he felt that he must defend himself.

12. *Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*

Job was a happy man to be able to say that. I hope that many of you can say the same. If you were tried with great bodily pain and depression of spirit, you could say, through divine grace, "I have not turned away from God." These are days when we need men of principle, men who can put their foot down, and keep it down, men who cannot be turned aside. They call this firmness, "bigotry." It is however, only another name for Christian manliness. If you dare to do right, and face a frowning world, you shall have God's commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

13. *But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?*

God has one mind, and He will carry out what He wills. It is vain for any man to think of turning Him from His eternal purpose.

13-14. *And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him.*

You will find that men who are much tried fall back upon the granite foundation of the divine decree. God has ordained it, so they yield to it, they acquiesce in it because it is according to the eternal purpose of the Most High. Though we say little about it now, there may come a time when some of you will have to say, as Job does, "For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him."

15. *Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.*

It is a bad sign when a man of God becomes afraid of God. Yet there is a holy awe which may degenerate into a servile fear which has bondage, but even this may be the foundation of a holy confidence which will keep us in obedience to the Lord.

16. *For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me:*

Are you saying that tonight? If so, I am glad you are here. I have for many years, been compassed about with a large number of persons who come from the ends of England and Scotland, and from longer distances too, in despair of soul, and seeking comfort, but I think that never in my life have I had more than I have had this week, persons unknown to me who are under conviction of sin, and feeling the hand of God heavy upon them. Hard tugs I have had to bring them out of Giant Despair's Castle.

The Holy Ghost alone can do this work, but He sometimes makes use of a sympathetic brotherly word to give light to those who are in the dark. I am praying that He may do so tonight, for there may be some here who say with Job, “God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.”

17. Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

He wished he had died before he came to such trouble, or that by some means such trouble had been turned away from him. May the Lord, if He sends you Job’s trouble, send you Job’s consolation! May He glorify Himself by your patient endurance, if He lays upon you His heavy hand!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—607, 594, 606

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