

How Great Thou Art

In

Job

Chapter 1

The book of Job is one of the most surprising of all the books of the Old Testament scripture. It fits in after the book of Esther and before Psalms in a significant manner for in Job we learn directly of the almighty sovereignty of the Lord our God, and we learn that His judgments are just and righteous altogether. The story of Job is simple – the first chapter or so, and the last chapter, are all we need to know to acquaint ourselves with the facts of the matter. The bulk of the book is given over to debate, and this is almost as surprising as the story itself, but the debate is properly the subject matter of the book, and the opening and closing chapters are merely the explanation of the debate, the introduction and finale, as it were. Most Christians know the story of Job – the debate, which is the *raison d'être* of the book of Job, is surely less well known and less widely studied. Therefore we wish here to concentrate on the debate, and to say as little as possible about the story. Chapter one of the book of Job we will regard only as the preface to the debate, in which we are introduced to the main or principal character, the chief speaker if you will, the man who is known as Job. It is necessary of course to read chapter one for yourself, in order to understand the debate which follows from it, and perhaps helpful also to read chapter 42 as well, to see the outcome or end of the story. Job represents Christ for us in this wonderful painting, to let us see how unfair it was to allow Jesus Christ the Righteous to suffer the loss of all things whilst sinners lived in peace.

We see clearly in verse one of chapter one why Job was chosen to represent Christ in this picture. “There was a man in the land of Uz,” – the place of the living – “whose name was Job;” – the tried one – “and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.” The uprightness and righteousness of Job is unquestionable, and is further attested by the fact that God could use Job as a model for His great painting of Jesus Christ the Righteous. Furthermore Job was no mean man, but a man of some substance indeed; a man God was proud of; a man who could be pointed to as an example of righteousness and uprightness – “and that man was perfect,” says God Himself. Therefore Job makes a very good model for God’s great painting of Christ. God is calling our attention to the obvious righteousness of Job, in order that we should see something of Jesus Christ the Righteous. As we read the opening chapter of the book of Job we are astounded – and indignant – that God could treat Job with such blatant unfairness. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” we cry. Is it right to treat Job so? It would scarcely seem worthy of God to treat a very great sinner in this manner, and how unfair to treat a righteous man so heartlessly! What then of Christ? The absolute shining perfectness of the righteousness of Christ is clear from the New Testament. The sinless perfection of the holy Son

of God is seen in the gospels. The immaculate spotlessness of the Man called Jesus Christ is clearly revealed in all scripture, and what happened to Him? He was crucified! The Just was made to step into the place of the unjust, and what befell Him there makes Job's story look happy by comparison.

Job was a man with seven sons and three daughters, illustrating for us how Christ should come with divine strength (seven sons) and the weakness common to all mankind, or as we might say, in the frailty of the flesh. Christ is made man, to suffer as a man, for this is God's decree, and the "three daughters" illustrates that point. Job is seen to lose all – the seven sons and the three daughters are lost in the fall of the house in one day – and Christ is seen to lose all likewise, for even His divine strengths are blotted out in one day by death. Job is allowed to live on – Christ must die. Job loses only what God gave him in the first place, and Job lives on in the hope that God will replace what God has taken away. But Jesus Christ the Righteous loses everything in that one dreadful day – all His substance and all His strengths and all His humanity are first violently taken away, and when He has lost all, Satan proceeds to take away His very life also by the most brutal means imaginable. The injustice of it is well illustrated for us here by Job. After a life spent in perfect righteousness, doing nothing but the whole will of God, careful to offend in no point of the law, displaying only love and kindness and compassion, bringing only blessing to others, Christ is made to suffer the loss of all His substance, and He in whom the most unjust judge could find no fault is stripped of everything, losing even the dignity that a shred of clothing would allow a man, and hung up as a public spectacle to be mocked by the vile. The patent injustice of it does not strike us until we have read with indignation how God once treated Job. If we cannot feel sorry for Job, and see the unfairness in the story, how can we feel anything for Christ?

So let us feel sorry for Job. Let us feel indignation over the shabby way God treats Job. Let us feel disgust that an Almighty God should ever allow Satan to treat Job like this. And let us give our sympathy to Job, the one righteous man in his generation who lost everything in one day because he was shamefully treated by the very God he trusted in. Who among us would claim to be as upright and perfect as Job? Which of us could boast of serving God so faithfully that God could point us out to Satan and boast of us? And what man among us could compare with the greatness of Job, who is said to be (in verse three) the greatest of all the men of the east? But if we were only half as upright as Job, only half as perfect, only half as great, we would feel we had a right to expect better things of God than that which befell Job. Why? Because there is no justice in it. Because there appears no justification for it. Because on the surface it seems heartless, even cruel, of God to hand Job over to Satan. Is this the reward for loyal service? Is this what a righteous man can expect for walking uprightly before God? Is this scurrilous treatment the recompense for a perfect life? If it were so indeed then who would do good? Where is the incentive to serve God in that? We would do better if we sinned! There could scarcely be a man with any sense of fairness and justice in him who, if he were honest, would not admit that the story of Job adds little luster to the idea of God dealing fairly with man. Even allowing for God's sovereignty and mysterious ways and dark counsels, the story of Job is still the story of a man who did nothing wrong and was punished for it! It is not a story of justice at all, but of a dismal injustice. We might well fear such a God, but we could never love such a God. And the story is true!

Now God is obviously not taking away Job's substance and heartlessly killing Job's sons and daughters merely in order to add to Job greater substance, stronger sons, fairer daughters. No, no! The substance could be doubled overnight if God so wished. The daughters could grow fairer with the passing years, without troubling Job at all, if God only wished to bless him more. Neither can it be merely some sort of test of Job's patience, as though Satan said, 'I bet I can make Job curse!' and God said, 'I bet you can't!' No, no! That is not our God at all! What is it then? Clearly, God is using His great servant Job to paint for us one more picture of Christ, a rare and priceless painting. The greatest honor God can bestow on a man is to use his life to paint a picture of Christ. Yes, God allowed Satan to test Job, and who has not heard of the patience of Job? Yes, God increased Job's substance greatly, and added to him even fairer daughters as the last page says, but that is beside the point. The scripture here is no different than any other scripture – it is testifying only of Christ. If we cannot see Christ in scripture we miss the point of the book of Job. The divine wisdom of God is terrifying in its transcending limitlessness. God is not dealing unjustly with Job – God is here exalting Job in a way which could never even enter Job's mind, so that Job is made to rank with God's greatest men. God is not being 'baited' by Satan – God is allowing Satan to fulfill a purpose Satan cannot conceive of. And why? Because God loves us, and wishes us to have this picture of Christ, even at the expense of Job's sufferings. The only way to portray the dreadful sufferings of Christ was to allow Job to suffer dreadfully, and yet if we study the picture in detail we will see only how merciful God has been to Job, and how ruthlessly God has had to deal with Jesus.

Yes, it is a very great picture, but then we serve a very great God! Job was wise – he refused to charge God foolishly with anything, even though the injustice of it would strike the meanest intelligence, and Job was an intelligent human being. Job was right – there must be a reason for such an experience even though the mind may be unable to conceive of any reason. And Job was perfect – scripture says, "In all this Job sinned not," and few of us indeed could follow Job's example in a day like that. But the story, as we said, is only the preface to the subject matter of the book, the great debate which follows, so we will not linger in chapter one. It is enough if we see that God is love; that the Judge of all the earth does right; that His ways are not our ways nor His thoughts our thoughts; that Divine wisdom is more subtle in the end than the false subtlety of Satan; that all things work together for good to them that love God; that we need more faith in our faithful God; that God, in allowing Satan to destroy Job, was busy honoring Job above any honor Job could imagine or dream of in his lifetime; and that nothing can happen to God's people except God allow it for His great and divine purpose. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The answer is always an emphatic, "Yes!" but if at the time we fail to see the rightness of it, does that mean it is wrong? Emphatically, "No!" God is the eternal God, and eternity will reveal to all how right God was, and how wrong we were to doubt Him. If we stand at the Cross of Calvary, and see for ourselves how Christ died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God, we will see the great painting in the book of Job where the Master Artist portrays the dreadful injustice of allowing a righteous man to suffer as the wicked, whilst sinners live, and mock.

In Job chapter two we are introduced to the final or second stage of the test applied to Job. We are also introduced in chapter two to the three debaters whose words take up such a large part of the book. We have already met Job in chapter one, now let us meet the three who call forth the main substance of the book, and then we will look briefly once more at Job. Verse 11 of the second chapter says, “Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.” Who are these three? What do they represent? How may we learn from them? First, they are friends of Job. Second, they act together. Third, their purpose is to mourn with him, and to comfort him. So much is clear from verse 11. Briefly then, they represent three elements found in life with which we are all familiar. What are those elements? First, reasonable or rational behavior, normality, accumulated wisdom, our own experience, all summed up in one “character” – Eliphaz the Temanite. Second, human emotion or emotional behavior (weeping, laughing, etc) pictured for us by a second “character” – Bildad the Shuhite. And third, our approach to life – and death – Zophar the Naamathite. These three are our constant companions, our familiar “friends,” our natural forces or elements from which we normally expect comfort in an evil hour.

Let us look at those three again. First, Eliphaz the Temanite represents what our experience of life has led us to believe is normal, reasonable, rational as far as behavior is concerned. If you were born with two heads, for example, then Eliphaz the Temanite would assure you that such a thing is abnormal, unreasonable and irrational. Eliphaz means to be made in the image and likeness of God, and the two heads would in this instance suggest something not seen in God's original creation. Furthermore, nothing in the life-experience of a two-headed man would lead him to believe it was the norm for mankind to have two heads. Eliphaz is the Temanite – he “springs from” awareness of God as Creator. Modern man, refusing to believe in God as the Creator, has lost his friend Eliphaz, and in an evil hour has literally no comfort from that source. If he falls sick, he cannot believe in divine healing, for he refuses to believe God is the Creator of his body. He must seek comfort from science, medicine, physicians and hospitals, and if his disease is incurable he must inevitably lose all hope and die comfortless, inconsolable, alone, except he give up his own apostasy, for Eliphaz the Temanite cannot reach him. Now Job, of course, quite obviously believes in God his Maker, and Eliphaz the Temanite is put first in the order of the three “characters” of chapter two. Eliphaz does not appear in chapter one, for if Job's body be unaffected such comfort as Eliphaz can give is not really required, though Job can obviously count on the support and sympathetic understanding of Eliphaz the Temanite in any circumstance, for he is his friend. We ourselves have often found comfort in creation, in seeing what is normal, reasonable, rational in life coming from the hand of God. Our ‘friend’ Eliphaz has succored us!

The second of the three is Bildad the Shuhite, representing here our emotions. The Lord, speaking of His generation, said they had neither lamented nor danced. They had lost Bildad the Shuhite. They had become so sophisticated, so blasé, so set in their own conceits that they were no longer normal, reasonable, rational people. What normal person would shout, “Crucify, crucify,” at the trial of a Man declared innocent? What reasonable person would demand the death penalty of a Man found innocent and without fault by four judges in one day? What

rational person would cry, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” when the judge washed his hands of the matter? If you agree with them, are you being normal, reasonable, rational? But the women who wept, mourned and lamented as Christ went to Golgotha had retained their Shuhite. They obviously believed in God their Creator, for only such can weep for the Crucifixion of Christ. Can we weep for the Crucifixion of Christ? Thank God, we can, for we believe in God our Creator and in Christ Jesus the Son of the living God! We have retained both Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite as our friends, and all through life they can comfort us. We do not weep, says Paul, as those without hope. Neither do we laugh as the crackling of thorns under a pot, the fool’s laugh. But in sorrow we are comforted by the knowledge that God our Creator has redeemed us through Christ Jesus our Lord, and in the day of feasting we can laugh with the merry heart of one who knows all is well with his soul. For we have two steadfast friends to rally round and come to our aid. We have Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite. We are not mad, so Paul avers, but normal, reasonable, rational people who only appear emotional to those who have thrust Bildad the Shuhite out of their lives.

And the third is Zophar the Naamathite. Bildad the Shuhite simply means God-given or God-appointed as a means to lessen the traumas and tragedies of life, a safety valve as we call it, perhaps a pillow or cushion if you like. Bildad – from God. Shuhite - an appointed means. God our Creator has given us both tears and laughter as a means to make life easier. But Zophar follows Eliphaz and Bildad in chapter two. Zophar represents an attitude, our approach to life. We who believe in God our Creator have wept for sin, for Calvary, for the dreadful death of the Cross of Christ. But also we have laughed, we have rejoiced, we have danced for joy at the Resurrection of Christ. So our whole attitude has been changed, our approach to life – and death – has altered. We have real comfort now. We have Zophar the Naamathite for a friend. We have a whole new concept, a new way of living and a new way of dying. We have a hope not seen in unregenerated man. We are born again as children of God, and our Creator has become our Saviour and our Saviour has become our hope of glory, our eternal life. We alone are normal, reasonable, rational people, even as we weep for Calvary, and dance for the Resurrection of Christ, even if our vastly different approach to life seem strange to you who know not God. It is you who continue to cry, “Crucify, crucify!” who are abnormal, unreasonable, irrational creatures. It is you who never wept over sin, nor rejoiced over justification, who live lives without hope, doomed to sure destruction. You have lost Eliphaz and Bildad, and Zophar the Naamathite. For Zophar means comfort, heart’s ease, an end to the burden. And Zophar is a Naamathite, like Naaman the Syrian, washed in the river of life – and death. As the river of life washes over you it must one day become the river of death, and what comfort will you draw from it? So beware!

Now in Job chapter two we see these three ‘friends’ of Job coming together to give Job comfort in an evil hour. They are not shown in chapter one, in order to give Job full credit for retaining his integrity before God, but what would happen to us if we met such an evil hour as Job met in the first chapter? First, Eliphaz would give us comfort from the knowledge we have, and the experience we have accumulated in our lifetime, of God our Creator. Second, Bildad would comfort us as our tears would flow to relieve our feelings, and we would know the truth of the Lord’s word, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” And third, Zophar would comfort us with the knowledge that in the day of resurrection all will be well with us. We

might be able to say with Job, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord,” for we have Job’s perfect example to follow. Unfortunately for Job, before his three ‘friends’ can comfort him, another day has come. “Again there was a day...” says scripture. The same scene-behind-the-scenes is shown, and this time Satan strikes Job with sore boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. It puts an end to all thought of comfort. The stage is set for the great debate. “And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept.” Job’s grief is too great for comfort. The man they knew and befriended is unrecognizable. The ‘friends’ may now only adopt the same position of bereavement as Job, and keep silence. Job is long past comforting. “And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.” Job’s plight is obvious. Job’s grief is too eloquent for words. Job’s comfortless state is total, and abysmal. And for the first time in his life, his three companions fail him. He may be aware of their presence, but that is all. Total silence prevails.

Did you ever stop to look at Calvary in the light of Job’s grief? Jesus Christ the Righteous is stripped of everything, even to the clothes He wore. Satan is allowed to do his worst, crowning Christ with thorns, scourging Him with the Roman scourge, nailing Him securely to a Cross of wood. And, Satan, with all his hatred of righteousness, does his worst, his absolute worst, in that dreadful ordeal – and then steps back. But as he steps back, God steps in, and fills the broken body with all the sin and filth and putrefaction of the whole world. And Christ, drowning in a sea of sin, must suffer the wrath of God against sin in the darkness there. And if He had any hope of comfort in that hour, God Himself forsook Him there. God never forsook Job. God forbid Satan to take away Job’s life. And God was only using Job as a model in a picture which would be unforgettable, but which must, of necessity, fall far short of the real thing. Boils speak of putrefaction of the flesh, but they cannot speak of “becoming sin” for us. Ashes speak of the fire, but they are no substitute for the fire of the wrath of God itself. And the potsherd speaks of a vessel broken, but it cannot portray the feelings of the Vessel which was broken for you. There is no equivalent in all history of the Cross of Christ. All the pictures of the Old Testament fall short of it. The gospel writers record it only briefly. The church cannot contain it. And if it had not been for Job we would never have glimpsed the feelings of a righteous man who is made to suffer unfairly when he himself had done no wrong. The picture in Job is a once-only painting. God would never do such a thing again till Christ should come. And the reason He picked Job? There was “none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.” And Job, as we know, was a sinner.

Chapter 3

Now in Job chapter three we come to the beginning of the great debate. The question debated is whether a truly righteous man would be allowed to suffer, or not. We have already seen these ‘characters’ who will debate the question, and Job of course is allowed to present it to us from the standpoint of one who has actually experienced it. If we follow this very fascinating and enthralling real-life drama carefully, we should find that the end result is an entirely new appreciation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The drama begins as Job opens his mouth. “After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.” That simple line reveals fully the feelings of a perfect

man who is made to suffer “without cause.” We see that Christ Himself never appears in our picture, for Isaiah says of Him, ‘He is led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before the shearers so openeth He not His mouth.’ Job is not able to do that. At best Job is silent for seven days and seven nights with unutterable anguish. It is not the same kind of silence, but rather it is the silence of one bereft of speech, shocked into silence, at a loss totally for words to express his grief. Christ’s silence is rather a controlled silence, punctuated by speech so sublime from the Cross we overlook the implication. Jesus Christ the Righteous is suffering beyond anything Job can even imagine, but no word of complaint crosses His lips. Indeed, were it not for Job, there is no way of knowing how another human being would ever feel were he called upon to be the one sin-offering for all mankind.

“After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.” We see Job, the righteous man, so afflicted by God that he curses the day he was born. The book of Job is clearly scripture, but the book is different in that the words of the great debate are declared foolish in the end by God Himself. We do not learn these words so as to quote them as we do other parts of scripture. No, no! The whole debate is simply a real life drama portraying the position of the one just man facing injustice, to give us some insight into Christ’s own position in the face of Calvary. Our Lord, in the garden of Gethsemane, sweats as it were great drops of blood at the imminence of the ordeal He is about to undergo. He pleads that if it be possible, that God would let this cup pass from Him. He asks three times. And yet thereafter there is no hint of His feelings as a Man in the gospel record. But the only other man we ever read of who lived perfectly before God is Job, and Job, faced with a far less ordeal, curses the day he was born. “And Job spake and said...” We can read for ourselves in God’s great book what Job said. All the bitterness of the just man unjustly treated springs out at us from the printed words. The depths of grief are revealed in this heart-cry of the righteous man stricken, afflicted. “And Job spake and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.” The vehemence of the outburst comes through to us loudly and clearly after the lapse of thousands of years. The hurtful words lay out the deep hurt of the stricken heart. Verse after verse records the indignation, the agony, the feelings of the just man unjustly treated. Read the chapter again. See for yourself Job’s total despair. And then remember that compared to what Christ suffered for you, Job was a happy man! See the picture!

Reflect for a moment. How do you react to even a minor injustice? With righteous indignation? Was Christ incapable of feeling righteous indignation? The more right we are the more deeply we are hurt. He was holy! Would a very grave personal injustice not affect you? Of course it would, and you a sinner! Then suppose you achieved the absolute in perfect living, and God ‘without cause’ handed you over to Satan for destruction, would you not feel affronted? Would you not feel the injustice of it? And would you be as patient as Job? Most unlikely! But Christ was born sinless, totally holy, born of a virgin. And no blot or stain marred that sinless life. He came to do the will of God, and He did it, beautifully, absolutely, perfectly. “Which of you convicteth Me of sin?” He cries. Could any judge have found fault in Him? Clearly not. Pilate tells us that even Herod could find no fault in Christ. Compared to Christ, Job is only a beginner. Furthermore, our Lord could easily have defended Himself. “No man ever spake like this Man,” they said in awe. The great Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous, never spoke a word in His own defense. And all the Roman legions in Jerusalem could have been destroyed by

twelve legions of angels if He had called for them. Yet He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before the shearers, so opened He not His mouth. We could never have appreciated what that effort cost Him, if Job had not spoken in this chapter. The hurtful, bitter words recorded here are the outpourings of a heart stricken, afflicted of God, and tormented beyond endurance. Was Christ not stricken, afflicted?

We know Christ Jesus was a Man, with the same feelings as Job. Indeed, being a perfect Man, Christ could suffer only more deeply, feel the injustice more keenly, appreciate the bitterness more intensely than ever Job could. Look what Job is not called upon to endure: Job loses all his substance, yet he is obviously left with his household intact (apart from his sons and daughters who had lived in separate houses or establishments) for we read that his wife spoke to him. Christ, alas, is stripped of the very clothes He stood up in. Job loses many servants and friends in chapter one, yet at least four escaped to be with him still. Of Christ's disciples and friends, one betrayed Him, one denied ever knowing Him, and all forsook Him and fled in His hour of need. Job is not humiliated, tried by unjust judges and condemned to death. Job is not crowned with a crown of thorns, nor smitten with a reed, nor struck by many hands, nor physically abused so as to have his beard torn out in handfuls by wicked hands. Job is not scourged. Job is not broken. Job is not crucified. And Job is not made to bear all the sin of the world. Nor is Job ever forsaken, nor allowed to die, nor made a public spectacle in his hour of death. No, no! Job is only made sore with boils. The only witnesses are those who came to mourn with him and comfort him, who wept when they beheld his plight. And scripture says, "After this opened Job his mouth and cursed his day." But in an ordeal that makes Job's plight look happy by comparison, when Satan had done his worst and man had done his worst, and faced with the task of becoming sin for us and suffering the fire of the wrath of God against sin, knowing He must be totally forsaken even by God Himself, a whispered prayer echoes down the centuries of time – "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." O Lord, how great Thou art!

Listen now for a moment to the bitterness of a perfect man who is made to suffer as a sinner – Job. "And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein. Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning. Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but have none; neither let it see the dawning of the day: Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes." Job cursed his birthday, the day of his birth. Was it futile, a waste of breath? No, no! This is the fervent prayer of a righteous man. Effectual? Of course. If you knew what day of the year Christ was crucified, you would know what day of the year Job was born. Christ had to bear the curse, you know. Christ had to suffer even for Job. The cup His Father gave Him was full to the brim, and He drank it to the very dregs of it. There was no final indignity, no last straw as we say, He would not be asked to bear. The very date of His Crucifixion is set for Him by Job, for God recorded every word Job uttered. The day turned to darkness around Him at the Cross, for even the day was cursed. By

what means? By the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man. God hears and answers prayer. Christ came to take away the curse. It had to fall on Him lest it fall on you and me. And did He fear that day? Listen again to Job. “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.”

O sinner, be warned in time. Christ died for us, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. He bore our sins in His own body on the Tree. He took away the curse, being made a curse for us. But if we refuse the offer of so great Salvation, bought at such a cost, and choose to live out our lives in sin, unredeemed, unregenerate, unrepentant and unbelieving, then a day will come when we must face alone the terrible wrath of God against sin, and that day will make Job’s suffering seem light by comparison, for we will be thrust into hell, into cursing, into eternal damnation. We cannot escape God. We cannot escape death. We cannot escape the day of Judgment. And if we have added our voice in this life to them who cried, “Crucify, crucify,” mocking the sufferings of Christ, hardening our unrepentant heart and going on in sin, seeking only our own pleasure, neglecting the redemption Christ won for us with His own life-blood in the cruel Cross of Shame, then be assured that the wrath of God will fall upon us in one dreadful day and we will wish we had never been born. Death waits for us at the end of the road. Scripture tells us plainly, “And after death – the judgment.” Then the long-suffering God, silent now for seven days and seven nights, will open His mouth in righteous indignation and curse the day we were born. All the stored-up bitterness of a righteous God shamefully treated will be poured out upon us. Without the great Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous, we will have no defense, no hope of escape from condemnation, no hope of appeal. And the gates of hell will prevail against us. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Chapter 4

“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said...” So begins the great debate. What subject is under debate? Should a truly righteous man be allowed to suffer, or not? And Eliphaz the Temanite answers. He is the one who speaks from knowledge, knowledge of God the Creator, and also from experience of life, of what is normal, reasonable, rational in creation. And his answer to the question is in the negative. No, he says, a truly righteous man would not and should not be allowed to suffer so. His answer is good news to me. As a sinner washed in the blood of the Lamb, a sinner saved by grace, I am credited with the righteousness of Christ my Savior. Shall I then suffer? No, says Eliphaz. And scripture confirms the verdict. “___ shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” What a comfort to know that! It springs from awareness of God’s great purpose in creating man, and it is backed by experience of God. Having accepted Christ and His offer of full salvation we are made aware that God plans for us to go to heaven, not hell, and there is now no condemnation to them that believe. We are made aware that sin is not the normal, reasonable, rational thing we thought it was, a perfectly acceptable part of creation, but an abnormal condition, abhorrent to God, a cancerous growth requiring treatment by a great Physician. We find peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And thereafter all our experience confirms the truth we have encountered. If we are made truly righteous, should we be made to suffer? No, says Eliphaz.

Eliphaz the Temanite, answering, says, “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?” Abraham, you may recall from Genesis, asks the Lord, “Shall the righteous perish along with the wicked?” All our knowledge of God our Creator comforts us with this sure hope, that those whom God has accounted righteous cannot perish as the wicked. We draw comfort from our ‘friend’ Eliphaz, from what is normal, reasonable, rational with God. If believers in Christ Jesus our Lord perished as the wicked, then there is no such thing as reasonableness. There is then no sense to creation, no meaning to Christ’s death, no truth in the gospel. Is God reasonable? God Himself says, “Come now and let us reason together.” The gospel is rational, you know. There is a rational explanation for sin. There is a perfectly sensible explanation for the curse. The truth about heaven and hell does no violence to any man’s reason, you know. And the opposite holds true. If there is no reward for believing, then Abraham is no greater than Esau. If there is no recompense of reward then Moses was only a fool. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But this Eliphaz becomes our ‘friend’ once we accept the truth of the gospel. We are given the comforting assurance that death, the great equalizer, is followed by the recompense of the reward respected by Moses; that those whom God calls righteous cannot perish as the wicked; and that heaven and hell are twin realities. Our ‘friend’ Eliphaz will lead us to know that whatever else happens, the righteous will not be cut off. Who ever perished, being innocent? Christ could not have perished, being innocent. His death only confirms what we already know – He died for sin. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. His death is the proof that He bore our sins.

Eliphaz continues, “Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.” It may surprise you to know that that thought has in every generation given comfort to believers. We do not patiently bear the injustice of your mocking taunts in the sure knowledge that your reward and our reward will be the same. No, no! We believe and are sure that whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. We are happy to know that you have got away with it for years and years, and we faithfully pray that God may reach you with the great gospel of Christ so that you repent in time, before it is too late, and be forgiven and not suffer the dreadful day of the wrath of the Lamb. We do not rejoice at the death of the wicked. We only know that the day is coming when they will wish they had never been born. Our ‘friend’ Eliphaz, speaking from experience – “even as I have seen” – tells us it is not reasonable or rational to suppose that the wicked go straight to heaven, but far more normal and sensible to perceive that the wicked go to hell. Is there no God, no just Judge, no heaven, no hell? Only the fool would say within himself, “There is no God,” and any reasonable person who can see there must be a God can easily see there must be a heaven where God dwells, and a hell where sinners go from out of His sight. The reasonable, rational behaviour of God, His normalcy, is proved by experience. God destroyed the earth with a flood and saved Noah alive, for Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of the plain, but just Lot did not perish with the wicked. And even in this day of grace, when judgment is withheld and free pardon is offered to sinners for Christ’s sake, wicked men are busy destroying themselves, destroying each other, destroying the world in their very lifetimes. Eliphaz is right. “They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.” If he were not right, he could not be ‘friend’ to a rational man.

But Job is not comforted by Eliphaz, because Job is perfect and being innocent he is suffering without cause. Our Lord Jesus gained no comfort from Eliphaz. Indeed, the debate opens with the words, "If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?" In other words, Eliphaz represents only the normal. Job's experience was abnormal. Our Lord's Crucifixion was not a 'normal' experience. In such circumstances Eliphaz becomes a "Job's comforter," adding only more grief instead of comfort. When we encounter some new experience in life we seek first to know if this is normal. Have others gone this way before us? And here 'friend' Eliphaz comforts us. It may be new to us, but it is normal enough, reasonable, rational. All is well. We are comforted by Eliphaz. The trouble with Eliphaz is that he will speak even though the circumstances are abnormal, only adding grief to the sufferer. "If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?" says Eliphaz. A simple illustration might help to make this clear. Suppose for the first time in your life you go aboard a ship, and during the voyage a hurricane strikes the ship, which is in danger of perishing. It is all new to you, but Eliphaz will assure you that such things have happened since man first put to sea in a boat. It is 'normal' enough in that sense, however rarely encountered by one individual. So you can draw a grain of comfort from that, however unwelcome the situation may be. But if during your voyage the hurricane struck the ship, and the crew decided to cast you overboard, and a great fish swallowed you alive, then you would find that Eliphaz would assure you that such a thing was abnormal, unreasonable, irrational, and Eliphaz becomes a "Job's comforter" indeed, for you would be left to deduce sin somewhere along the way.

So we see that Eliphaz the 'friend' who comes to comfort Job turns into what is known as a "Job's comforter" in a situation which is strictly abnormal. That is why the church no longer heeds 'friend' Eliphaz. First, because he couldn't comfort Christ on the Cross of Calvary. There was no normalcy there. Eliphaz cannot distinguish the good man suffering without cause, because he sees only what is normal in life. Eliphaz was no help to Job, no help to the prophets, no help to our Lord Jesus Christ, no help to the apostles, no help to the saints who suffered for Christ's sake. Therefore, however truly Eliphaz speaks, God sweeps away his words as foolishness in the end. For if we suffer for Christ's sake and the gospel we are comforted, not by Eliphaz, but by the word of God alone. Second, because he only adds grief to the innocent, Eliphaz added nothing to Job but grief, when Job sorely needed comfort. Eliphaz added only grief to Christ, when our Lord could have done with a grain of comfort. And Eliphaz, were we to heed him today, could add only grief to those who suffer for Christ's sake. Should a righteous man suffer? Eliphaz says, "No." No, because it is an abnormal and irrational situation in life, and Eliphaz represents what is only normal. Were the wicked to suffer, that would be accepted by Eliphaz. But when the innocent, the upright, the righteous, the perfect suffer, Eliphaz cannot accept it. And third, because God's word has superseded Eliphaz. Our Lord set us an example, and told us that if any wished to follow Him, such must be prepared to suffer likewise. And such are to draw comfort from the word of God only, to walk by faith only, to see only that the servant is not greater than the Master. They suffer "without cause" in that sense, and Eliphaz, were he to be relied upon, would assure us that that is wrong, unreasonable, and contrary to all rational principles.

The last part of chapter four describes the vision of Eliphaz. "Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker?" It is a secret vision, a vision actually

of Christ. Christ on the Cross is stepping into the shoes of the unjust – the Just for the unjust – substituting Himself for sinful man. At that point mortal man is more just than God, man is purer than his Maker. Eliphaz, representing reasonableness, cannot accept it. The normal reason fails in sight of the Cross. The mind boggles at the implications. And yet God insists on giving us the full debate in the book of Job. We are made in the image of God, not descended from apes, you know. Eve ate the forbidden fruit out of curiosity. She saw it was a tree to be desired to make one wise, and we as God's creation are obsessed with an insatiable desire to know God more completely. But can we know God more completely? God says we can. If we come to the Cross of Christ at Calvary, and study the meaning of it, the reason for it, the implications of it – all given in scripture – we will learn more and more about God. If we refuse to come to the Cross of Christ, refuse to believe God is our Maker, refuse the debate in the book of Job, we are left with our sins. God says, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow, and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool." The debate at the Cross involves the whole question of our sins. If we participate in the debate – and listen to reason – then the end result will be that, like Job, we will abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. Our sins will be dealt with. And as Christ arose the third day in newness of life for our justification, so too we can arise in newness of life fully justified by Him, with the question settled. If we refuse to accept it, then, a Eliphaz says, "They die, even without wisdom."

Chapter 5

What can we learn from Eliphaz? There is much we can learn from Eliphaz in Job chapter five. Eliphaz, remember, represents normalcy, which is learned from or by experience. The youth does not know what to expect of life, for he has not made Eliphaz his 'friend.' He therefore cannot tell whether his experiences are normal or not, and only later may he look back and see if his upbringing was normal or different. A wise man makes Eliphaz his 'friend' and draws comfort from normalcy. He is then better able to judge the abnormality in any situation. The Christian must learn that it is abnormal for the innocent to suffer, so that as he suffers for Christ's sake and the gospel he will not be confused and think that perhaps this is a normal, reasonable, acceptable part of the life of every man. Rather he will be driven to God in prayer the more. A poor fisherman who is seasick each time his boat leaves harbor might well believe it an acceptable, normal hazard of his occupation, instead of seeing he would do better as a farmer perhaps. Thus we can deliberately cultivate the 'friendship' of Eliphaz to our advantage, and study his words to our edification. God has recorded all his words here in the book of Job so that we might learn from them, and better understand thereafter what is normal in creation. It is normal in creation for the sparks to fly upward, is it not? So it is normal in life to encounter trouble. Eliphaz says, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Trouble – what one calls "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" – is the norm for all men, not something peculiar to you, and a life without trouble is abnormal.

You see, if a man is perfectly happy his life is abnormal. If a man and his wife never argue, but agree on every point, their marriage is abnormal, not normal. If you never encounter trouble, your life is different from that of most men. Eliphaz, speaking from experience, says in chapter four, "even as I have seen." So Eliphaz, as we said earlier, represents in one 'character'

these things – reasonable or rational behavior, normalcy, accumulated wisdom, experience. And Eliphaz is the Temanite – he ‘springs from’ an awareness of God, the Creator. He speaks of God in this fifth chapter on this wise – “Which doeth great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number.” When we see a miracle of God we say it is abnormal, strange, different. If Eliphaz were our ‘friend’ we would perceive that miracles are the norm as far as God is concerned, and a lack of miracles would be seen to be abnormal. If Christ had done no mighty works there would have been something abnormal about His behavior, for God was His Father. God is a God of wonders, doing marvellously, says scripture. That is God’s normal behavior, says Eliphaz. What else is God’s normal behavior? “Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields.” You see, drought is an abnormal condition in creation. And if our souls are dry and our spirits hot and dusty that is an abnormal condition before God, who has stated that He will pour out water to the thirsty soul, and give plentifully to him that is dry. Indeed Christ assures those who come to Him that out of their belly will flow rivers of living water. If the scriptures are a dry and dusty collection of writings, or if the church is a dry and dusty place, then something is wrong somewhere. Eliphaz speaks only of what is normal. And we should experience this.

What else then is normal to God? “To set up on high those that be low” says Eliphaz in verse eleven, “that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.” If you have humbled yourself as Paul told you to do and God has not exalted you, then something is wrong; God is acting contrary to His normal behavior. Perhaps He is merely testing your patience. But at least know this – if you have mourned for your sins, and bent low before the Cross of Christ at Calvary and asked to be forgiven, and become a simple believer in Christ, and God does not raise you up at the resurrection of the just and seat you with Christ in heavenly places, then God has gone berserk. His behavior would be so extraordinary, abnormal, so unlike God that reason would fail and Eliphaz would be found a liar. We saw in chapter four the opposite picture – the end of the wicked. “By the blast of God they perish,” says Eliphaz, “and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.” If the wicked get away with it, as we say, after the day of judgment, then God’s behavior would be termed extraordinary, to say the least, and who would worship a mad God? We have to see that wrath for sin is the normal, day-to-day attitude of the unchangeable God. We need to see that the exaltation to a place of safety of the simple believer in Christ is what our experience with God would lead us to expect. And if we had time to study the words of our ‘friend’ Eliphaz recorded in scripture we might come to a truer understanding of God our Creator. Now only a fool would believe there is no God, no Creator, and Eliphaz warns us in this fifth chapter against such folly. Let us not anger God with our unbelief, “for wrath killeth the foolish man,” states Eliphaz. Don’t be silly, for God is a jealous God, as Moses told us in the law, “and envy slayeth the silly one,” says Eliphaz. Normal behavior!

Now it should be possible with the help of ‘friend’ Eliphaz to see something else in Job chapter five, something concerning Christ. Once we have established what is normal behavior with God, we see clearly what is abnormal behavior with God. Man might rationalize away the Cross of Christ, saying Jesus was an insurrectionist in a politically troubled land whose death was the only result to be anticipated from His radical teachings. Nonsense! We see from Job that for God to allow the righteous to suffer as the wicked is abnormal behavior. There must be a special reason for it, therefore. We know – or should know – that there was a very special reason

for allowing Christ to suffer and to die. He was the Sin-offering for all the world. God was not chastening His Son, either, for the normal pattern here, as Eliphaz tell us, is quite different. “For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole.” If God chastens us as His children then we may temporarily feel sore, and momentarily feel wounded, only to discover afresh how much God loves us. But Christ was deliberately betrayed, mocked, beaten, crowned with thorns, tried by unjust judges, scourged and then publicly executed by the most cruel means available, whilst Barabbas, murderer and insurrectionist, is set free. You see the abnormality of it? Furthermore, Eliphaz assures us in verse 19, “He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.” That is the normal and expected behavior of God. But all seven come upon Christ in one day and He was delivered from none of them. Was that not extraordinary? Eliphaz goes on to assure us, “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good.” Eliphaz is speaking from experience and from accumulated wisdom. We have searched it, it is so!

What were the seven troubles that could befall a man? “In famine, he shall redeem thee from death...” Famine here implies drought, which would have been a better word, to make it easier to see. Now Christ cried, “I thirst,” but God did not save Him from death. “And in war from the power of the sword.” But the enemy accomplished His death. “Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue,” says Eliphaz, but the malefactors railed on Him. “Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh,” but He was destroyed. “At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh” – that is scripture – but the Man of Sorrows gave up the ghost. “Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.” Well, brutal man exhibited a bestiality at Golgotha which has never been equalled, and Christ sweat as it were great drops of blood at the thought of what He was called upon to endure. Does that sound as though nothing abnormal had ever taken place? What is the debate in the book of Job all about? ‘Should a truly righteous man ever suffer, or not?’ Eliphaz answers “No,” therefore we can rest assured that in normal circumstances Jesus Christ the Righteous would have been declared faultless, and set free. The conclusion we are forced to accept therefore is that there was nothing normal about Calvary. Of all events, it is the most extraordinary. God’s whole pattern of behavior is altered. The Just is made to suffer as the unjust. The sinless Son of God and two evil malefactors hang together. A murderer is released, and the Lord of Glory is crucified. There was no deliverance from the seven troubles. Christ is left comfortless – to die. If that were the ‘normal’ with God, which of us would want to go to heaven? We must clearly see, therefore, and fully understand that Calvary was truly extraordinary. Praise God!

Perhaps we can make the matter clearer again in this way. God raised Christ from the dead the third day. Now if we have judged correctly, and if Eliphaz is right, then that is not – we repeat, not – extraordinary. That is what we should have expected. Wonderful, yes, but our God is a God of wonders, doing marvellously. It was to be expected, you see. Christ Risen rebukes His disciples because they were astonished. He clearly expected to rise from the dead the third day. He had told them so. They should have known enough about God to expect it, and confidently await the third day. It was the normal. It was what to expect. It had to happen, if the unchangeable God were to remain changeless. Why any man should doubt the Resurrection of Christ is beyond us. Surely this was the only reasonable, rational, normal thing to happen in that short period of time. Up to Calvary, Christ is doing wonders, and God is doing wonders among

the people. Three days after Calvary the wonders begin again. So what is abnormal? Calvary! If Lazarus is raised from the dead, can Christ not be raised? And at Pentecost the wonders are seen again. And the apostles go on to do wonders, even to raising the dead. Why? Because that is the normal. Anything else would have been abnormal. So the church can judge if her state today is normal or abnormal by whether the wonders are seen or not. If they are not, something is wrong. If they are, everything is fine. Let us learn from Eliphaz therefore to distinguish clearly between the normal and the abnormal. Let us study scripture a little more carefully and diligently in future. And let us come closer to God, and learn more of what God is like, and see for ourselves the true meaning of Calvary. O Lord, how great Thou art!

Chapter 6

“But Job answered and said...” Eliphaz is a ‘friend’ when everything is normal, for Eliphaz represents in one character that which is reasonable and rational and normal and expected. But Eliphaz cannot help in an abnormal situation. The question under debate is whether a truly righteous man should suffer, or not. Now Job is truly a righteous man, as God Himself tells us. Eliphaz sees that under normal conditions it is irrational for a righteous person to suffer the afflictions of Job, and the implication therefore is that Job must have sinned somewhere. But there is such a thing as the sovereignty of God, where an abnormal condition or situation may be allowed for a special purpose. We have already seen in the opening chapters the very special purpose of God in allowing Job to suffer. Eliphaz can never see this, and in this type of situation Eliphaz always becomes a ‘Job’s comforter.’ We learn from Eliphaz only what is normal and while it is a valuable lesson to see what is normal with God and with man and with ourselves, yet the greater lesson, if we might put it that way, is learned from Job. Job expresses for us the feelings of a righteous man who is called upon to suffer ‘without cause’ (chapter two, verse three) and this is a very abnormal and unreasonable and unexpected situation. We saw in chapter three that Job cursed his day. There Job’s depth of grief and despair is starkly revealed. And then we learned from Eliphaz that such affliction is not normal, and should never occur. The normal state of a truly righteous man is that God is with him in all that he does, and though man may be contrary, Satan entrenched against him, God will ever and always bring him through and never forsake him.

Now Job is portraying for us the total state of a truly righteous man whom God has handed over to Satan, so that we might appreciate in some measure the feelings of Christ at His Crucifixion. “But Job answered and said, Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up.” What words of Christ are “swallowed up” at the Cross? Listen again. “I have eternal life abiding in Me.” “No man taketh My life from Me.” “I have overcome the world.” “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.” “I am come to do the will of My Father which is in heaven.” “The meek shall inherit the earth...I am meek.” And many, many more. They point to ultimate victory, but the Cross appears to those watchers to be only the ultimate defeat. The words are true – we know that – but at the Cross they are swallowed up, and if Christ had not been raised again the third day those words would have been swallowed up forever. The fact that the words remain today, and can be seen to be true, only

confirms that Christ is risen, as He said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away.” Job portrays for us what a perfect and upright man would feel if all he had said, and all he had stood for, were swept away by God and “swallowed up” by an immense calamity. We are not able to weigh Job’s calamity, nor assess it truly, yet we can see that Christ’s calamity is ten times heavier than Job’s calamity. How then are we going to be able to appreciate Christ’s sufferings if we cannot feel for Job in his drastic ordeal? If we cannot assess the tenth part, how may we assess the whole? It behoves us therefore to study Job, so that in seeing the fraction more clearly we may be led by the Spirit to love our Lord more dearly for all that He suffered for us, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

Job continues, “For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.” Job rightfully lays the entire blame for his situation at God’s door. Satan is not the prime mover against Job – Satan is only the means used to bring about Job’s destruction. We need to see that in Christ all things come to us from the hand of God our Father. God will use Satan as a means, for God cannot be tempted of evil neither tempteth He any man, but God is in overall authority even today. God was set on glorifying Job, but of course there was no way for Job to know that. God at the Cross is set on glorifying Christ, but could anyone have convinced Peter of that? God may be set on glorifying you, but can you deduce it from present calamity? Job says, “Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? Or loweth the ox over his fodder?” Of course not. Our cries in the wilderness are heard because it is a wilderness; our moaning is heard because we are not in peace and safety. Now Christ at the Cross is not heard at all, except in speech so sublime we may miss the sublimity of it. The natural man therefore concludes that where no cry is, all is well. Only by putting Job through a really dreadful ordeal can God give us some conception of what Christ must have suffered at Calvary. “Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?” cries Job, “or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” Job is only made to eat that which is unsavoury and Job is only made to taste the tasteless, but Christ is given to drink the bitter cup of the wine of the wrath of God, and He drinks it uncomplainingly. We know little of either, for we have the salt which can make palatable all things we may partake of in this life, and Christ left no drop in the bottom of His cup for us to drink. Therefore it is difficult to imagine even Job’s situation, and almost impossible for us to appreciate Christ’s sufferings. But if calamity or tragedy struck us today, reflect – what would it be like without Christ in us?

Job says, “The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.” Job had been particularly careful never in thought or deed to blaspheme God. Yet here he is in the process of denouncing the very God he loved. Does Job serve God for naught? Come to that, did Abraham serve God for naught? Or Moses? Or David? Or Elijah? Do we serve God for naught? Of course not. Abraham looked for a city, Moses looked for a reward, David looked for a kingdom, Elijah looked for power. And what of us? We look for all these, and eternal life as well! But Christ served God for naught. His meat was to do His Father’s will. And when God demanded of Him that all the sins which He had refused all His life be taken into His own body on the Tree, He meekly bowed His lovely head and took them – every one. The absolute perfection of Christ makes the best of us seem blasphemous by comparison. Even Job, the only man scripture calls a perfect man, is blasphemous by comparison. Men marveled at Christ as He went about displaying the power of God in His life. But it is at the Cross of Calvary we are made

to realize the truth of the prophet's words – His name shall be called, Wonderful. We can only gaze in awe, and wonder at such perfection. No slightest wish of the Father went unfulfilled. When Satan had done his dreadful worst, and God had gone on to make His soul an offering for sin, and in the three hours of darkness the terrors of God had beset Him on every side, at the end of the most unconscionable horror imaginable, and just before He gave up the Ghost, He turned to the God who had forsaken Him and said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." He loved the Father with a pathetic, trusting love that only a child could hope to emulate and Calvary couldn't destroy. He wanted nothing for Himself, only to be allowed to do His Father's will. No wonder God has made Him Lord of all.

Poor Job! To be chosen to model for such a picture may indeed be the highest honor God can bestow on a man, but it is an unenviable position. "Oh that I might have my request" he says, "and that God would grant *me* the thing that I long for!" What did Job long for? Read it again for yourself. Christ wanted to live, with all the tenacity of a man and with all the repugnance for death of a sinless being. He was found in fashion as a man, scripture tells us, but we know He was not born of Adam's line, subject to death. Yet in His humility He became obedient unto death, and that the death of the Cross. He laid down His life of Himself. It was the Father's will. He was not Himself under the curse of sin, but took upon Himself the curse for us. Job foolishly prays for death to end his suffering, "Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!" little knowing that he would live for another hundred and forty years in peace and prosperity. To the eternal Son of the everlasting God death was the last straw, the ultimate horror, the climax of calamity – not the blessed relief from suffering portrayed by Job. We say it so glibly – "Christ died for our offenses," – little realizing that to the eternal Son death was anathema, unjust, without cause. And if it had not been for Job we perhaps might have remained in ignorance. Thank God for Job, and for all his sufferings. Eliphaz could not have helped us to see it, for Eliphaz could only tell us that if Christ had eternal life abiding in Him then death would be the last irrationality, the ultimate unreasonableness, the final abnormality for such a being. But Job, in his longing for death, tells us that Christ was much more than only a perfect man, for even a perfect man might wish to die. Christ was the only-begotten Son of the unchangeable God, from everlasting to everlasting.

We are not here making an exhaustive study of the book of Job. We are merely uncovering a picture of Christ, as all scripture testifies of Him. Time would fail us to go into all the details. We only wish you to study the Cross of Christ for yourself, to consider it, to reflect upon it, to learn better to appreciate the Saviour of the world. And if you can do that by seeing how a perfect man in lesser calamity would react, as Job sets out for you, then the effort is not wasted. But God would never leave you with only a picture of the Cross. In verse 19 of this sixth chapter of the book of Job you will find a different pattern – "The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them." The gospel writers record how they set a watch by the sealed tomb and waited for three days to pass. And in verse 20 we read, "They were confounded because they had hoped." Yes, they hoped the eternal Son of the everlasting God was destroyed completely, and was perished once and for all. They couldn't be sure till the third day. And "they were confounded because they had hoped," for on the third day the seal dropped off, the great stone rolled back, and the Risen Christ stepped in triumph from the tomb, alive to die no more. And scripture, exact as always, shows us the disciples in that twentieth verse also – "they came

thither, and were ashamed.” Peter in particular, yes, but all who had forsaken Him earlier, “they came thither” – to the tomb – “and were ashamed.” If you had not realized that Christ died for you, the book of Job would put you right. But if you had not believed that Christ rose again from the dead according to the scriptures, the book of Job would put you right there also. It is not enough to the soul to see the death on the Cross – the picture is incomplete. Christ is Risen! Hallelujah! And the eternal Son of the everlasting God is exalted into glory. And He is coming again. O Lord, how great Thou art!

Chapter 7

In Job chapter seven the lamentation of the man Job is very poignant and moving. Here he makes mention of his afflictions: “My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.” That is the picture of a man lying on the ground, covered with oozing sores, dirty, dispirited, despairing of life. In chapter one Job was the greatest of all the men of the east. Such a difference indeed exists between Job in the first chapter and Job in the second chapter that his friends could no longer recognize him as the man they once knew. Poor Job! To lose all he had accumulated – in one day – was bad enough, but even that could be borne patiently. To come to this pitiful state of wretchedness as we now see him was just too much. “Is there not an appointed time” (to die) “to man upon earth?” he cries. Job was not young. He could see no hope but death. “*Are not* his days also like the days of an hireling? As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow,” – working in the fields in the heat of the day – “and as an hireling looketh for *the reward of his work:*” – the end of the day – “so am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.” There is no end in sight. The trial just goes on and on, each hopeless day succeeded by the blackness of despair. “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.” And in verse 13 and 14 and 15 we learn of Job’s nightmares, so that even his rest is made bitter. No more utterly dejected, miserable and lost condition has ever been set down in literature, and Job as we know was a righteous man, “perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil.” What a picture!

Now just and upright as Job had been, and unjust and deceitful as Satan’s attacks had been, both fall far short of the real thing. We can only see Christ by comparison, and we can only guess at many of the comparisons. We know of course that Job, for all his God-fearing way of life, was a man who obviously is born of Adam’s race and lineage, partaking of the sin and the curse which is man’s inheritance in Adam. If Job were other than such, he would not expect to die, but scripture says, “As in Adam, all die,” so the conclusion is valid. In comparison, Christ had eternal life, not bestowed upon Him, but abiding in Him. Christ is “Thy holy Child, Jesus,” as the angel told Mary, “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Christ is not merely just and upright and perfect, but sinless, born holy, utterly without blemish. If Satan’s attacks could so reduce Job to a miserable, oozing wreck beseeching God to destroy him and put an end to his misery, and Satan is restricted by God to certain limits, imagine what Satan could do were he given free reign to do his worst, to do his utmost. We perceive therefore that the sufferings of Job, compared with the sufferings of Christ, cannot do more than hint at the real thing. What is the subject of the debate in the book of Job? Should a truly

righteous man be allowed to suffer, or not? Let us put it another way. For what crime would a judge sentence any man to undergo the afflictions of Job? Would the death penalty not seem kind by comparison? The malefactor could say, "We indeed justly, for we receive the reward of our deeds," and of Jesus, "but this man hath done nothing amiss." How savagely unjust was Calvary! How extravagantly cruel was the Lord's treatment! What afflictions could make Job's lot seem light? And the more innocent the Victim, the harsher the sentence appears!

Now the gospel records bear this out, but they do not detail it. We are forced to study Job, to listen to what Job said, to see Job's afflictions, before we can begin to grasp what Christ was called upon to suffer. Jesus Christ the Righteous is not simply the Just suffering unjustly, but the Just suffering for the unjust. What He suffered is what you and I would have been compelled to suffer as the due reward of our wicked deeds, were we to be brought to trial and charged with them. We as sinners, living in sin and indeed delighting in sin, rebelling against God our Creator and Maker, refusing to believe in Him or in His word, adding iniquity to iniquity each day we lived, would be at least brought into judgment before Him. The sentence then would be eternal damnation, suffering the torments of the damned in hell, from which there is no escape. Christ Jesus died so that we might never come into that condemnation. God can by Christ Jesus righteously offer us free pardon for all our offenses, because the penalty for each offense has been fully paid at the Cross. Only if we refuse the pardon: only if we choose to go on living in sin: only if we ignore the Sacrifice of Christ, will the offenses be imputed to us, and we be called upon to stand trial before God. This is true for each one of us, for John says He is the propitiation for our sins, "and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world." We may go free, escape unscathed, be forgiven all our debt, by acknowledging our sins before God, repenting from and forsaking our sins, giving up our rebellion and accepting by faith the death of Christ Jesus at Calvary as full payment for sin, and so by openly confessing Christ as Savior and publicly witnessing to His Resurrection, make peace with God through Him.

That of course is the gospel message of all evangelists, from the apostles to the present day, the good news for man from God his Creator, and the power of God unto salvation for all believers in Christ. That is not found in Job but in the New Testament, for resurrection from the dead is unknown to Job, – "so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more," – and Job was in ignorance of the picture he modeled for. Now obviously if Job knew why he was suffering we would have no book of Job, for his patience was such that he would likely have kept his integrity, and no debate would have come to pass. The debate, as we said earlier, is the whole point of the book. Without Job's lamentations how would we ever have learned the feelings of a righteous man made to suffer unjustly? "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth" Job says in verse 11, "I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." But we are all meant to see the picture he modeled for, and if we fail to see it – or refuse to believe it when it is shown to us – then the book of Job can be returned to the dry and dusty archives of history as some sort of curiosity, of little interest to modern man, whilst the church keeps only the story of Job and ignores the other forty chapters completely. No doubt some will prefer it that way, but God gives us no book we may safely ignore in scripture, and the book of Job is rather too long and occupies rather too much space in the Bible to be entirely overlooked. What shall we do with it? Paste the pages together and retain it thus unopened? Or cut out the pages and throw them all away? False teachers! Here is a book which can open our eyes to the sufferings of

Christ, and no other book can equal it. Let us alone then, for if we can learn something of Christ from any part of God's word we are free to do so.

Therefore we encourage you to read chapter seven for yourself. At the end of the chapter you will find that Job says, "I have sinned," for he realizes that in complaining against God he has lost his integrity and yet he cannot refrain, he cannot help himself. Do you perceive the anguish of his spirit? This is a perfect man suffering unjustly. What then of the sinless Son of God, suffering for you? Will He suffer no anguish of spirit, no bitterness of soul? Who will say that He suffered no such thing? But where is the true tale of His sufferings? There is no hint in the gospels, nor little enough in the prophets. No, no! Only in Job is the truth revealed. And Job, realizing that he has sinned, and lost his integrity, goes on to ask in the last verse of the chapter, "And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" The afflictions do not abate night or day, yet it seems to Job that God is hiding from him, refusing to answer his prayers, and indeed causing him to sin with his mouth. In chapter one, you will recall, scripture says, "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." At the end of the book God causes Job to see that he has charged God foolishly, but even by the seventh chapter Job can say, "I have sinned," for he has opened his mouth. It is not the first time in scripture, nor the last time, where the people of God have been much enlightened by seeing where another man transgressed. We can learn more than one lesson from Job. But the picture God wants us to see is that Christ was sinless. Even in being made sin for us Christ is sublime. Even in face of Calvary's Cross He opened not His mouth. God only hid from Job – God forsook Christ! Yet Jesus Christ the Righteous never uttered one word of complaint in the anguish of His spirit and in the bitterness of His soul. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him. Amen!

Paul says, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It is our privilege today, in seeing the injustice suffered by Christ and how He bore it without sin, to acknowledge that it is no more than simple justice to exalt Christ above every name that is named in heaven above or in the earth beneath. It is no more than His due to raise Him from the dead and seat Him at the right hand of God. It is up to us to try to make amends for the sufferings He bore for us, by serving Him with all our hearts, by confessing His worthiness, by praising Him here below. The day will come when we will be able to stand with the thousand thousands of the redeemed, and sing His praise in our Father's house in heaven, but what of today? Does not Christ deserve our best? Is not He worthy of the true accord of our hearts? Should we wait for another day before offering Him our thanks? Or shall we not rather join with God in recognition of His greatness as our Savior and Lord, and sing His song, "How Great Thou Art!" with adoration. Job was perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil. Job could not refrain himself from sinning. Christ was holy and without spot, and, apart from our sins, remained sinless to the end. But willingly He bore our sins and our iniquities, in His own body on the Tree, and died for our offenses, and poured out His lifeblood for our redemption, and bought our pardon, and reconciled us to God, and having done all – "It is finished" – rose again for our justification. Shall we look for a greater? Shall we search for higher love? Shall we seek another saviour? "Is not this the Christ?" Yes, therefore let us join with God in honoring Him, to the glory of God the Father.

Chapter 8

“Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, How long wilt thou speak these *things*? and *how long shall* the words of thy mouth *be like* a strong wind?” Bildad the Shuhite is the second of the three ‘characters’ taking part in this debate. We saw in chapter two that Bildad the Shuhite is representative of human emotions as a God-given or God-appointed means to lessen the severity of the traumas and tragedies of life. He is our ‘friend’ in that way. Under normal circumstances we can count on Bildad to rally round and assist us to mourn or laugh, to sorrow or rejoice. As in tragedy our ability to weep is a safety valve to keep us from introspection, so in feasting our ability to laugh is an adjunct to merriment and mirth. Without Bildad the Shuhite our mourning has no outlet and can do us real harm. Without Bildad the Shuhite our rejoicing has no vent, and can do us little good. So early in life we learn to make Bildad the Shuhite our friend, that we may grow up without a twist, as we might say. He is confederate with Eliphaz, so that we may grow as reasonable, rational and normal persons. It is irrational to teach a child not to weep. It is abnormal for a child not to laugh. Bildad the Shuhite is a God-given or God-appointed means to allow the child to be normal. And we should retain Bildad the Shuhite as our ‘friend’ all our lives. If as adults we can laugh when we are merry, why can we not weep when we are sad? It is inconsistent to say grown-ups may laugh but not weep, or vice versa, yet that is what is taught. Yet tears bring balm to the wounded heart, and the expression of joy is the involuntary dance. We dance for joy, we weep for sorrow. This is the norm in the life that is not repressed.

The sufferings of Job may be gauged by the inability of his ‘friend’ Bildad to help him. Here in chapter eight Bildad can only counsel silence. “How long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?” Job’s afflictions have turned his ‘friends’ into ‘Job’s comforters.’ He dare not laugh – it would be the sick laughter of hysteria, and point to a momentarily unbalanced state of mind. He cannot weep – Job is past the point where tears could ease the anguish. His ‘friend’ Bildad can only wait in silence for seven days, hoping perhaps that the desperate situation will improve, the anguish abate with time. But the afflictions continue unabated, worse if anything, for hope dies. What then can Bildad do? He can only counsel silence, “How long wilt thou speak these things?” This indicates extraordinary afflictions, as this is extraordinary counsel. Under ordinary afflictions in life Bildad, like Eliphaz, comes to comfort and sympathize with us. But Job’s afflictions are far from ordinary. What is normal therefore in normal circumstances becomes obsolete here, and in place of the normal we get the extraordinary. Would Bildad the Shuhite normally counsel silence? No, of course not. When we can see in affliction that the best course to pursue is to keep silence, then we will realize that the afflictions are above the normal. They are extraordinary, in fact. Now it is obvious that the advice to Job is good – Job would indeed have been better not to have opened his mouth. But Job has been silent for seven days, and now he can no longer refrain his mouth. His afflictions have risen from the extraordinary to the unbearable, and his speech is inevitable. His ‘friends’ have been “Job’s comforters’ to him, and instead of sympathetic comfort they add only grief to his anguish.

Now Job is the perfect man, ‘modeling’ for us in a great picture of Christ. At what point Christ’s afflictions become unbearable we cannot be sure. Perhaps at Gethsemane. Perhaps at His mockery in Herod’s palace. Perhaps at His scourging. Perhaps at His nailing. But if Job is giving us a true picture, then we are made to see that at some point Christ’s sufferings became

intolerable, and we await the inevitable. Why is He yet silent? He has not laughed hysterically. He has not wept emotionally. He has not screamed in anguish. He has not moaned in pain. He has not cried out in bitterness of soul. He has not railed on any. He has not reproached God. The sublimity of His utterances only serve to accentuate the silence of the Man. Is He not human? Ah, yes, He is indeed human, but this is Jesus Christ the Righteous, Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God Himself. We may all resist pressure, suffer affliction patiently, bear the cruelty of man meekly, but only up to a point. When the bearing becomes altogether unbearable then what is in us will come out. And Christ was human. When the bearing became unbearable then what was in Him came out. And as we look again at the Cross of Calvary we see clearly what was in Him. Compassion. Love. A desire to save. Even respect for His earthly mother. But above all an unshakeable relationship with God. The intolerable will always bring out what is in man, however strongly disciplined we may be. Christ was Man, and the intolerable clearly reveals what was in Him. The seven sayings on the Cross of Shame reveal once for all what Christ was like. Even His humanity is starkly revealed in the phrase forced from His lips, "I thirst," and that bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is no reproach of God, but the cry wrung from the depths of His being which exposes His utter dependence on God, and the true holiness of the sin offering.

Now if it had not been for Job we could never have discovered this. Job's words are inevitable. What was in him was forced out of him under intolerable pressure. Bildad the Shuhite says the words of Job's mouth are like a strong wind. We may take a deep breath amid a sea of trouble, and silently endure for a time. But when affliction overwhelms us and we begin to sink, how long can we hold our wind? And Job is going down for the third time, as we say. When he surfaces for a moment then the words of his mouth are like a strong wind – expelled by unbearable pressure. Christ is in that drowning situation also – "all Thy waves and Thy billows have passed over Me." Now Job does not drown, but Christ does. And Job the righteous justifies himself and reproaches his Maker, but Jesus Christ the Righteous justifies God and reproaches neither God nor man. We see in verse two that it is not Job but Bildad the Shuhite who justifies God; "Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?" Bildad says. We see therefore the value of retaining Bildad the Shuhite as our 'friend.' When we are emotionally moved, either to tears or laughter, our 'friend' will keep us straight thus far at least, and we will justify God. The only danger to watch out for is that Bildad may go too far and convict us of sin where no sin exists, but few of us are so righteous as to let that worry us. "If thy children have sinned..." says Bildad. "If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee." Beloved, if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. We must wait for God to speak. Bildad, like Eliphaz, is not equipped to deal with an abnormal situation, but we can see that in a normal situation Bildad is true enough. His words would have been true had Job sinned, and in chapter nine Job answers and says, "I know it is so of a truth," but of course we understand that Job's situation, like Christ's situation, is that of a just man suffering 'without cause.'

Of what value then are Bildad's words? Let us see. "Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers." Christ died two thousand years ago, cut off in a day of judgment. He does not die the death of the righteous, but the death of the sinful. Does your search show that that was the end of Him? "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose

trust shall be a spider's web," as Bildad puts it? Not at all. For He was Jesus Christ the Righteous. "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will He help the evil doers," says Bildad. If Christ were an evil doer His death is the end of Him, but if Christ were a perfect man then something had to happen. If He were pure and upright then God had to awake for Him (verse five) and make the habitation of His righteousness prosperous, His latter end more than His former estate. Is that true of Him? Indeed it is! The Corn of Wheat had to fall into the ground and die lest it abide alone, but "Behold," says Bildad, "this is the joy of his way, that out of the earth shall others grow." God's harvest. "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect *man*, neither will he help the evil doers: till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing. They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought." Yes, Bildad's words are true of Christ. The Cross is not the end, neither is the tomb His dwelling place. The Resurrection of the third day is the outcome, and the exaltation of Christ is the sequel. The Man of Sorrows who wept over Jerusalem, wept at Lazarus' grave, and had compassion on sinners, is now the Man of Rejoicing. His little flock has become uncountable millions of believers. His latter end is greatly increased. The habitation of His righteousness is prospering. The 'normal' has been restored. The tears have given way to the laughter, the sorrows to joy, the anguish to rejoicing, for Bildad the Shuhite has spoken and all he said has come true at length.

"For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers." History repeats itself. If it came true for Job then it came true for Christ also. But reflect. If it came true for Christ shall it not come true for you also? Yes, it will, if you are in Christ. The resurrection of the just must include those who live by faith today, for it is the just who live by faith. And Paul tells us that the sufferings of this present time cannot compare with the glory that shall be revealed in us. "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end shall greatly increase." The reward is not awaited in vain. Resurrection day will come, and if we are yet alive we will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to join the resurrected to meet Christ in the air – "So shall we ever be with the Lord." And not only 'friend' Bildad, and our knowledge of previous experience, and our enquiries of the former age, but all scripture testifies that our sorrow shall be turned to joy, and our mourning to rejoicing, for God Himself shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and sighing and sorrow shall flee away. The greater our sufferings now for Christ's sake and the gospel, the greater our recompense in the day of our resurrection. The afflictions of today demand the amendment of tomorrow. What we are called upon to endure in this life is the basis for our hope of glory in heaven, so long as we are enduring all "for Christ's sake." This is the promise of God, the black-and-white of scripture, the doctrine of the apostles, the history of Christ. If Job's latter end were not increased then Bildad the Shuhite is false, but chapter 41 reveals the outcome of the matter, and the truth of Bildad's saying. So let us not fear to weep today, because "tomorrow" is the day of laughter. We do not need to thrust away our 'friend' Bildad the Shuhite, for this is our comfort in the trials of today. As God is our Maker then the emotional balance which He set for us, He will restore, as He did for our Savior.

“Then Job answered and said, I know *it is* so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.” It becomes more obvious as we read the book of Job that the translators did not fully understand the matter, and in some verses the use of odd words makes the meaning somewhat obscure, but it is no part of our work to quibble over the ‘*mot juste*.’ We are only here drawing attention to the great picture God has painted for us of Jesus Christ the Righteous suffering the afflictions of God on our behalf, using Job the perfect as a model. If we can see that, then the details will tend to clarify themselves, and obscure meanings will tend to become less obscure. We see in this ninth chapter, as Job once more takes the stage, that God is unanswerable in His divine wisdom. If a perfect man cannot argue with God, how shall we as sinners state our case? If Job cannot stand, how shall those less upright than he, hope to get by? If a truly righteous man feels as Job feels, how shall the less circumspect plead their cause? No, no! Let us see that the unfathomable wisdom of God is too perfect, too subtle, too absolute for any of us. In the day of judgment there is none, however wise-hearted, who will be able to answer Him one in a thousand, a percentage without significance. We cannot therefore depend on our wisdom to get us by, nor yet on our goodness to defend our case. We are neither as wise as Job concerning God, nor as righteous as Job before God, and if Job confesses his inability to contend with God shall we prosper where he failed? It would seem unwise to count too much on it!

Job understands God as Creator, saying, “*He is* wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened *himself* against him, and hath prospered?” Job has seen God in action – have you? – and he is able to say, “Which removeth the mountains, and they know not:” (or, “their place knoweth them not”) “which overturneth them in his anger.” Job is not talking about natural phenomena, such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, but Job is also speaking of what he has seen, when God wreaked havoc on earth, which is why Job fears God. He goes on, “which shaketh the earth out of her place,” (or “orbit”) “and the pillars thereof tremble.” Here again Job is referring to the day of God’s anger. “Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars,” (or, “darkeneth the stars, so they shine not”). Job feels impotent in his knowledge – not hearsay – of God, for Job has witnessed the things he speaks of, and now finds himself, in spite of years of carefulness, up against the very God he fears. His feeling of inadequacy deepens as he remembers all he has learned of God. “Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.” Job was in there at the beginning somewhere, in spite of remaining unmentioned till the history of God’s people is completed in Esther. The Cross of Christ is from eternity, and God can use any man in any age, therefore, to paint a picture of Christ. “Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades,” – these deserve careful study – “and the chambers of the south.” This is not merely symbolical language, but factual. “Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number.” Truly, Job has a better understanding of the God of heaven and earth than most of us, for Job fears God, Job comprehends God’s fathomless wisdom, and Job credits God with being the God of wonders, doing marvelously. Can you speak thus?

“Lo, he goeth by me, and I see *him* not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.” Who can fight what he cannot see, or challenge what he cannot perceive? Is God in front of, or behind you, or off to one side at this moment? Can you tell if God is above you, or all around you, or inside you? There is no way of knowing, is there? So who can resist Him, or stand against God?

Job knows well the futility of his own speeches, yet because of his intolerable situation cannot refrain from speech. Yet the knowledge only adds to his bitter frustration. He cannot laugh, or weep, or pray. Nothing he can say or do can mitigate his afflictions. He is squeezed in a cruel vice, and he cannot wriggle free, twist or turn as he will. “*If* God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him,” (or “the helps of the upright must bend and give way before Him.”) All Job’s righteousness and careful living no longer offer him support. He has relied on integrity and honesty and righteousness and perfectness to maintain his standing before God. If these cannot answer for him, says Job, “How much less shall I” (without them) “answer Him, and choose out my words to reason with Him?” Yes, Job’s situation is truly intolerable and his grief past bearing. Who would willingly change places with Job? And yet we know that Job’s afflictions were light compared with the afflictions of Christ. Is Job stripped and hung up to die, a mocked spectacle of the cruel ones? Has Job been scourged? Has Job been crucified? Or will God ask Job to make atonement for even his own sin? Not all Job’s afflictions put together could begin to compare with one hour of darkness on Calvary’s Tree. But without a glimpse of Job’s sufferings, without Job’s speech to reveal the matter, how could we ever appreciate the sufferings of Jesus Christ the Righteous called upon to become sin for us?

Why do we continue to read the words uttered by Job? Because we want to understand the afflictions of Job, and to grasp the feelings of one perfect man (before Christ) who is unjustly made to suffer the sinners’ fate, the just in the place of the unjust. Why do we continue to read the words of the three friends of Job? Because we want to understand what is normal in order to better comprehend the abnormal. Eliphaz tells us what is the norm in human life. Bildad gives us the normal reaction (as weeping or laughing) to the events of life. If Job can neither laugh nor weep nor pray, nor find an answer in his present distress, then we perceive his afflictions are abnormal, unheard of for a righteous man to suffer, without precedent, unlooked for, without cause, but demanding of an explanation. Unless we see the role played by Job as a model for God’s great picture of Christ, then any explanation must leave out Christ, and nullify His word that all scripture testifies of Him. Of what use then are the forty chapters of debate? None! So let us read what Job says (read it!) and let the light of God’s truth shine in our darkness. “Whom, though I were righteous, *yet* would I not answer, *but* I would make supplication to my judge.” We see that Job well knows the greatness of the Lord his God, and the sovereign majesty of the everlasting Throne. Righteousness and perfect living are not enough to save the soul. Holiness is the first requirement. And we are unholy. How then may we be saved? By believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, who bore our sins and was made an atonement for us, reconciling in Himself the irreconcilable – man the sinner and God the holy, – by one perfect offering on Calvary’s Cross. How great thou art!

“If I had called, and he had answered me; *yet* would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause.” That is the speech of a man who feared God and eschewed evil. We are allowed to see close up the sufferings of Job and his feelings. We can steadily gaze without qualms on this picture, and yet it is only the briefest outline of Christ’s extremity of distress. Nevertheless, Job’s words bear careful consideration. “He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness.” It is the drowning man fighting to breathe, whilst being filled with the cup of bitterness – that is the picture before us. “If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong.” It is the cry of a strong man in the

grasp of a stronger – that is the picture painted by Job. “And if of judgment, who shall set man a time to plead?” It is the cry of the innocent whose judgment is taken away, his case unheard – that is the calamity portrayed for us by Job. It is a true representation of Christ, even if we never saw it so before, for Job the perfect makes a very “akin” model for Jesus Christ the Righteous. We are fully aware that no man could be an “alike” for our Lord. Job testifies, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: *if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.*” No, the perfectness of Job is not quite the same thing as the perfection of Christ, nor the righteousness of Job – unquestionable though it be – quite the same thing as the holiness of the sinless Son of God. Job’s own mouth condemns him, and Job’s own mouth witnesses to his perverseness, but of Christ scripture tells us that in Him was no perverseness, “neither was guile found in His mouth.” Christ never appears in the book of Job. Job’s words speak only of Job. But read again the life of Christ in the four gospels, for “never man spake as this Man.”

For all that, Job’s words bring us very close to the Lord Himself. Listen. “If the scourge slay suddenly,” verse 23, “he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.” Job is pouring out his pent-up bitterness in a bitter reproach of God. That is the picture of the book of Job. But in the gospels Christ is scourged. And God does not lift a finger to help Him. He must bear it by Himself. But others had been known to die under the scourge. Suppose He could not bear it – what then? There was no provision made for that eventuality. Job, in his great grief, accuses God of heartlessness. He is of course referring to his own calamity, a symbolical scourging only, not an actual scourging, but Christ must bear an actual scourging. Did you ever stop to reflect what the outcome would have been if He had been unable to bear it? Could not God, who had been known to remove mountains out of place – remove Golgotha? Could not God, who had been known to shake the earth on its axis, have shaken Pilate’s palace? Could not God, who commandeth the sun and it riseth not, – overturn the judgment? Why would He allow His only begotten Son, His well-beloved, the apple of His eye, to be scourged? Why would He allow the perfect and the wicked to perish together on one hill? Job can find no answer. But do you and I not know the answer? Yes, we do. “ ‘Twas for sinners, Jesus died.” Scripture says, “With His stripes, we are healed.” If the litany of my sins were read before Pilate, would he not order me to be scourged? Indeed he would. And how much more just is God! Therefore Christ bore it all for me – for you – that neither I nor you might ever come into that condemnation. Death is the wages of sin, the due reward of our deeds. Christ died that we might live, and rose for our justification. We indeed justly, but this Man hath done nothing amiss.

Chapter 10

In the tenth chapter of the book of Job we find Job continuing his complaint and reproach of God. What is he saying? He is saying this has gone on long enough! He is pleading for an end of it! He is distressed beyond measure yet his afflictions only increase! He has endured the unendurable, tolerated the intolerable, and borne the unbearable and still the pressure never lets up but grows steadily worse. Therefore Job’s words become more and more bitter, his reproach of God more vehement, his statements wilder. We are meant to see that for Christ, Gethsemane, the betrayal by Judas, the faithlessness of His disciples, the denial by Peter, the mockery of Herod’s palace, the hall of judgment before Pilate, the cruel scourging, the death sentence, the

intolerable burden of the Cross itself, the pathetic road to Golgotha, and then the actual crucifixion itself in all its horror, were only preludes to the Great Sacrifice, when Christ was called upon to atone before God for the sins of the whole world. He had already borne the unbearable, tolerated the intolerable, and endured the unendurable. Satan had done his worst, and stepped back satisfied, rubbing his hands. Then God stepped in, and the darkness closed around the Sacrifice. Christ is nailed into position. He is no less Man than Job. Does He reproach God? Does He beg for an end to be made? Does He plead for His life, or even for death? Nay, the obedient Son bows His head before the fierceness of the wrath of God without a murmur.

Listen briefly to Job, as we scan the chapter before us. “My soul is weary of my life...I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God...Is it good unto Thee that Thou shouldest oppress...and shine upon” (or “approve”) “the counsel of the wicked?...There is none can deliver out of thine hand...Thine hands have made me...yet thou dost destroy me...see thou mine affliction, for it increaseth...Thou huntest me as a fierce lion...Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increased thine indignation upon me...cease, and let me alone...before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death.” Do not the words convey the sense of the intolerable? Is there any relief found in chapter ten? And yet Job’s afflictions, long a by-word, are light in face of the Cross of Christ. If a man would not willingly change places with Job, what Man would willingly step into the sinner’s place and suffer all the wrath go God against sin which had been piling up since Adam fell? Greater love hath no man than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends, says scripture, but we see that Christ is not merely laying down His life – Christ is the Sin-offering demanded by the Law. When a man has given his life for his friend, he has given everything, the ultimate in sacrifice. But he has not been called upon first to atone for his friend’s sin. His life is all he has to offer, and if he give that, he has given all. But the Man for whom Job is a model is called upon to make one Sacrifice so awesome as to astonish heaven and earth. As God is the ultimate in holiness, so God must demand the ultimate in Sacrifice if His holiness is to be satisfied. We cannot conceive what the demands of ultimate holiness might call for, and therefore we cannot conceive what the Sacrifice involved, but within the limits of finite minds we can nevertheless comprehend that until we studied the picture in the book of Job we were not even aware that the inconceivable even existed.

Is it enough then to scan briefly the words of Job? Would not more careful study only elucidate more clearly the details of the picture? Job says, “My soul is weary of my life.” That is the first sentence of chapter ten, yet further on we learn that Job’s afflictions are increasing rather than lessening. At what point then does Christ say, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death?” At the end of the Sacrifice? During the Sacrifice? Or before the Sacrifice? And if at that point all the horror lay before Him, how can He possibly go through with it? Job can plead for his life in verse two, “Do not condemn me: show me wherefore thou contendest with me.” Christ can only say, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done.” Job can reproach God in verse three, “*Is it* good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?” Christ can only say, “Not My will, but Thine be done.” Job can ask in verse four, “Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?” meaning can God really appreciate Job’s sufferings? For God is in heaven, untouched by evil and untouchable. But Christ is God manifest

in flesh, and it is in flesh Christ is asked to bear the sins of the world. Can God really appreciate what He is asking His Son to bear? Scripture tells us that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The mind boggles! The words of Job in verse five hint at something that Job in his bitterness could not imagine. “*Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man’s days?*” It verges on the prophetic, you see, for “I and My Father are one,” yet it is not God who dies but the Son of Man only, for God is eternal, if you will not misunderstand us. “That thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?” Job can sense, but not see, that the picture is of wrath against sin, but that only baffles him and adds to his frustration.

Jesus Christ the Righteous is made sin for us, scripture tells us. If the wrath of God against sin could righteously fall on Job, who is said to be “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil,” to the point where Job longed for death to ease his afflictions, what wrath of God must righteously fall on the One made sin for us, who “became sin” and who bore our sins in His own body on the Tree? Job can say indignantly “Thou knowest that I am not wicked” (verse seven) but scripture assures us that for every misdemeanor man is to be judged, and we can gauge the sentence when we see what Job had to suffer. Our best must fall far short of absolute holiness. God declares “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” and obviously that ‘all’ included Job the perfect. Can we assess where we might stand in the light of that? Would Christ have died if it had been possible for Adam’s race to stand before God in their own righteousness? If God’s chosen people, diligently keeping the law and serving God day and night, could not achieve holiness, shall we sinners of the Gentiles succeed in becoming accepted on our own merits? And yet it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Job continues, “And there is none that can deliver out of thine hand.” Is there then no way of escape, no hope save judgment no prospect but eternal damnation? Thank God there is a Way, a brighter hope, a better prospect than that. “He that believeth on Me shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Christ is the Way. He is our only Hope. He is our better Prospect. For He has already placed Himself in our position, suffered for our sins, shed His blood for our redemption, and risen from the dead to lead us unto God, “clothed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the Throne.” We have done nothing, only believe. We have no merits to offer, save the merits of His Cross. We have not made ourselves acceptable to God, but believing in Jesus we are “accepted in the Beloved.” Hallelujah!

Job, as we said, longs for death to ease his afflictions. From verse eight to verse 18 of chapter ten we can read the lamentation of Job. “Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.” Can we not see that those around us are perishing? If this is the language of an upright man while still on earth, what lamentations will emanate from hell? Will those who refuse Christ today not wish then that they had never been born? Will they not reproach God, and reproach their sires, and reproach the midwife for allowing them to leave the womb? Yet today they are comfortable and serene, in blissful carelessness of the Cross of Christ. Cheerfully they go about their business, blaspheming His name, using God’s creation to furnish their houses, ignoring every appeal of the gospel, wantonly wasting the time God has given them to repent in. The older they get, the longer they prepare to live. Job cries in verse 20, “Are not my days few?” but these live as though they had plenty of time in which to repent. Job goes on to say, “cease *then, and* let me alone, that I may

take comfort a little, before I go *whence* I shall not return, *even* to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness *itself*; *and* of the shadow of death, without any order, and *where* the light *is* as darkness.” If every generation goes there, shall this generation escape somehow? How gloomy is Job, not wishing to live yet afraid to die, seeking only a brief respite from his afflictions before the number of his days is over. How cheerful is man, enjoying all that God has given to him in Creation, inheriting a world he couldn’t create, fed by the hand of God – and in his ignorance denying that there is a God, destroying all before him, and claiming that he personally will somehow evade death, shirk the responsibility for his sins, and escape by his own ingenious error from the land of the shadow of death.

Job says, “A land of darkness, as darkness *itself*; *and* of the shadow of death, without any order, and *where* the light *is* as darkness.” Christ said, “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” Man walks by the light of his own thought, his own philosophy, his own success, refusing to walk by the light of the word of God, by the light that has come into the world. He stumbles on, unheeding or unaware that as he draws further away from the Light that lighteth every man entering into the world, so his darkness deepens. “The only goal in life is to get rich,” he tells those behind him, and none asks God’s great question, “If this night thy soul should be required of thee, whose then would these things be?” On he plunges, irrational, unreasonable and illogical, seeking the elusive gleam of gold, his soul forgotten in the pursuit of happiness. But as his darkness deepens, so he comes nearer and nearer to the border of a land where the only light is darkness, illumined by the flames of a lake of fire. And behind him shines a great light, so that he can always see the shadow in front of him, yet he never pauses but rushes on to the land of shadow, where the great Light shines no more. The God of order and reason is left behind. The Light of the World is totally ignored. The gospel that would save his soul is the only thing he never wants to hear. And before death ever gets to him he is already dead. Before he comes to the border of the land where the light is as darkness he is already in darkness. And before he comes under the shadow of death he is enveloped in the shadows. (But in his will he instructs those following him, “Don’t sell – the value must go up!”) Little does he know, or care, how Christ suffered on his behalf, even going into death itself in order to win for him eternal life, which he refused. Is not that sad? Is it reasonable, rational, normal? “If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.” O man, consider it!

Yes, Christ went into death, tasting death for every man. If it is distasteful to you to die, it was bitter indeed for Him. Death had no claim on Him, for death is the wages of sin – “in Adam, all die,” – but He was the Son of God alone. In Him was light. In Him was the fountain of life. In Him was eternal life. But obedient still, even unto death, He gave up the ghost, crossing the border of the land of darkness. Into the land of chaos – “without any order,” as Job puts it – came the Lord of Glory. He came to preach to the souls in prison. Three days He abode there, and then He left, never to return. Scripture goes no further. We are left only with a sense of greatness, as though something has been accomplished, but what it was or how it was we are unaware. This only we know – God is a God of order. As in Genesis God by the Word brought order out of chaos, so in the land without any order the Word that came there preached peace. And as in Genesis we saw Joseph in prison taking charge, before he was raised to ruler, so too we may understand that Christ was given the keys of the prison and all things are now put under Him. It

is the Christ men scoff at who holds the keys of death and hell. It is the Christ of Calvary who holds power of life and death over every man. It is the Christ of God who must finally decide your eternal destiny. We are told to kiss the Son, to make peace with Him while we can for at His coming again He will come to judge the earth and all its inhabitants, when even the dead shall stand before Him.

Job says, “Before I go *whence* I shall not return, *even* to the land of darkness and the shadow of death.” Job can only speak for himself – Christ must, and did, return from that land. “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption,” was Peter’s text. The resurrection was inevitable. On the Cross Jesus cried, “It is finished,” and gave up the ghost. Death had no claim on Him. Only the Father’s will made Christ subject to death, and it was never the Father’s will to leave Him there. The third day the inevitable happened. Christ rose from the dead and appeared openly to His disciples. Christ rose from the dead and fulfilled the last prophecy of scripture concerning Himself. Christ rose from the dead and fulfilled the Father’s will. Christ rose from the dead and took the seat reserved for Him at the right hand of God. Christ rose from the dead for our justification, “for if Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins,” says Paul. Christ rose from the dead to be the firstfruits from the dead. Christ rose from the dead to be the firstborn among brethren. Christ rose for the church. Christ rose for the apostles. Christ rose that you and I might live in triumph evermore, unafraid of death. And Christ rose because in Him lay the eternal life, the fountain of waters, the dayspring from on high. It was obviously as necessary for Christ to rise from the dead as it was necessary for Him to die. One without the other couldn’t exist. The whole climax comes with the Resurrection of Christ. The mourning of His disciples turns to joy. The day of Pentecost begins the wonders afresh. The New Testament comes into being, the church grows worldwide, and when will He return, we wonder? Yes, Christ is risen from the dead!

Chapter 11

“Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said...” In Job chapter eleven we need to see the relevance of the third ‘character’ in this debate. Remember the subject under debate is this question, “Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not.” In the fourth and fifth chapters Eliphaz the Temanite answers and says – in a word, “No.” Again, in chapter eight Bildad the Shuhite answers and says – in a word, “No.” Now Zophar the Naamathite answers and says – in a word, “No.” But each answers from a different standpoint. Eliphaz the Temanite shows that it is not normal for a truly righteous man to suffer as the wicked. Bildad the Shuhite shows that both tears and laughter are common to all men, but even he comes down heavily on the side of an answer in the negative to that very important question. And Zophar the Naamathite, representing an approach to life and death, an attitude if you like, agrees with the other two. You see, our approach to life and death, our attitude in the matter, has to follow on from our Eliphaz and our Bildad. If Eliphaz had said, “Yes,” – yes, it is normal for a truly righteous man to suffer as the wicked, – then our attitude to Christ’s sufferings would be colored by our understanding of that answer. If Bildad the Shuhite had said, “Yes” – yes it is normal for a truly righteous man to suffer only grief – then our attitude to the sufferings of Christ would be different. But if Eliphaz says, “No,” and Bildad says, “No,” then our attitude is probably going to be “No,” for Zophar follows

on from the first two. Zophar means comfort, heart's ease, and our approach to life and death is confident only if we know we will not suffer as the wicked. If we thought the just would suffer as the unjust we could have no confidence in life – or death.

Suppose you lived in a (fairly) normal society, where wrong was punished and right applauded. If you did only what was right, yet you were punished as a wrongdoer, would you not be indignant? Surely our 'Eliphaz' would tell us that such a situation should never exist. Suppose you lived in a (fairly) normal society where tears and laughter balanced each other out, and only you were a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, would you not feel discriminated against? Surely our 'Bildad' would tell us such a situation should never exist. And suppose you came to your time to die, and you were confident that you had done no wrong in your lifetime, would you expect to suffer as the most wicked? Surely 'Zophar' would tell us such a situation should not exist. So we see we have these three 'friends' to comfort us. But these three 'friends' only comfort us so long as the situation is normal (or even fairly normal). In a place where Christianity is barred, such as China, a man can live a perfectly upright life, doing good, preaching the gospel, going to church and bringing up his children in the fear of the Lord – and he will be put in prison for it, even tortured to death for it. Can Eliphaz comfort him there? Indeed no, for Eliphaz would turn into a 'Job's comforter' and answer him that God must be against him. If a Christian in Russia spent a third of his life in prison for merely being Christian, he would become a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Could Bildad help him there? Indeed no, for Bildad would only assure him that God had forsaken him, 'Job's comforter.' And if a truly righteous man lived an exemplary and perfect life in any society would he not live without fear of prison and punishment? And if he were made to suffer unjustly, would not Zophar the Naamathite condemn him, because such a thing is not normal but abnormal, and Zophar then becomes a 'Job's comforter.'

“Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said, Should not the multitude of words be answered?...” Well, it is normal in any debate for a speaker to be answered, particularly if he has just uttered a “multitude of words.” “...and should a man full of talk be justified?” (Or, accepted without question?) Again, to be normal, the answer is “No.” “Should thy lies make men hold their peace?” Zophar goes on, “...and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?” We see that under normal conditions lies would not be allowed to stand unanswered, and slanderers would be made ashamed. It reminds us again of the abnormal conditions under which Christ suffered at His trial, when the false witnesses went unanswered, and the slanderers went unreprieved, although the greatest Advocate of all time stood in their judgment hall. If Job in the bitterness of his anguish of soul reproached God, then Zophar would reprove Job in any normal debate. If the attitude of those who stood to condemn Christ had been normal, they would have understood that they were reproaching God, and so desisted. But the whole approach to life and death of the Pharisees and Sadducees was abnormal. Verse four goes on, “For thou has said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.” We know of Christ that the judges could find no fault in Him, and we know His doctrine was pure. Why then is He condemned to death? Surely that is abnormal? Our whole approach to life would alter drastically overnight if we found in our courts that false witnesses were countenanced, and that the judge was influenced more by the catcalls and mockery of the spectators than by the evidence before him, so that perfectly innocent persons could be put to death on any pretext of those in authority. We would rise in alarm and

flee the country, for such abnormal conditions are rarely seen – they must certainly be the exception rather than the rule, if justice is to be seen to be done.

Zophar continues, “But oh that God would speak, and open His lips against thee.” God did speak concerning Christ in the ears of His people, saying, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Furthermore, John the Baptist, whom they revered, bore witness that He was the Son of God. All His works and all His miracles attested to Him, that He was of God. Multitudes of men and women bore witness to His graciousness, to His compassion, to His healing power, to His wonderful doctrine, to His touch. His disciples were witnesses to His righteousness. None could find a single fault in Him, nor could any convict Him of sin in thought, word or deed, though many tried. He was Innocence personified. Every deed was good, every word sublime, every thought pure – yet they shouted to crucify Him. Why? Because their attitude was wrong. Because their whole approach to life – and death – was wrong. Believing themselves normal, and Christ abnormal, their ‘Zophar’ was completely wrong. Zophar the Naamathite is our ‘friend’ only when conditions are normal or fairly normal. Now any normal person should easily discern that Christ was innocent, man was wicked. To him, ‘Zophar’ is a ‘friend.’ But if our whole approach to life and death is false, if our attitude is wrong, we will side with those who mock Christ. We will condemn the innocent and free the guilty, as they once released Barabbas. Justice will depart out of our coasts. Christ could not get justice under the law of Moses. Christ could not get justice under the Roman law. Are you doing Him justice by your mockery today? How will you know when ‘Zophar’ is wrong? When he clashes with the word of God. God has said of Job, “This man was perfect, and upright and one that feared God and eschewed evil.” God has said of Christ, “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!” And God has revealed His will to man. “Woe to him that calleth evil good, and good evil.” But you have condemned the innocent!

“And that He would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.” Zophar the Naamathite is washed by the river of life, as we said earlier. He speaks from experience, or what we would call the accepted norm. Now in any society where injustice is so frequently seen as to become the accepted norm, or where cruelty and wickedness is standard behavior, ‘Zophar’ will justify your own injustice, your cruelty, your own wickedness. But when believers see the injustice meted out to Christ, the cruelty of Calvary, the wickedness of man, then their ‘Zophar’ becomes their ‘friend’ indeed. To them is revealed the secrets of wisdom, “that they are double to that which is.” They discover the real meaning of the Cross of Christ; they understand the why of it; they perceive it is more than the death of the Innocent. And they know that God will never tax them with that which their iniquity deserveth. Their eyes are opened, enlightened, made to see clearly. Their ears are unstopped so that they hear God’s word. Their whole approach to life and death is transformed, and their whole attitude to earth and heaven changes. Thus their ‘Zophar,’ which formerly excused the guilty and condemned the innocent (as in Job 11), now exonerates the innocent and condemns the guilty. They see they are guilty sinners themselves. They know they need a Savior. They rush to Jesus Christ the Righteous to plead for them, to be their Advocate. And they hurry to make peace with God through their new Lord, Jesus Christ. Such then become the salt of the earth, keeping the rottenness at bay. Without them justice would die, wickedness would flourish, and violence abound more and more. But Satan seeks ever their

extermination, and by every means in his power he tries to turn them against God, as he tried once with Job. So they suffer accordingly.

So in Job chapter 11 we see that from verse seven to the end of the chapter Zophar the Naamathite speaks the truth. But because of the abnormal situation the truth only offends Job, and his 'friend' Zophar becomes his 'Job's comforter.' When we suffer for Christ's sake – and that is literally what happened to Job – Zophar says, "Well, you brought it upon yourself," adding, "That's life!" which is small comfort indeed to Job – or Paul – or you. He is speaking from experience, you see. Our friend Zophar is washed by the river of life as it flows around him. One reason for believers to gather themselves together into a body is to allow that 'river of life' to flow around their 'Zophar,' to renew the conviction that their approach to life – and death – is indeed normal, if only among the like-minded. Likewise Satan will always attempt for the same reason to keep us apart, to prevent us meeting and having fellowship one with the other. Zophar says, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Be reasonable, says Zophar the Naamathite. "Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (or perfectly) Can man with his finite mind ever fully uncover the dark counsels of God? Obviously not in this life, if Zophar is true. But the word of God says, "They that seek Me with all their heart shall find Me." If we make our approach in a spirit of unbiased enquiry we will begin to understand God better. But where do we start? We start at the Cross of Christ. We discard our old attitude of mockery, sarcastic reproach, unbelief – and in a genuine new spirit of wanting to know the whole truth, approach Calvary again. If we do, we shall indeed find God there, and appreciate the phrase, "The Just for the unjust." Our 'Zophar' will prove to us the innocence of Christ and the sinfulness of man. "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands to Him," Zophar tells us, "Then shalt thou lift up thine face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast."

Chapter 12

"And Job answered and said, No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?" Elementary, scoffs Job. The bitterness of his soul is betrayed in the irony of his reply. But as to comfort, there is none; and as to any abatement of his sufferings, there is none; and as to any help his 'friends' can give, there is none. "I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and He answereth him:" (God appearing to be with the neighbour), "the just upright man is laughed to scorn." As Job sits to model for the picture of Christ we see the truth back of his words. On Golgotha's hill stand three crosses. The center one is familiar to all of us, but two unknown malefactors are pilloried on either hand. The malefactors also railed on Him, we are told. "I am as one mocked of his neighbour...the just upright man is laughed to scorn," mourns Job. But one neighbor has second thoughts. He repents. He confesses his unworthiness, and glorifies God in Christ Jesus – "This Man hath done nothing amiss." Then, his situation desperate, he turns his head to plead for one last chance. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." And Jesus answers, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." But what did Job say? "Who calleth upon God, and He answereth him." Even the Pharisees said, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Every believer knows that it is by turning to the center Cross we as malefactors are assured of a place along with Jesus. We indeed justly, but what of this

Man? This Man is our substitute, our propitiation before God, our sin-offering, our Redeemer, our Lord and our God.

Job continues, “He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.” Around the Cross of Shame men sat, lay, sprawled at ease, their only thought of Him to despise Him. But above their heads hung “the lamp despised,” the light of heaven and earth, slowly slipping, slipping, slipping away. The ‘tabernacle’ of His body is torn, plundered, ravished – the scars still visible today. And says Job, “The tabernacle of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.” The life of the centurion is in God’s hand, to do with as He will. The bodies of the soldiers are His creation, and no sickness entered there. The very Tree is originally God’s handiwork. They plundered His garden to make the cruel Cross. They breathed His air to get the strength to crucify His Son. They ate His provision to provide the energy to hammer home the nails. Listen again to Job. “The tabernacle of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.” Small wonder Job is so bitter! The just man sees the injustice, and cries out in bitterness. The perfect man sees the abnormality of it, and is in anguish of soul. The God-fearing man sees the wantonness of it and is cut to the heart. And the upright man sees the irony of it, and cannot refrain his lips. If we have never seen it, never cried out at it, never spoken out against it, are we upright, God-fearing, righteous, just? Poor, misaligned Job! This man, says God, “was the greatest of all the men of the east.” Did any prophet give us a truer picture of Christ, or any king sit so patiently for so long as a model for us? Perhaps you never bothered to read his words before this? Stop! It is time you did. It is time even you sat down to read for yourself what Job actually said. So sit and read – under “the lamp despised.”

“But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.” That is Job 12:7-8, and verse nine goes on, “Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?” The beasts speak of brute creatures. The fowls speak of spiritual thoughts that fly heavenward. The earth speaks of the body of land. The fishes speak of that which survives the flood. In looking at Calvary we see “the thing which the Lord hath wrought.” Man, as brute creatures, without thought, acting out the instinct to kill. The Lord’s poignant utterances as birds released, flying heavenward. The land with the deep furrows ploughed across it, the Lord’s body. And our eternal life – that which comes out of the flood, when the waves and the billows passed over Him. It is the hand of the Lord which hath wrought this. “In whose hand,” adds Job, “is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.” When Christ breathed His last, into whose Hand did He breathe? And when Pilate heard He was dead already, into whose Hand did he gasp? And when the chief priests and elders of the people heaved a sigh of relief, into whose Hand did they sigh? Calvary is God’s great creation, God’s perfect work. The Cross of Christ is the last piece put into place – “It is finished.” The crowds begin to melt away, returning to Jerusalem. The centurion and soldiers break the legs of the two malefactors to hasten death, for the sabbath draws on. The mockers go their way, each to his place. The silent spectators turn at last from the grisly spectacle. And only Job sees, and knows, and tells us plainly of all that God might have done to them and did not do. “In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.” “Father, into Thy hand,” Jesus breathed, “I commend My Spirit.”

“Doth not the ear try words? And the mouth taste his meat?” The facts of the gospel are not in dispute; four writers have written separate accounts. It is up to each one of us to discover these facts for ourselves, and if any cannot read they can listen. “Doth not the ear try words?” Just to listen afresh to the old, old story is to know that it is all true. “And the mouth taste his meat?” O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. “With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.” There are many now who are turning to tomorrow’s world to find salvation, or hope of salvation, from new discoveries. But it is to yesterday’s world we must turn for salvation, to the historical reality of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. True, God is waiting for us up ahead, but it is in turning back to Christ we find wisdom and understanding. “With him is wisdom and strength; he hath counsel and understanding.” We never turn forward to find God; we turn back to Him. All the things we need so desperately today – wisdom, strength, counsel and understanding – are found when we turn back to God by Christ Jesus the Lord. Let us go back to the reading of His book, the Holy Bible. Let us go back over our lives and repent of our misspent years. Let us go back to praying on our knees before Him. And let us go back to the Cross, and confess our need of a Saviour, before we go any further, before we go too far and find it is too late. This day – today – is already too late for some. Tomorrow may be too late for you. Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, for behold, now is the accepted time, today is still the day of salvation. The wisdom you need for tomorrow is to be found in Him today. The strength you need for the journey ahead He provided for you yesterday. He has counsel to give you, and understanding to aid you, but do not put off till tomorrow the turning back to Him of today.

Man likes to think he is in command, and what he plans will stand. But listen again to Job for a moment, because Job knows his God. “Behold, He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. Behold, He withholdeth the waters, and they dry up; again, He sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth. With Him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver alike are His. He readeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty. He removeth away the speech of the trusted, and taketh away the understanding of the aged. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth into the light the shadow of death. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again. He taketh away the heart of the thief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.” No, man is not in command. Man is not the final authority. Man is not the great deviser he likes to believe he is. For Job gives us a truer idea of God than many another, because if God had His eye on Job, and His hand in Job’s affairs, then Job was known to God, and God was known to Job. Job feared God, scripture tells us, and another scripture informs us that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Yes, Job was wise. Job was wise in his real knowledge of God. And scripture records the wisdom of Job as well as the foolishness of Job in charging God foolishly. If we want to know more of God we can profitably study the words of Job, for this too is part of scripture. “Search the scriptures,” Jesus advised, adding, “They are they which testify of Me.”

Now that piece of scripture gives us insight into the ways of God, into His dealings with man, into His omnipotence. But can you see Christ in that scripture just quoted? That is the test. If you cannot, is that because your eyes are not opened yet, or is it perhaps because you are looking in the wrong direction? Try it. Read it again. Pray over it. All scripture testifies of Christ. Is this piece not part of all scripture? Then it too must speak of Christ. You would be the first to condemn us for what you assert to be wrong teaching – can you do better? We have already shown you the scenes around Calvary in the opening verses – now you show to us something of Christ in the closing verses. Each verse is in two parts, or phrases. You go first, and show us Christ in the first phrase, and we will show Christ in the second phrase. “He shutteth up a man, and there is no opening.” The tomb, you see. “He sendeth them out (the waters) and they overturn the earth.” The Risen Christ pours out His Spirit upon His disciples, “The deceived and the deceiver alike are His.” The Jews who refuse to believe in Him, along with their instructors. “And maketh the judges fools.” The Resurrection of Christ reveals the folly of the judges, Annas, Caiphas, Herod, Pilate. “Girdeth their (the kings) loins with a girdle.” Herod is cut off, Festus restricted. “Overthroweth the mighty.” Jerusalem is destroyed at last. “Taketh away the understanding of the aged.” The time-honored way of serving God is replaced by worship in Spirit and in truth. “Weakeneth the strength of the mighty.” Rome is troubled. “Bringeth into light the shadow of death.” Those who believe in Him no longer need to fear death. “Enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.” New Christian nations formed, and again Christ will return to confront the earth. “Caused them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way.” Catastrophe overtakes those left behind. “And maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.” The wicked drink finally the wine of the wrath of God.

Chapter 13

“Lo,” says Job, “mine eye hath seen all *this*, mine ear hath heard and understood it. What ye know, *the same* do I know also: I *am* not inferior unto you.” No, Job is by no means inferior. Job has been said to be – by God Himself – a ‘perfect’ man. And God has made Job to sit patiently and suffer ‘without cause.’ Only his mouth is free to move – in verse 27 Job says, “Thou putteth my feet also in the stocks, and lookest narrowly unto” (constricts) “all my paths.” Job is caught as it were in a vice, from which he can in no wise wriggle free, struggle as he will. And still the pressure continues to mount, till Job is ready to scream. His vilification of his friends becomes wilder and more bitter. His caution is thrown to the wind. He has tried to maintain silence, biting his lip to refrain from speech – but cannot! “Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand?” he asks in verse 14. “Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what will.” His speech is the last resort of a desperate man, his sole outlet for the anguish he is suffering. For the very real sufferings of Job are no light matter indeed. And yet – Ah, God only put Job’s feet in the stocks and restricted his movements. Job is not nailed to a Cross and left to die. God only hid His face from Job – “Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?” – but Job is not forsaken. And Job has freedom of speech, freedom of movement and hope of escape – “Wilt thou pursue a leaf driven to and fro? And wilt thou break the dry stubble?” – but what of Him who can neither move nor speak out nor escape the

wrath of God? In the light of Job's sufferings the Cross in the background stands silent, forsaken, alone – and the Man of Sorrows becomes to us a figure of mystery and of awe.

“Surely I would speak to the Almighty,” says Job, “and I desire to reason with God.” O Lord, be reasonable, pleads Job, for you know I cannot bear it. His plight is desperate, his sufferings beyond belief, his agony unabated. But worst of all, there is no relief! Yet we are made aware of a shadowy background even as we look at the foreground of the picture. If the foreground is a scene of aching unbelief, the background is terrifying. As Job sits to endure the unendurable and is scarce able to maintain his seat, so we are led to see that the only way for a Man to endure in the shadowy background is to be nailed into position. Job's feet are clamped fast in the invisible stocks (a form of punishment no longer in use) and his movements restricted by pain (the narrow paths) and “thou sittest a print upon the heels of my feet” (drumming with the heels) but the Man of Sorrows in the background is too tightly secured even for that. There is something beyond our ken in the background, but in the foreground there is something we can understand and appreciate. Job is a perfect man indeed, but he is only a man. Christ is perfect Man indeed, but the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, the King of Kings also. Christ will endure what Job cannot be asked to suffer. Christ will shine through the gloom and glorify even the blood-stained wood. Christ will die, and lie in death, and rise again, for He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. Christ will outlive, outshine every other creature in God's creation. And yet, as the dutiful Son, He will do it to glorify God the Father. What shall we say to Him then? Shall we not bow adoringly at His feet, falling on our faces before Him in worship, “My Lord and my God,” says Thomas, and offer Him the sweet sacrifice of praise, praise for ever, for what He has done for us? Who else is worthy? What other man is there? The perfect Job? Would anyone worship Job? No!

What then of Job's three ‘friends,’ and the great debate? We can see clearly at least that Job's situation is abnormal, the just man suffering unjustly, and Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar cannot relate to any situation outside of the normal. They equate punishment with crime – or sin – and their position is that a truly righteous man should not suffer, for if the righteous suffers as the wicked, justice is fled away, and if sinners escape condemnation something is amiss. Eliphaz speaks in chapter four, and says, “Who ever perished, being innocent?” Bildad speaks in chapter eight, and says, “Doth God pervert judgment? Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?” and Zophar speaks in chapter 11, and says, “But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and the shall not escape, and thine hope shall be the giving up of the ghost.” But here in chapter 13, Job the upright says in verse four, “But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value.” So we learn from Job that if any man suffers unjustly, his erstwhile ‘friends’ become his ‘Job's comforters’ – their reasoning is true only up to a point, and after that their arguments are false, for they do not allow for the sovereignty of God. We are of course speaking of a normal (or near normal) society in which evil is condemned (not condoned) and good is rewarded (not degraded). If Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar were true, then believers would have no hope of heaven, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and the wages of sin is death, and the wicked go away into eternal damnation, according to scripture. But God is sovereign. By allowing Christ to be our substitute God can exercise His grace and mercy to forgive us all our sins, if we come to the Cross seeking pardon. But sovereign grace is beyond reason, outside the scope of the normal,

and can only be accepted by faith. Therefore we are justified by faith alone, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“O that ye would altogether hold your peace!” Job cries to his ‘comforters,’ “and it should be your wisdom.” (Their silence would be wise.) “Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips.” Poor Job! He is in miserable case indeed. He has searched his conscience and found nothing, unless it be the sins of his youth (verse 26) for which he thought he had atoned long ago. Yet the writing is against him, the hand of God is forbidding his relief from the onslaughts of Satan. The just man is suffering the fate of the unjust, as if indeed God perverted justice and judgment. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” echoes Abraham’s question. If Job is, as God said in the opening verse, “perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil,” and yet suffers the fate of the wicked, who can justify God’s actions? Shall we lie and say God is being kind to Job, or God is treating Job fairly, or Job deserves it? “Will ye speak wickedly for God? And talk deceitfully for Him?” (verse seven). Yes, even some Christians take that line. Or do we mean when we say that God is sovereign that there is no such thing as a truly just God dealing only in righteousness? Justice is justice. Righteousness is righteousness. Holiness is holiness. Can a just, righteous, holy God deal unjustly? Surely not! Even sovereign grace must be righteous. God can pardon – righteously – those who come to Him through the merits of the shed blood of Jesus Christ – but no one else. Abel escapes by the blood of the Lamb. Abraham is said to be a believer. Moses raises up the serpent in the wilderness, speaking of Christ on the Cross. David says, “Thou wilt not suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption,” speaking of Christ’s Resurrection. Lot escapes the destruction of Sodom, for Lot is spoken of as a just man – and the just shall live by faith. All the prophets prophesied of Christ. The great cloud of witnesses spoken of in Hebrews all died in faith. Only those who witness to Christ and live by faith and die in faith can – righteously – be exonerated.

Now Job knows God. Yes, Job knows his God. And God of course knows His servant Job. Job says, “Shall not His excellency make you afraid?” If you think you can stand before God in your own righteousness, not having the perfect righteousness of Christ, shall not His excellency make you afraid? It should, you know. God is totally holy, and He requires of us the same, “Be ye holy for I am holy.” God and sin are incompatible. God and the wicked are diametrically opposed. Imagine coming before the totally holy God with the marks of sin on your person. “Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you?” asks Job the perfect. You would be like a beggar at a King’s wedding – not having on a wedding garment. Every believer must be clothed in the spotless righteousness of Christ, washed in the blood of the Lamb. The beggar from the dunghill is changed; made a new creature in Christ; given the right to be called a son of God; clothed with Christ’s righteousness, brought from darkness into light; accepted in the Beloved; given a place among the people of God; accounted holy; made king and priest unto God. All others are cast into outer darkness, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. What did this beggar do? He came in humility and tears to the Cross of Christ, confessing his sin and his unworthiness, asking for pardon. And God, who loves to pardon and is loath to condemn, righteously accepted the beggar there. But for God to be the God of Justice, someone had to die for the beggar’s sins. There is no such thing as an unjust pardon with God. His holiness must be satisfied first. If you did not come to Him by the way of the Cross, you must

come into condemnation. Or do you think your holiness will satisfy God apart from Christ Jesus our Lord? If you think that, read the Bible again. Man is not intrinsically holy – man is born in sin. Neither a Christian upbringing nor the rites of the church can save you if you have not asked for pardon personally at the Cross of Christ Jesus. You must put your hand to the head of the Sacrifice, by faith, to get your own atonement.

Job knew his God. “Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid,” he says. This man was perfect, and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil, scripture tells us, yet his prayer is, “Let not Thy dread make me afraid.” If Job the exemplary could not face God in judgment, can you? If Job the perfect needed salvation, what of you and me? Job, modeling for Jesus Christ the Righteous, says in this thirteenth chapter, “He also shall be my salvation.” And regarding faith, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Job looked to God for salvation, and Job lived by faith also, and God could use Job’s life to paint a picture of Christ. If we look to God for salvation, and live by faith also, and portray something of Christ in our lives, shall we perish without hope? Not so, but God will make our latter end more than our beginning. We may have to suffer unjustly in this life. We may have to bear much for Christ’s sake and the gospel. We may still be looking for our “City-which-hath-foundations” till we die. But we serve a righteous God, a just God, a holy God. The perfect righteous robe reconciles us to a righteous God. The death of the Just for the unjust will satisfy a just God. And the incorruptibility of the Holy One, as evidenced by His Resurrection, will meet all the demands of a holy God – for us who believe. For Christ is not dead, but risen, alive to die no more. Jesus Christ the righteous is our Advocate with the Father. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. And the Lord knoweth them that are His. It is not normal to be forgiven all one’s debts by any creditor. It is not normal to be pardoned for one’s offenses before ever reaching the Judge. It is not normal for a sinner to wear the robe of righteousness. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zohar would never agree with it. But thank God it is true, for one day a truly righteous Man did suffer, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, and rose from the dead for our justification. If that is not good news, then what is?

Chapter 14

“Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” That much-quoted verse is the prelude to chapter 14 of the book of Job. Now Job, as we said earlier, was by no means a young man at this point, and furthermore Job lived after this point another one hundred and forty years. Job’s life up to this point had been tranquil, for God had hedged him roundabout and prospered everything he undertook to do, and from the end of the book of Job we gather that his next one hundred and forty years were both tranquil and prosperous. Before his tragedy Job had had seven sons and three daughters, and Job was the greatest of all the men of the east. After his tragedy Job had again seven sons and three daughters and he was twice as great. In the light of these facts, how true is this verse of Job? “Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” It makes a great verse for quoting, but just how true was it of Job? “He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.” Does that describe Job’s life? And addressing God he says, “And dost Thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with Thee?” No, Job is trying here to wriggle free of the viselike grip

of affliction. He is pleading for his life. He is seeking to remind God that in the light of eternity even a prosperous and tranquil life is short, difficult, and hard to bear at times, without God adding affliction to it. We are reminded that in the life of Christ, in His brief and few days with us, every day brought troubles. His earthly family misunderstood Him. His disciples misunderstood Him, particularly Peter at one notable point where the Lord had to say, "Get thee behind Me, Satan, for thou art an offense unto Me." The people He walked among misunderstood Him, and the rulers hated Him. Of Christ it could be said, "Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble." Not of Job!

Job goes on in verse four to ask, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Job is reproaching God. Who can bring good out of all this evil that has befallen Job? Job answers his own question, "No one." Do all things work together for good to them that love God? Job always thought so previously, but now in the despair of his soul when the floodgates of affliction are opened against him, in anguish and misery, longing for death, Job doubts that any good can come of this. It is too overwhelming. It is too tremendous. It is simply too much, and there is no end in sight. What possible good can come of it all? What sense is there to it all? What can God possibly hope to gain from it all? It is senseless, causeless, wanton destruction of a good man's life. Life is too short to make anything of it all. "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou has appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." Job cannot see the picture he is modeling for, therefore he can make no sense of his role. Job wanted only to serve God, and this is the result! "Turn from him," he goes on, "that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day." But Job's role is one of the greatest in scripture, because he is posing for God's greatest painting of Christ in the picture book of the Old Testament scripture. Because of Job we have insight into the sufferings of Christ. Because of Job we can test Christ's reactions against the reactions of a perfect man. Because of Job we can see how a truly righteous man must feel, suffering unjustly. Because of Job many a Christian has learned to suffer patiently. Because of Job our lesser sufferings and Christ's greater sufferings are given depth and dimension. Because of Job a norm has been established, even for suffering. And because of Job a whole book, priceless and unique, has been added to the scripture of truth. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" No one but God. Only God could conceive, direct, organize, and produce this masterpiece of debate. How great Thou art!

Now Job continues his lament in chapter 14. He says, "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease." In chapter 13 we learn of Job's extremity – "if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost." Speech is his only outlet, so cruel are his sufferings, so seemingly endless. Job's plight is desperate, his despair total. Death stares him full in the face, only his speech maintaining his sanity, and his speech grows wilder and his lamentations grow more bitter and his reproach of God grows greater with each passing chapter. We sense, rather than see, that the pressure on him is increasing rather than abating. For behind him, in the background of the picture, a grim struggle is taking place. A Man is being slowly consumed by the wrath of God. The fire of the altar consumes the Sacrifice. In a grim horror of absolute reality the Son of God is paying the penalty for your sins and my sins. No reproach of God springs to His lips. But the Silence is deafening. Can he endure not to speak? Job, under only a normal pressure, cannot bear it. He must speak – or die! There is more hope for the Tree than for the Sacrifice – "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will

sprout again” – and that is total despair. In darkness, and surrounded by His murderers, Christ plunges into the depths of total despair, drowning in wrath against sin as “all Thy waves and Thy billows pass over Me.” Who can endure such pressure? Who can suffer like that? Who would not speak one word of reproach under those conditions? Is there no end to it? Is there no abatement of such anguish? Down, down, down, totally here forsaken of God. And down further. Has God forgotten Him altogether? Is there no bottom in those fathomless depths? Is there no limit to this eternity of endurance? Is there no shadow of light in this horror of darkness? Alas, no! For this Crucified One is the only Sin-offering for the whole world.

Listen again to the lament of Job. “For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.” You see there is no sense of resurrection in that bitter reproach. It is the cry of a man who is going down a dark tunnel and sees no ray of light at the end of it, the wailing lament of a lost soul steeped in sin and ready to die. “As the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down, and riseth not.” Is this the speech of a perfect man? Yes, and this is the view taken by Job under the pressure of his sufferings. Surprise? No, not a surprise, but few of us could stand in Job’s shoes, so we seldom pause to appreciate Job’s anguish. Christ is made sin for us, He who knew no sin. He is forsaken of God. He is without hope, for the promise of resurrection is lost in that tunnel. All that is dreadful, all that is agonizing, all that is fearful, all that tells of horror and darkness and dread waits at the end of the tunnel. And He must go down there, down into death itself, and drink the cup to the bitterest dregs, careful to leave no drop for us, if the holiness of God is to be satisfied. Job only comes to the upper entrance to the tunnel, and cries out in the bitterness of his soul at the sight of it, for Job only sits to model for Christ. Job is not asked to go anywhere near it, but Job nevertheless reveals it unto us.

Christ is not only taking your place. Christ is taking the place of murderers, rapists, slave drivers, torturers, extortioners, cruel men, wicked men, evil men, damned souls, satanic men. All sin must be accounted for, nothing overlooked, if salvation is to be offered freely to whosoever will. No one is so far gone in wickedness that he can say Christ did not die for him. And the penalty for every sin must be paid in full, if a righteous God is to forgive the vilest sinner. John says He was the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. The cannibals are not left out; the idol worshippers with their human child sacrifices are included; the depraved are all accounted for. He took our sins in His own body on the Tree. “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow!” But Job, in the forefront of our picture, has by comparison a happy lot! Listen to Job, then. “O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!” There is no account of happiness in that forlorn lamentation, no word of hope in that whole chapter, no glimpse even of resurrection in the pain of today. This man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil. But he is made to sit in the sinners’ seat, the just in the place of the unjust, till the picture is painted. He loses sight even of the hope of resurrection in that place of the hopeless. “If

a man die,” verse 14, “shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call,” that is, call to die, “and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” It is the lament of the hopeless in the place of the hopeless. It is the wail of the damned only waiting for death.

“For now Thou numberest my steps...” David said once, “There is but a step between me and death.” “For now thou numberest my steps: dost thou not watch over my sin? My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity.” Job is made to sit in the seat of the sinful. He watches God number the few remaining steps of the sinner, make a final score of the sinner’s sin, seal up all the transgressions in a bag, and sew up the iniquities in care with the name on the bag, ready for the day of judgment. (If every sinner could be granted this vision there would be fewer sins!) Of little use to cry to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne,” for Job says, “And surely the mountains falling cometh to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place” (for naught). The flood of God’s wrath becomes visible again. “The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man.” Sentence is passed on the sinful. “Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away. His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.” The sinner finally goes into eternal damnation in hell. Yet ‘twas for sinners Jesus died. There is no need for one soul to be lost. All may come to the Cross of Christ. His blood avails for me – for thee! He paid the penalty for sin, won for us a free pardon, rose from the dead for our justification, His pardon in His hand ready to forgive – and still men neglect and reject and would crucify Him afresh if they could. God is not willing that any should perish, but all come to repentance. God can righteously forgive, because of what Jesus did that dreadful day on Calvary.

Chapter 15

“Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said...” We come now to the words of Eliphaz. If you recall, Eliphaz represents in one ‘character’ the sense of reason, normality, rationality, and plays a major part in the debate which is the bulk of the book of Job. Again the subject debated, remember, is this – Should a truly righteous man suffer or not. Eliphaz strongly holds the negative view – “no, he should not” – for such a thing is clearly seen to be abnormal, unreasonable, irrational. But Eliphaz is no help to Job, because Job is able to prove by experience that such a thing can, and does occasionally, happen. If we suffer for Christ’s sake our ‘Eliphaz’ will become a ‘Job’s comforter’ to us. Why did so many of the saints spoken of in Acts and the Epistles desert Paul? Because their ‘Eliphaz’ assured them that Paul’s bonds, sufferings, shipwrecks etc. must indicate that Paul was not right before God. The savages on the isle of Melita, seeing Paul bitten by a serpent, said, “Aha, a murderer no doubt,” but seeing him come to no harm later said, “Oho, a god no doubt.” Why? Because even savages know it is normal to ascribe evil-doing to a man in chains, and God punishes evil. But Paul unharmed is goliath in their eyes because even savages know that the wages of sin is death, but they cannot know that the gift of God is eternal life, except someone teach them. They had never heard of Christ Jesus our Lord. They knew nothing of Calvary and the Resurrection of Christ. They only knew,

savage-like, that the wages of sin is death, for the most ignorant savages all know that, and even modern man is not so ignorant as to be unaware of it. So their 'Eliphaz' would assure them that the serpent out of the fire was simply justice overtaking the evildoer, because that is the view of 'Eliphaz' even in the presence of Job.

So Eliphaz the Temanite in Job 15 is horrified at the words Job has been uttering, words which reproach his Maker, words which indicate the abnormal, unreasonable, irrational. Should a truly righteous man suffer? Eliphaz is aghast at the suggestion. Should Christ be made sin for us, He who knew no sin? Eliphaz is horrified by the idea. Should sinners escape condemnation? Eliphaz is shocked at the notion. Why? Because it is not normal. The 'norm' is seen in Noah's day. Noah the perfect is the only one saved, while the whole world is lost, destroyed in the flood of God's wrath. Eliphaz can appreciate and applaud that. But that the perfect Man should be swept away in the flood of God's wrath in order to save the world, is outside the scope of Eliphaz the Temanite. That is not wisdom, cries our Eliphaz, that is foolishness. And Paul calls it "the foolishness of God, wiser than the wisdom of men." The foolishness of preaching. The foolishness of the gospel. "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge," cries Eliphaz, "and fill his belly with the east wind?" But we know, and Paul knew, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. "Should he reason with unprofitable talk?" asks Eliphaz, "or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?" Clearly not. It is not reasonable, rational, normal to do so. But the gospel is not unprofitable talk, and Paul's speeches did the whole world good. God reproves Eliphaz in chapter 42, verse seven, and approves only Job. Why? Because Christ has made all the difference. The gospel of Christ has turned the world 'upside down' in that sense. The abnormal – the perfect Man suffering so that sinners might be freely forgiven – has now become accepted, now become the 'norm' of Christian nations, now become the only reasonable, rational, normal way, before God. It is God-approved. God has been shown to accept it. We are to accept it also. We are to approve it. We are to testify to it, preach it, witness for it, stand by it, live and die for it.

Eliphaz says in chapter 15, "Yea, thou castest off fear, and restraineth prayer before God." But Job did fear God, and his bitter words are unanswered prayers – "O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave" is a prayer that couldn't then be answered. Eliphaz is not accustomed to prayer like that, for it is not normal, and Eliphaz cannot equate Job's words with the fear of God, for they are irrational in that setting. He goes on to say, "For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou chooseth the tongue of the crafty" (or subtle). "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee." When we acknowledge before God that we are sinners saved by grace, our lips testify against us. We plead guilty. We admit our guilt, and confess to our great Advocate-with-the-Father all our wrongdoing, and ask Him to take up our case for us, for without Him our case is hopeless. By our own admission we are deserving of death and hell. Our own mouth condemns us; nay, our heart condemns us, but God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things. Eliphaz doesn't get it. He cannot understand this. This is abnormal, illogical, unreasonable. Can the guilty one plead guilty, and still hope to escape the penalty? Can the condemned give evidence against himself, and trust not to come into condemnation? Can the prisoner testify of his wickedness, and hope to evade the sentence? Under normal circumstances, certainly not. What then makes all the difference? Christ makes all the difference. His death makes all the difference. His shed blood makes all the difference. And He ever liveth to make all the difference, to intercede on our behalf, to be our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

Righteous. “He that believeth on Me shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” Yes, Christ makes all the difference in this world and the next. O Lord, how great Thou art!

Now Eliphaz continues, “Art thou the first man that was born? Or wast thou made before the hills? Hast thou heard the secret of God? And dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself? What knowest thou, that we know not? What understands thou, which is not in us? With us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father. Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee? Why doth thine heart carry thee away? And what do thy eyes wink at, that thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest such words go out of thy mouth? What is man, that he should be clean? And he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints;” (i.e. angels) “yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” Be reasonable, Job, says Eliphaz in effect. Be more rational, if you please. How can you, a mere man, stand before God when angels cannot? Is that sensible? Let us look at things from the normal point of view. For of course Eliphaz never takes any other viewpoint. Under normal conditions sinners cannot stand before God. It is as unthinkable for sinners to come boldly into the presence of God as it is for the holy Son of God with eternal life abiding in Him to die in the presence of sinners. It is abnormal. Indeed, Eliphaz goes back to the patriarchs and assures us it is unheard of. No man since Adam, born of woman, could stand before God and hope to win. What, he inquires sarcastically of Job, is your secret? “Is there any secret thing with thee?” asks Eliphaz. And then Eliphaz proceeds, in the remainder of the chapter, to show what is normal for the wrongdoer to expect. He implies of course that Job is a wrongdoer. He associates pain with wickedness, verse 20, and trouble and anguish with the wicked man, verse 24. He shows that it is the wicked whose substance is taken away from him, verse 29, and associates the loss of sons and daughters with just punishment for the wicked man, verse 33. What a ‘friend’!

Now if what Eliphaz says is disallowed of God in chapter 42, why is it in scripture? This is the Holy Bible, after all, the scripture of truth. Why bother then to read it, if finally God says to Eliphaz, “Thou hast not spoken of Me the thing which is right”? And if it is unfit to be read, why is it printed in the first place, why is it in scripture at all? The answer of course is that it is true. It is a part of scripture. It is literally God’s word to us. We need to learn what is normal if we are to learn what is abnormal. “The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days,” says Eliphaz. Why is that truth unacceptable to God? Because it is only true normally. Christ has changed all that. This is the day of grace. Only when the day of grace ends will that truth become true again. Then the wicked man will travail with pain all his days – in hell. But today is the day of salvation. The wicked man can repent of his wickedness before the Cross of Christ and be saved. He need not go to hell, for why will ye die? asks scripture. “Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right,” says God. No indeed. For the truths spoken by Eliphaz are in abeyance so long as the gospel of Christ is still preached. Only those who die refusing the gospel of Christ need concern themselves with the truths propounded by Eliphaz. Listen again to Eliphaz speak of the wicked man, the man whose only concern was for his life on earth, who prospered howsoever he could with no thought for the reckoning, but who is called to account before God in the last day. “He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.” The wicked, our Lord promised, shall be cast into outer

darkness; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be?” He stands before God a beggar, when he could have stood with all the riches of Christ. Then the truth of Eliphaz becomes obvious. The man is cast into hell. Normality returns.

Eliphaz, beginning his denunciation of the wicked, speaks of what he knows, what he has learned, what experience teaches. “I will shew thee, hear me,” he says, “and that which I have seen I will declare; which wise men have told from their fathers and have not hid it; unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them.” This truth, says Eliphaz, was known from the very beginning, from the days when there were only a few men upon earth – “and no stranger passed among them” – and is literally the truth of Genesis. Adam sinned; death came upon all. Cain murdered; Cain was cast out. Wickedness flourished till Noah’s day; the flood swept them all away. And that, says Eliphaz, is normal. And our Lord taught that as it was in Noah’s day so shall it be again when He returns. Read His parables! You see, the day of grace accepted as the ‘norm’ today is actually abnormal. It is a special time, precious time, dearly won for us at the battle of Calvary. It is the great day of salvation, of good news, of faith in God, of waiting for Christ to come back. Today none need be lost. Today the wicked can repent. Today all men everywhere can come to God by Christ Jesus our Lord. Eliphaz is not right, thank God, for sinners can and do daily escape from judgment. We can be rich toward God. We can stand in His presence justified. We can all share in heavenly glory. Why? Because Christ is raised from the dead, risen for our justification. How can we share in it? By believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. “Thou shalt be saved,” shouts Paul, “and thy house.” It is a glorious time to be alive, to have the opportunity of winning eternal life, to have the chance to suffer with Christ that we may reign with Him. But unbelievers should study the words of Eliphaz, for another time will come, a day when the wicked will be cast into hell to receive the due reward of their deeds. Today, if ye will hear His voice...see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.

Chapter 16

“Then Job answered and said, I have heard many such things: miserable comforters are ye all. Shall vain words have an end?” (Have you finished berating me?) “or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?” (Or has the urge to answer ceased prompting?) “I also could speak as ye do: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you.” Yes, indeed. Poor Job! His role is not easy, his position not comfortable, his seat not happy. It is simple to criticize, to sit in judgment on our fellow men, so long as we are not called upon to change places with them. With what alacrity Job would have changed places with Eliphaz! “If your soul were in my soul’s stead, I could...shake mine head at you.” Just to return to normal was Job’s whole desire. We are reminded of those who came to view the Cross, who shook their heads, saying, “If this man were the Son of God (and sinless as He claimed) God would not have allowed this to happen.” The background and the foreground are nearly identical in places in our picture. What would Jesus not have given to return to normal, to a day spent among His disciples and friends! Would He not gladly have changed places with anyone in the crowd around Him? But this was the Father’s will, and He came to do the will of His Father. The pleasant duty of healing those around Him, of teaching the people about God, of living among

His disciples is over. The unpleasant duty of dying for all men has been carried out also, grim though the prospect be. He is not come merely to do good to men of that generation; He is come to save the world. He could not draw all men to Him so long as He remained among them – He has to be lifted up so that those in the far corners of earth might catch a glimpse of the Saviour of the World. “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me.”

But even on the Cross Jesus is better than any man on the ground. Job says, “But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.” There is not a man on the ground who could have brought comfort, renewed hope, peace and joy to the malefactor who repented, but Jesus did all that with one brief sentence, “This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.” Listen again carefully to Job. “But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.” Job is saying that if he could change places with his friends and one of them cared to take his place, then he could comfort them in their real distress. But Christ is in real distress, and brings strength and comfort FROM THAT POSITION to others. It is a remarkable feat. There is a man in the crowd who, but for this Man whom he came to hurt, would be walking around with only one ear. Jesus had reached out to him and touched him and healed him; he in return had been one of those who roughly seized Jesus to carry Him away for trial and execution. Did he come forward at the seat of judgment to witness to the goodness of Christ then? Not a word. And on the Cross itself, His flesh torn and tortured, in an agony of distress, Jesus assuages the grief of His neighbor with a brief moving of His lips, although first the man had railed on Him. And amidst ever-increasing agony He takes time to assuage the grief of Mary His mother, and to strengthen John His disciple, though all had deserted Him in His hour of need. And even today, if we come to the now-empty Cross, we will find amid our tears of repentance a mighty Voice in heaven, saying, “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and hell.” So will we be strengthened, and our grief assuaged. For if from that position of pain He could give strength and comfort, imagine what He can do today seated at the right hand of God! “The moving of my lips should assuage your grief,” says Job.

Poor Job! How he longed to return to normality, and change places with Eliphaz! In chapter 13 he had got to the point where, as he says, “If I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.” Here in chapter 16 even that little relief is no longer able to assuage his grief. In verse six he tells us, “Though I speak, my grief is not assuaged: and though I forbear, what am I eased?” Caught in the unseen vice, speech was his sole pressure vent, his safety valve in the face of death, but the pressure is building up, increasing rather than decreasing. By chapter 16 even the safety valve of speech cannot assuage his grief, and yet he must keep that vent open at all costs, for “if I forbear, what am I eased?” If this is merely the foreground of our painting of Christ, what must the background be like? Yet from the background the silence is deafening. Only two words betray the intensity of heat, the pressure of the fire of the wrath of God against sin – “I thirst.” Only those who have wandered at midday in a desert can realize the full force of those two words. They betray an unbearable condition, where heat causes dehydration. They are vented, forced out from between locked lips, by unheard-of pressures Job cannot be asked to endure. We see only the Lamb of God on the Wood of that Altar of Sacrifice – the fire is unknown, unimagined, unseen, the fire of the wrath of God against sin. We have to go back to the ancient temple, or the still more ancient tabernacle, to see the thing. From Leviticus come

pictures of a terrifying scene – the sin offering. The beasts are mercifully killed before sacrifice is made. Only Christ can be asked to be a living Sacrifice. And had it not been for Job, no hint would ever have been given of what that might involve. Only Job the perfect was ever asked to sit in the seat of the sinner to give us some inkling of what it is like. Only Job the upright was ever asked to test the furnace. And only Job the God-fearing was ever asked to model in this way, the just man treated as the unjust.

It was an unenviable position. Job's patience is now a byword. But did Job bear it uncomplainingly? Yet who would change places with Job? Listen again to Job's words. "But now he hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company." (Or companions.) "And thou hast filled me with wrinkles," (Another effect of dehydration in the desert.) "which is a witness against me: and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face." The only sound on earth which approximates that speech is wordless – the bleating of the scapegoat in the wilderness. But can you see that the foreground of the picture here gives us the background too? Listen again as Job speaks. "He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me. They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me. God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked." Can you perceive that the words are more literally true of the background than of the foreground of our picture? They resemble more the speech of the psalmist or one of the prophets. They are somewhat inappropriate for a man only smitten with sore boils, but they are Job's words. But they are completely appropriate for the background of our picture, are they not? "They have gaped upon Me with their mouth; they have smitten Me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against Me. God hath delivered Me to the ungodly, and turned Me over into the hands of the wicked." Can you see now why we say Job is modeling for Christ? If this is scripture, does not all scripture testify of Christ? If this is testifying only of Job, why is it in scripture then at all? Can you answer?

"I was at ease," says Job, "but he hath broken me asunder: he hath also taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark (or target). His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground. He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant. I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust. My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death; Not for any injustice in mine hands: also my prayer is pure. O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place. Also now, behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high. My friends scorn me: but mine eye poureth out tears unto God. O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour!" That is the cry of Job in the forefront of our picture. We see in it a man sorely tried, a man whom God has broken down, a man who has wept and prayed until he could weep and pray no more, and desires a 'neighbor' to pray for him now, but finds none willing. We see a man in the extremity of distress, a man weary of the battle who is too hemmed in to quit and at the same time too hard pressed to hold his own. Will another come to his aid, even to pray for him? There is none to come. Will the pressure ever ease? There is no end in sight. Will God step up and intervene? God is hidden from him. What shall he do then; indeed what can he do? Endure, endure, endure! But can a man endure so much? "He breaketh me breach upon breach" – it is the city wall crumbling

under the staggering shocks of a battering-ram. Just how much punishment can a human body absorb? “Set me up for his mark,” as a target is set on an easel for archery practice. Just how many ‘arrows’ can be absorbed by the ‘target’? “Not for any injustice in mine hands.” A man can bear better when he is guilty than when he is innocent.

Finally, in the very last verse we have Job in the now familiar strains of ‘no resurrection.’ “When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return,” says Job. Now if a just man like Job lost sight of the resurrection of the just, if only for a moment, how much harder for the Sin-offering to keep in mind the resurrection of the third day? Yet it was crucial for Him to do so. He is not going into death to rest, no matter how weary His soul may be or how sorrowful. He is going into death to fulfill His Father’s will. He is going into death unutterably weary, but He must be ready against the third day. Job could look forward to death as an end to the intolerable burden of grief, and Job could look forward to death as a relief from suffering, and Job could look forward to death as the end to his weariness, the long deep sleep. But Job has no thought of resurrection in mind. Now Peter, James and John fell asleep by the Garden of Gethsemane. Was the Man of Sorrows not equally weary? Christ will get no sleep at the palace of Annas or Caiphas or Herod or Pilate. He will get no sleep during His trial, as well as everything else, to fight the bitterest battle of His career. And death beckons with its promise of rest. But dare He sleep? Who will stand watch for Him, or who come there to awaken Him at the appointed time? None. Yet He arose very early on the third day. Job says in effect, “Only a little while longer here, and I shall go there (and rest) whence I shall not return.” We find in fact the thought of rest uppermost in his mind, because “I shall not return” signifies an end. But Christ is returning out of death the third day. He dare not be asleep when the call comes from God, and in fact He arose very early in the morning before the women got to the tomb. We need Job to illustrate for us something of what Christ faced, if we are to understand His bloodied sweat beforehand. The Man was human, but He was the Son of God. Scripture says, “Great is the Lord.”

Chapter 17

“My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me.” We can see that chapter 17 of the book of Job follows on closely from chapter 16; indeed the last verse of the previous chapter properly belongs to this chapter. For in this chapter 17 the whole thought of resurrection is entirely missing. “My breath is corrupt” – or as we might put it, my scent, my odor, my smell is changed. It is the odor of death. And again, “My days are extinct” means defunct, terminated, finished finally. Job looks into the face of death and says, “The graves are ready for me.” The cave of death is becoming more and more obvious, the mouth of the tomb yawns in his very face. And a quick glance down chapter 17 reveals no thought of resurrection. “My days are past, my purposes broken off...the light is short because of the darkness...if I wait, the grave is mine house; I have made my bed in the darkness.” There is no hint of anything beyond the grave, no purpose which is to be continued later, no thought of ever leaving the house of the dead again. Resurrection is in the phrase, “Thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption.” Only death is in chapter 17 of Job. “I have said to corruption,” verse 14, “Thou art my father: and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister.” It is unmitigated gloom. And goes on to ask, “Where

is now my hope?” Hope is connected with resurrection. “As for my hope, who shall see it?” It could be read, “As for my resurrection, who shall see it?” They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.” That is how the chapter ends, in despair.

Now Job is a just man, perfect, upright, righteous. If Job cannot look forward to the resurrection of the just, who can? And scripture teaches that all, great and small, even the most wicked, shall be called out of the graves to face the judgment. Nowhere in scripture is it taught that the grave is the last stop, that there is nothing beyond the grave. Job of course knows that. “Where is now my hope?” he asks, and again, “As for my hope, who shall see it?” He is speaking of his hope of resurrection. But Job has lost sight of his hope in a sea of sufferings. Our hope of resurrection is a lighthouse to assure us we are on course as we approach the harbor of the grave. But for Job, lost and adrift in a sea of affliction, in darkness and despair, amid stormy waves, the lighthouse is temporarily lost sight of. That is what chapter 17 of the book of Job shows. But what of Christ? If Job is adrift on the sea of affliction, Christ is drowned in the sea of affliction. If, because of the stormy waves and billows around him, Job is in despair – “Where is now my hope?” – what of Him who says, “All thy waves and Thy billows passed over Me”? If Job in his darkness cannot manage his course, what of Christ in the darkness of Calvary? But Christ has to maintain His course at all costs. “It is finished” involves Paul’s “I have finished the course.” He dare not lose control. And Christ finishes strongly – He cries with a loud voice before giving up the ghost. It is the bitterest struggle of all time. It is the cruelest path ever devised. It is the fiercest fight in the history of man. It is a Samson course, a giant race, a fearsome test. And He won!

Suffering is relative. “I suffer” – compared with what? We see Job’s suffering and we think it is extraordinary suffering. No, no! Christ’s suffering is extraordinary suffering! Job merely establishes the norm in suffering, for us to test ourselves by. No one would minimize the tragedy of losing a loved son or daughter, but the ‘norm’ is to lose ten children in one day, as Job did. No one would laugh at hardship, to lose employment, or wealth, or possessions, but the ‘norm’ in suffering is to lose everything in one day, as Job did. No one would despise sickness of body, but the norm established by Job is to have agony, rather than pain, and oozing sores from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, day and night, without treatment or remission, so that the body putrefies – “My breath is corrupt,” cries Job – and pain such that one may neither stand, sit nor lie down, so that one is unrecognizable to one’s friends, reduced to skin and bones as we speak, and ready to die. That is the ‘norm,’ according to the book of Job. Christ’s suffering is therefore clearly seen to be abnormal, undreamed of, unknown before or since. But since we can only gauge a matter by discovering first what is the ‘norm,’ the book of Job becomes to us a priceless document. Speaking of the Cross of Christ one hymn writer has said, “We may not know, we cannot tell, what pains He had to bear...” Obviously true, but with the help of Job we can at least grasp something of it. Did Job lose ten children in one day? Christ lost twelve. Did Job lose substance? Christ lost everything, down to the clothes He wore. Did Job lose his health? Christ lost His life – for us. And, as in chapter 17, did Job lose sight of the resurrection of the just? Christ, in the darkness of Calvary, lost sight of God! If few of us ever reach the ‘norm’ in suffering for Christ’s sake and the gospel, let us at least try to appreciate that there cannot be, nor ever was, sorrow like unto His sorrow.

What else can we discover from Job 17? Let us look at the piece we left out, from verse two to verse ten. Perhaps the King James English is not too easily understood, but the scripture at least remains intact, which cannot always be said for easier-to-read translations, for if a person does not understand the book how can he or she properly translate it? Proper translation of scripture depends largely on the spirituality of the translator, rather than mere knowledge of Hebrew or Greek, because scripture is spiritual. So in verse two Job says, “Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?” A freer translation might read, “Am not I surrounded by those who mock?” for Job is modeling for Christ, “and does not the spectacle (of me) provoke mockery?” The casual crowd at Christ’s Crucifixion ceased not to jeer and scoff. Verse three continues, “Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?” “I will strike a bargain with you,” Job is saying, “I will take your place if you will take my place.” But who would change places with Job? And we forget so soon that the Cross is the sinner’s seat, the place of the wicked, of the wrong-doer, of the iniquitous. And Christ voluntarily took our place there. The casual crowd did not understand it. “For Thou hast hid their heart from understanding,” says verse four, adding, “Therefore shalt Thou not exalt them.” The meaning might be clearer if we remember that ‘exalt’ really means ‘lifted up.’ “And I,” says Jesus Christ, “if I be lifted up...” It is also a paradox. His humiliation is in His being ‘exalted.’ His lifting up is His humiliation. When we ‘lift up’ Christ Crucified before men by way of the gospel we are also exalting Him. Again, His Resurrection is His exaltation, so we perceive He is ‘lifted up’ to the Father’s right hand. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which above every name...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that His Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

We cannot go into verse five at this time – but you can – so we will go on to verse six. “He hath made me also a byword of the people;” says Job, “and aforetime I was as a tabret (or harp).” Do you remember that our Lord was known as the Great Physician? for the sick and despairing never failed to strike a responsive chord in His heart of love. But at Calvary He became a saying, a jest, a byword among the people – “Physician, heal Thyself.” “Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow.” The eyes that had had compassion on so many, the eyes that looked at us with the clear gaze of love, are now clouded with pain and grief. The frail tabernacle of His body is now only a shadow of its former self. The hands that reached out at His bidding to touch the untouchables are nailed to the cross-beam. The feet that brought the good news of God’s love to man are now nailed to the upright. The bones, the joints – but we spare you. Job tells us in verse eight, “Upright men shall be astonished (astonished) at this, and the innocent (or perfect) shall stir up himself (wax indignant) against the hypocrite.” If we really perceived what Christ suffered for us, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God, we would be astonished, and stir up ourselves against the hypocrites and mockers around us today. Can it be that the reason we do not wax indignant at the daily mockery of Christ we hear on every side is that we are not innocent, not perfect? Where is the upright man who has stood astonished at the side of the Cross of Christ who will not speak a word in His defense among the hypocrites? Are you a hypocrite? Whose side will you take in future? The mockers, the scoffers, the hypocrites? Surely not! Not if you are washed, cleansed, by the blood of Christ. Not if you are innocent, as Christ was innocent. Not if you call yourself an ‘upright’ person. Rather, let us suffer.

“Upright men shall be astonished at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. The righteous also shall hold on his way...” Nothing that brings Christ into clearer focus can ever offend the upright, the innocent, or the righteous. Job was a man “perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.” Job’s words are meant to be read and understood by all who come under that classification. These words will not deflect the righteous – “The righteous also shall hold on his way.” If after reading Job you find you need to alter your course somewhat, then do so. If you were right all along, congratulations – “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.” If the words of Job weaken your long-held position, was the position untenable then in the first place? If the words of Job only strengthen long-held views, then read them again, for you shall be stronger and stronger. Edifying means building up, strengthening; and scripture is given for our edification, not to satisfy our carnal curiosity. If we are to stand by the Cross of Calvary we will need all the strength we can get. If we are to suffer for Christ’s sake and the gospel we will need to become stronger and stronger. If in some measure we are already doing this, let us hold on our way, that we may finish the course with joy. There are some who do not “hold with it” at all, but are they upright, innocent, righteous, clean? Or are they found among the scoffers and mockers? Job looks at those he thought were friends, and adds, “But as for you all, do ye return, and come no more: for I cannot find one wise man among you.” It may sound at times as though Job were the mocker, the reproacher, the scornful – but God accepts Job in the last chapter and reproves all the others. There is one sure test of whose side we are on, as Paul taught us. Do we suffer? Do we suffer for Christ’s sake? Do we suffer wrongfully? As Christ did!

Chapter 18

“Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said...” Each in turn takes the stage in this great dispute, so that we may perceive the cognizance of their arguments. Bildad the Shuhite, remember, represents for us both tears and laughter, as the normal ups-and-downs of life. A life lived on the mountain tops of Pisgah is not normal. A life lived in the valley of despair is not normal. But a life lived unto God in which is found both the mountaintop experiences and the valley despondencies is a perfectly normal life. We are to rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep. But a life of endless rejoicing is not in mind here, nor a life of constant weeping. Bildad should be a comfort to Job, a reminder that Job was happy once and will be happy again, however hopeless his present condition seems. Bildad should be a ‘friend’ to Job, as one to turn to in time of trouble. And Bildad should be a source of hope to Job, bringing to Job the full assurance that God is closer in a day of trouble than in a day of feasting. But Bildad is none of those things to Job. Bildad becomes an adversary, a very ‘Job’s comforter’ no less, in these special circumstances, because Job is made to sit in the sinner’s seat, and Bildad the Shuhite has no comfort for sinners. “Yea,” says Bildad, “the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine.” Apart from the glorious gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ there is no hope for sinners, no comfort for the wicked, no assurance for the ungodly, as Bildad shows. The sinner’s case is hopeless. The wicked man is about to perish. The ungodly person is assured only of judgment. And according to Bildad that is to be expected as normal, as not at all surprising, as perfectly proper and anticipated.

In the day of visitation, the day of God's wrath, how do sinners fare? According to Bildad the Shuhite, not very well at all. Listen to his description of the wicked on Judgment Day. "The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him." Every man needs light to guide his steps through this life on earth. But most men refuse the light of God, the true light. They love darkness rather than that light because their deeds are evil. They take their light from sinners. They illumine their path with science falsely so-called, and light their candle from philosophy and vain deceit. What will happen to all such in the day of Judgment? "The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him." God will snuff out their little light, and with the breath of His mouth blow out their feeble candle. These, saith the Lord, shall go into everlasting darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. But those in Christ are already walking in the true light, according to John's epistle. None can snuff out that true light, nor turn to darkness the Light of life. The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more – until we step out of the shadows into the full blaze of His glory. What we have to ensure is that the light in our life is the true light of God. All other candles are false. The Lord said, "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" But the apostle's doctrine teaches that we are to walk in the light even as He is in the light. Christ alone is the true light, and Christ alone is the light of the world. All other lights are counterfeit, poor feeble attempts to guide the feet of the stumblers. We are to look well to our ways, to pay heed to our walk, to see clearly where our steps will lead. We need light for the journey, not a light that grows dimmer with the passing years but a light that shines more and more unto the perfect day. Christ is our light.

Now the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. They see what they want, and they take the necessary steps to obtain it. The robber carefully plans his robberies. The wicked man carefully prepares his wickedness. The rich man deliberately plots to become richer. Bildad the Shuhite in Job 18:7 calls this "the steps of his strength." They are deliberate steps to achieve the end in view. God of course is not consulted. And the wicked seek counsel. The robber takes counsel from other robbers; the wicked seeks the advice and counsel of those who have achieved like ends; the rich man studies to be yet richer. But in the day of Judgment Bildad tells us that, "The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his counsel shall cast him down (or, be his downfall)." These steps lead only to hell. But let the children of light learn a lesson from all this. We are to take necessary steps in order to prepare ourselves to be with Christ for ever. We take the steps of faith. First, by faith we are saved. Then, by faith we commit our lives unto God. By faith we are baptized. By faith we receive the Holy Ghost. By faith we worship God. By faith we meet with those like-minded. By faith we preach Christ Crucified. By faith we acknowledge we are strangers and pilgrims in the earth. By faith we suffer. By faith we work the works of God. By faith we prophesy. By faith we await with patience Christ's return. And by faith we fall asleep, waiting for the resurrection of the just, for the just shall live by faith and die in faith. These are our "steps of strength" to bring us to God, for the steps of a good man are all ordered of the Lord. They are steps with an end in view. They are steps to life, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. And our counsel comes from God Himself, as found in His holy word. Our steps shall never be straitened, and our counsel shall not be our downfall but our uplifting.

Bildad continues his description of the wicked in verse eight of chapter 18 of Job. “For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare (or trap). The gin (a type of trap used by the hunter to catch the unwary) shall take him by the heel, and the robber (trapper) shall prevail against him. The snare is laid for him in the ground (path), and a trap for him in the way.” It is a description familiar to all who hunt or trap animals. There are different kinds of ‘snare’ used in different countries. Sometimes a net is used; at other times a pit is dug and then covered over with a thin layer to resemble the surrounding terrain; sometimes a steel trap is sunk into the trail and carefully disguised. The aim is to make the ‘snare’ invisible. So in life we set out on a path that seems favorable to us, not seeing the ‘trap’ anywhere. But life is full of pitfalls, as we all know. The richest man in the world cannot prevent his grandson from being kidnapped and held for ransom. The most careful parent cannot ensure that one of the children will not bring his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. The cleverest criminal cannot guarantee that no clue is left remaining of the crime. The most assiduous worker cannot assure himself of promotion. The healthiest person may fall sick. The best defended may be overcome. The wariest can have an accident. The most organized can be upset. The craftiest can be caught; the most cunning can be poisoned; the wiliest can be snared. There is no such thing as inviolate security. There is none who can lie down to sleep in absolute confidence that he or she will wake unharmed, for death may come in the night. Bildad says, “Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet.” An earthquake can bring the roof crashing down; a strong wind can toss down mighty men; a wall of water can sweep away even a city across its path.

Bildad assures us this is normal to life – there is no path which is free from anxiety and care, no road totally without tears of sorrow, no sure way which is “laughter, laughter all the day, every day.” (Let us not be overconfident till we reach the end of the road, at least.) But still we set out, in defiance of Bildad’s truth, to search for happiness, and spend our last years regretting we had not gone some other way, without considering that this is true of every way, every path, every road. The whole secret of the snare is its invisibility. You are not caught by a snare you can see. No, no! You are caught by a snare you could not have seen. Bildad is speaking only of the wicked, but the same is seen in the lives of all men. Abraham’s ‘snare’ is Ishmael. Isaac’s ‘snare’ is venison. Jacob’s ‘snare’ is his children. David’s ‘snare’ is Bathsheba. Solomon’s ‘snare’ is religion. And even Paul is caught in the temple. Each is trapped differently, but each has sorrow because of the snare. Now if none escape, how about you? Job took every precaution possible, but Job is caught in a vice-like grip. Could Job possibly have foreseen that his righteousness would have caused this grief? If he had, would he not have taken steps to avoid it? We must conclude then that every path has a ‘snare’ hidden in it somewhere. Our ‘friend’ Bildad the Shuhite will assure us that tears and sorrows are as normal as laughter and joy. If we seek only laughter and joy, refusing the tears of repentance and sorrow for sin, we shall come to grief in the end. If we follow the Man of Sorrows here, we will come to a time of rejoicing eventually. But it is not easy to be acquainted with grief while others are enjoying themselves, even though we know the truth of the matter. We only know this is the Lord’s way, His path, His road through life, and we follow Him. We may not understand all the whys and wherefores, but we trust Him. Even in sorrow we know the Good Shepherd will not lead us astray.

Now if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinners appear? Is there a ‘snare’ to every path except the path you tread? Beware! If perfect righteousness was the

trap Job fell into, shall you escape in sin? Read what Bildad has to say. “His strength shall be hungerbitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side.” He paints for us a picture of the wicked in chapter 18. But there is no hope for sinners. What we need is One who can come along and lift us out of the pit, and free us from every snare and loose us from every trap. And this One is Christ the Lord. But in order to succor us, Christ had to allow Himself to be let down into the pit: to endure the ‘snare’: to be Himself trapped. He had to take the place of the wicked. He had to die for all men, including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, David, Solomon, Paul. (There is none good, no, not one.) We see in the gospels how He is ‘caught.’ We see on the Cross how He is ‘snared.’ We see in the Tomb how He is ‘trapped.’ And we see He needed God to free Him, to set Him at liberty again by raising Him from the dead. But He is free now to deliver us in turn from our ‘snares.’ He is at liberty now to release us from our ‘traps.’ He is able now to deliver us from the sorriest ‘pit’ we can fall into. We need only cry out to God, for our Deliverer to come to us. We cannot avoid the snares – we cannot even see the snares – but we can have deliverance none the less, because He is free and can never be trapped again. Of course our Lord had to allow Himself to be trapped, for He Himself said, “No man taketh My life from Me: I lay it down of Myself.” We cannot say that. The apostles couldn’t say that. Job couldn’t say that. Therefore our hope is in Jesus Christ, the One mighty to save, our great Deliverer, the lifter up of our heads, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep. We cannot trust ourselves, we dare not trust another. Only Jesus Christ is able to deliver us.

Chapter 19

“Then Job answered and said, How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words? These ten times have ye reproached me: ye are not ashamed that ye make yourselves strange to me.” Job is here seen to be caught in a snare, in a vice-like grip. His dilemma is obvious to us. He cannot obtain surcease from sorrow, nor can he find a cause for his suffering because it is causeless. Yet his position is truly desperate, as his words reveal. Here in chapter 19 we see that not only his three ‘friends’ but all those who formerly honored him are now turned against him. “My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me,” he says. “They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer... My breath is strange to my wife... Yea, young children despised me... All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.” His case is hopeless, for he declares that God is against him, and all his friends have deserted him. “He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone,” declares Job. Such calamity befell Job that it is a wonder he survived at all. Such pressure was applied to Job that it is a wonder he could still find strength for debate. Such catastrophe surrounded Job that it is a wonder he didn’t contemplate suicide. And the invisible ‘snare’ holds him firmly in position, wriggle as he may, and there is no escape for there is none to release him. Would any change places with Job? One day he is the greatest of all the men of the east – the next he is penniless, friendless, deserted, crushed, destroyed, broken. Who brought it all about? God! “Know now that God hath overthrown me,” says Job in verse six, “and hath compassed me with his net.” Trapped! And the trapper was God.

Now we know the reason for it. Job is modeling for the picture God is painting of Christ, who was to come after. It is God who traps Christ. Our Lord steps out of the garden of Gethsemane into a trap. The net is thrown around Him as the motley crowd led by Judas Iscariot converges on Him and His disciples. Yet at His first words they fall back. His word breaks the net, you see. He has to wait till they recover and reconverge. He must be silent lest He break the net again. He must allow Himself to be taken. He must not open His mouth lest the net break, the snare fail, the trap be exposed. Even in the palace of the high priest He has only to call out to receive twelve legions of angels. Even on the Cross itself He has only to speak for the wood to collapse under Him, the 'snare' fail. The words He speaks are designed to ensure the traps do not fail, for except He had said, "Father, into Thy hand I commend My spirit," the final trap – the tomb – cannot hold Him. The body without the spirit is dead, James says. As long as the spirit remains, the body is not dead; the tomb must remain unused. He must give up the ghost Himself in order to be carried out and placed in the last 'trap.' But the last trap is the truly dangerous one, for He must lose the ability to speak. This is the only 'trap' He cannot spring by Himself. He goes into it utterly dependent on the God who had forsaken Him. Job cannot be asked or expected to model for such a scene. The greatness of Christ can be discovered only in Christ. The obedience of the obedient Son cannot be determined until the Son Himself appear. All the pictures fail, the prophets fail, the great men fail – for none can portray the Christ of God, for none is equal to the task.

Why do we study Job? Is it that we may learn more of one of the great men of the east? Is it that we may learn patience under adversity? Is it that we may take part in some intellectual exercise? No, none of these. True, we will have learned more of one of the greatest men of the east. True, we will have learned about patience in adversity. True, we will have gleaned something from the great debate of genuine interest. But these are the incidentals. If we have learned nothing of Christ, if we have seen nothing of the obedient Son, if we have gathered for ourselves nothing of How Great Thou Art, we have wasted our time. Someday we are going to meet our Lord; let us learn here to appreciate Him, so that when that day comes we may greet Him with reverence and adoration, and say from our hearts, "Thou alone art worthy." Someday we may be called upon to suffer for Christ's sake; let us learn here and now to appreciate what Christ suffered for us, so that we too may endure our cross and despise the shame. Someday we may fall into the 'snare' hidden along the way we tread; let us know from the book of Job that Christ is able to deliver us if we cry unto Him. It is not the foreground of the painting we need to concentrate on, but the background. It is not the very real sufferings of Job we need to appreciate, but the cloudy hidden scene of suffering which Job should not obscure but reveal to us. It is not the model, but the picture modeled for, we need to perceive in Job. Job is caught – "Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net" – and despite his words he cannot escape. Job is snared – "mine hope he hath removed like a tree" – and despite his righteousness he cannot release himself. But Job is not trapped, for in verse 20 he says, "I am escaped with the skin of my teeth." How so? Job goes on in verse 25 to give us the explanation, "For I know that my redeemer liveth."

But the only way to see the background of this picture is to study the foreground. Listen again to Job. "Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment." That is the foreground. But what of the background? Christ must remain silent in the

face of wrong, lest the net break, and even though there is no judgment (meaning justice) He dare not oppose the sentence lest the snare be exposed. Job goes on, “He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths.” Job sees this is the will of God for him, and complains bitterly with a great lamentation. Christ accepts the will of God in all things, whether the way be dark or light. Job again, “He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head.” Christ humbles Himself to wear the royal robe, and bows His head to receive the crown – of thorns. Job says, “He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.” Well for Job it is only “like a tree”; Christ is destroyed “with a tree.” Job goes as far as to say, “He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as one of his enemies.” But Christ must face the whole wrath of God against sin and be utterly forsaken of God. Job can go no farther. Indeed, Job has gone almost too far. Job quickly returns to the man-made details of the scene – “His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.” Christ becomes lost to view in the noonday darkness in the background. No man, not even the greatest of all the men of the east, dare penetrate that darkness. Job goes on to show us the details of the friends he has lost, the kinsfolk who failed him, the servant who denied him, the very children who mocked. The reality of Job’s sufferings is starkly conveyed to us in verse 20, “My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh,” but Job is beginning to pass out of affliction as the pressure abates, “and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.”

Well done, Job! Truly, “the greatest of all the men of the east,” and “that man was perfect, and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.” He has sat patiently and endured much. In the beginning, at least, we see that in all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly. Only as the pressure became unbearable did Job vent himself with the words of his mouth. Then as that intolerable pressure grew worse we saw Job’s words become wilder, his voice strident, rising, his reproaches ever more bitter. We saw him lose all hope in the sea of affliction, losing sight even of the lighthouse of resurrection. Death hung over him like a vulture, and the tomb gaped cave-like in his very face. Maddened with pain, desperate to survive, in despair and devoid of all hope, Job endures the absolutely unendurable “by the skin of his teeth,” as we now put it, and passes the point in this nineteenth chapter where the test is over, the heat turned off, the sitting completed, the picture painted. Why is it suddenly all over? Because no man dare go any further. Job has been tested up to the absolute limit of endurance of any man in the furnace heat of God, but Job is not to be asked to actually go into the furnace. We cannot see past that point. In the background of the picture darkness covers the face of the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour. We are left gazing at Job in the foreground only. He is a pitiful sight indeed. He holds out imploring hands, “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God (has persecuted me), and are not satisfied with my (offerings in the) flesh?” Yes, let us have pity on Job, and accord him the honor due to him, for we may no longer observe the background of the painting, nor expect Job to sit for us a moment longer. The persecution is over; we are to be satisfied with what we see. The heat will take some time to cool – the debate is not over – and the pressure cannot be instantly relieved lest he get ‘the bends,’ but the worst is over for Job.

And now Job is afraid we will miss it after all, that we will never perceive the picture that has been painted for us. “Oh that my words were now written!” he cries, “oh that they were

printed in a book!” Never fear, Job, God has taken care of all that also. But Job is still not satisfied. “That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!” Job, your prayer is heard – and answered. But why do you wish it to be so? “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” Yes, Job, your Redeemer – and ours – liveth, and He did stand upon the earth – and He shall so stand here again. You have caught sight of the lighthouse again, Job, and your hope of resurrection is sprung up anew. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” Well done, Job! We are glad to note that for you the sea of affliction is calmer now, so that you have got the lighthouse fully in view again. We are happy for you to note that the pressure has begun to fall a fraction, and the worst is over for you. We are pleased to know you are not going to have to be asked to go into the last ‘trap’ after all. But look behind you, Job. Can you see that darkness? Can you see that the One of whom we say, “How great Thou art,” is passing through the very midst of the furnace? And can you tell that He will be carried and placed in the final ‘trap’? Job, He is your Redeemer. Hear Him say in Revelation, “I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore.” Yes, Job, your Redeemer – and ours. Alive to die no more! He has sprung the final trap and we can cheerfully fall asleep in Him for the ‘trap’ cannot hold us when He comes to awaken us. We shall rise (and Job also) to be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. And listen to this, Job – “So shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Chapter 20

“Then answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said...” Why do we study the book of Job? Is it history? Is it only an exercise in ingenuity? Or is it scripture, testifying to Christ? We need to see that the debate, rather than the story, is the ‘raison d’être’ for the book. If it were only the story of Job, then five or six chapters would have sufficed for the whole. But the story is only the introduction and the end of the book – the bulk of the book is taken up with the great debate, “Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not?” All four characters answer, “No.” Job answers “No” because he is the truly righteous man who is suffering, and he wants no part in it. His three friends answer “No” because such a thing is so abnormal as to be outside their experience of life. We are to see that when God caused Job to suffer He was creating a new thing, a novel situation, a genuinely unique experience. It was almost a prophetic thing. It showed that the sufferings of Christ would be abnormal and should never be regarded in any other light. The debate in Job is threshed out ad nauseam to give full opportunity for one to convince the other if such were not the case. Yet chapter after chapter, speaker after speaker, time after time the answer comes back, “No,” “No,” “No.” Neither does any speaker change his position. Job is adamant, despite all his ‘friends’ say. The three ‘friends’ are adamant, despite Job’s speeches. Job claims that as he is righteous he should never be called on to suffer; his ‘friends’ seek to demonstrate that only the wicked suffer, never the righteous. Each listens to the other, and each takes his turn, but the answer never varies. No, no, no. A righteous man should not suffer – only the wicked should suffer. We need to see that basically that is the normal position no matter who the speaker may be.

Zophar the Naamathite is speaking from experience, washed by the river of life, and a long life at that. “Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth,” he says, “That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?” When our Lord was Crucified, the wicked triumphed, and the hypocrites rejoiced. For how long? Three days! Christ risen is Christ triumphant, and His disciples rejoiced thereafter. Zophar speaks from experience. And Zophar represents an attitude to life. What should our attitude be? We should rejoice every day and live triumphantly. Why? Because Christ is risen in triumph. Because the day of the wicked is almost over. Because the joy of the hypocrite is about to be turned into weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Is the wicked forging ahead today? Is he “laughing all the way to the bank” as we say? Is he laying up treasures on earth, and making his name great? Zophar tells us, “Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?” Pause for a moment and consider a few of those you have known or heard about, and ask yourself, “Where is he?” “And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.” But the poor Christian who was so despised and hated – where is he? The Lord explains, “That where I am, there ye might be also.” In the paradise of God! If you had a choice, with whom would you rather change places? Would you rather be rich, and finish up in hell; or a beggar, and finish up in Abraham’s bosom? “Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment?” Our ‘Zophar,’ our whole attitude to life and death, would alter instantly if we could but get one glimpse of heaven and one long look at hell. Yet neither is available, that the just might live by faith and not by sight. But God cannot lie.

Zophar continues, “He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.” You see, it is actually the meek who shall inherit the earth. The believer in Christ is the only person with a solid foundation under him. The person who hears the word of the Lord and does it, his house shall stand forever. The wicked is only a will-o’-the-wisp, without tenure, and without stability, flourishing in the darkness only. When the day dawns, and the Sun of Righteousness shall arise, the wicked will be as forgotten as a bad dream, a nightmare without memory. “The eye also which saw him shall see him no more;” verse nine, “neither shall his place any more behold him.” His vast estates, his grand houses, his hoards of gold are taken from him in one night. Then whose shall these things be? They shall be given to the meek, to the poor and despised who sought only the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Who shall give them to the meek? His children! “His children shall seek to please the poor,” says Zophar, “and his hands shall restore their goods.” You see, it is the Sun of Righteousness which arises with healing in His wings. It is Jesus Christ the Righteous who will come to judge the world. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? The wicked go away into everlasting damnation, as Zophar says, “A fire not blown shall consume him.” Everyone thinks they have got away with sin, that because it was done in darkness it shall never come to light. But scripture teaches the reverse. “The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.” Zophar’s words may not be true in the day of grace, but as soon as the day of grace is over and things return to normal, then these words will be seen to be the scripture of truth. Remember, the

day of grace, the offer of pardon, the salvation of our gospel, is for a limited period. Some day it will come to an end.

“His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust,” says Zophar. It recalls the story of the prophet, Elisha, who was full of the power of God. When a dead body was dropped into the grave of Elisha, the dead man revived and stood upon his feet, having come into contact with the bones of Elisha. Christ was holy. Even the sin of the world in His own body could not contaminate Him. “Thou wilt not suffer Thy holy One to see corruption,” David prophesied. Christ is raised from the dead and seated at God’s right hand. He is our Great High Priest, without spot or blemish, in the holy of holies. We see He was incorruptible. But the wicked is seen to have sin in his very bones. He is corrupt to the bone. No outward cleansing, no outward appearance of godliness, no outward rites or rituals can have any effect on him, for sin is bred into his very structure. What he needs is to be born again, to become a new creature in Christ, to have a new foundation of holiness unto the Lord. He cannot merely be ‘improved’ or ‘smartened up’ or ‘sweetened.’ No outside remedy can alter his basic structure, which is sinful. Yet man is ever content with the idea of improving the flesh, despite the word of God. He will ‘turn over a new leaf,’ make yearly resolutions to do better, and put on an appearance of godliness in the hope of satisfying God. What does that do for him? That transforms him from being classed as ‘wicked’ to being classed as ‘a hypocrite.’ Well, if the triumph of the wicked is short, the joy of the hypocrite is equally short-lived, according to scripture. Holiness, according to Leviticus, is not just something put on, but something which begins with atonement. We need to be bone-holy instead of bone-sinful before we die, if we are to have a part in the resurrection of the just. “Be ye holy, as I am holy,” saith the Lord.

Can we learn of Christ from Zophar the Naamathite? Yes, for this too is scripture, and all scripture will testify of Christ if we are led by the Spirit of God. Indeed, the work of the Spirit is to take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us. You see, Zophar the Naamathite is wrong. His words are disallowed. Why? Because he tried to apply them to Job, to the man God called righteous, a man approved of God. Now if Zophar’s words cannot be allowed to apply to Job, who says of himself, “I abhor myself, and repent,” how much less can they apply to our Lord Jesus Christ, a man approved of God, Jesus Christ the Righteous, in whom was no sin! But that was exactly what men did, you know. They called Him wicked. They accused Him of blasphemy. They crucified Him, and then gathered at His Cross and said, “This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.” They applied Zophar’s words to Christ. And they couldn’t have been more wrong, you see. This was not a sinner, but the Holy One of God in the sinner’s place. This was not a wicked person, but the Person who bore the punishment of the wicked in order that God might justify the ungodly. This was not a hypocrite, but a Man whose joy will last forever, for God Himself has raised this Man from the dead that He might be the firstfruits of them that sleep, and that His joy might remain with us. They were wrong. Peter says they did it in ignorance, and called on them to repent. But what of you? Are you still saying, “Where is he?” Are you saying of His ascension into heaven, “He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision in the night”? In other words, scoffing at His existence, at His promise to return. You are wrong, you know. You cannot apply the words of Zophar to Christ. He has neither ‘flown away’ nor been ‘chased away.’ He has ascended into heaven to give men everywhere the opportunity to believe on Him,

and when the time comes He shall descend from heaven with the voice of archangels and the trump of God. (Amen!)

What we need to learn from Zophar is that our whole attitude can be wrong, our entire approach to life false. Just because the thing is outside the scope of our experience does not prove it is nonexistent. Many people, millions indeed over the centuries have proved that the gospel is true, and the word of God trustworthy. The secret is in trying it for yourself. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or not.” Try it and see! What is His will? “That they should believe on Him whom the Father hath sent.” Is it for all men? Yes, whosoever will may come unto God by Him. Am I too wicked? “Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.” It is not too complex? He has made the way of salvation so simple that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. Are there not ‘snares’ to it? There are snares to every path in life, but only this path has the Great Deliverer in it. Can I trust Him completely? If I can, you can. Well – almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian. Almost – but lost! Remember that the wicked go to hell. “His bones are full of the sin of his youth...though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not...in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits...God shall cast the fury of His wrath upon him...all darkness shall be hid in his secret places: a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.” Christ came to die for sinners. None need perish. Jesus has suffered so that we might go free. Today is still the day of grace, but tomorrow...? Who knows? Christ is Risen, and Christ must return. The day of Judgment cannot be far off, and death can come suddenly and take away the opportunity to be saved. Read what Zophar has to say about the wicked and the hypocrite. This is the scripture of truth, which cannot be broken. Perhaps up to now your whole approach has been wrong. Believe God!

Chapter 21

“But Job answered and said, Hear diligently my speech, and let this be your consolation. Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on.” Job in chapter 21 has passed the point where the heat has been turned off, the pressure abated, the trial over, yet he is far from recovery although his recovery has in fact begun. Only that he will recover is no longer in doubt. So we see that not much change in his speech can be detected here. His ‘friends’ still appear to him to be mocking him. The bitterness of his reply is still evident. The complaint remains much as before. “As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth.” At this point, Job is calling attention to the state to which God has reduced him. “Mark me,” he says, “and be astonished.” Look what I am reduced to. See for yourselves the wretched condition of the man who was asked to test the heat of the furnace – and be astonished! But of Him who was led into the furnace, ask no more. Pilate was astonished that He was dead already. He has to be released and carried and placed in the tomb. Gone now is every vestige of strength. He cannot assist others any more. He cannot help Himself now. He is totally destitute of all trace of strength, of power, of ability. His life blood has drained away. Utterly dependent on others now. He must rely on them not to tear the body, to close the eyelids, to position the arms and hands, to maintain

even the shape of a man. On others' care and gentleness depends the way He will find the body again in three days, for He can do nothing about it – nothing. Even the place they will lay Him is not chosen by Him but by them. "Mark me, and be astonished," scripture says.

Now Job is escaped with the skin of his teeth, the trial over as we said, but too recently for comfort. "Even when I remember I am afraid," Job tells us, "and trembling taketh hold of my flesh." Job has no clear idea how he escaped. He cannot rejoice. All he knows is that one moment death hovered at his shoulder, and the tomb gaped wide before his very face – the next he is out of danger, though reduced to a wreck, and the intolerable has passed him by. The memory of what might have been is enough to make him shudder. "Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold of my flesh." The patience of Job is a byword. What other man would have sat still for so long to give us this picture? We would long ago have sought the world's help, gone to a hospital for treatment, bought ourselves intensive care, set up a charity fund among our friends to restore our fortunes, and taken ourselves out of the hand of God. But Job is not called 'perfect' for nothing. Job sought no help but God's. Job left all his affairs in the hand of God. And Job allowed God to have His way with him. Was this not the greatest of all the men of the east? The result is that God can now righteously restore Job to health and strength, give him long life, double his fortune and make him to see his children's children even for four generations. But it will be a long time yet ere Job can forget the horror of darkness that stared him in the face. Perhaps a hundred years from this point Job will still be able to say, "Even when I remember I am afraid," so stark was that horror. But search the scriptures as we will, we can find no reference to any such reaction on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although He shows them His hands and His side, He makes no mention of the horror of darkness. Only we should see, through the eyes of Job, that the reason it is not mentioned is because it is unmentionable. The only clue we have is in Revelation, where John tells us that the hair of His head is white as snow, like the Ancient of Days.

Only one thing troubles Job now. "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?" he asks indignantly. Why is there no swift retribution on the wicked? Why is Pontius Pilate suffered to live to a ripe old age? Why is Herod let still to keep his power? Why is Caiaphas still high priest? And why is only Judas Iscariot destroyed? (Good questions – can you answer them?) "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth," – and suffer no long illness at the last – "and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" Christ has been Crucified, and He is risen from the dead. Why then are His murderers not stricken down, and brought to swift judgment? "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?" Because it is now the day of grace. What then of Judas Iscariot? Iscariot is a special case – he goes to his own place. Who then suffers? Peter. John. James. Stephen. Paul. "Of all men the most miserable." The church. The Christians in Rome. What happens to the wicked? Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Can this be true?

Check with the New Testament. Check with the historical records if you like. Jerusalem is not destroyed till Christ's murderers are dead. Each is given every opportunity to repent. Each lives out his life to the last day. And who sees it and is indignant? Job. "This man was perfect and upright."

But Job, indignant at the lack of retribution upon the wicked, knows nevertheless that God is still in control. "Lo, their good is not in their hand," he goes on to say, for even their long life and painless death is in the hand of God. "Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me." What is the counsel of the wicked? "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" In other words, who needs God? Man can get along splendidly without Him. That is the counsel of the wicked. But Job would rather suffer with God than prosper without God, and so would Peter, James, John, Stephen, Paul, the Christians in Rome, the early church – and you? Because Job knows his God. He is not confused by all this. If God in mercy to mankind grant this world a day of grace, a time to repent, a pause to think things out, that is well. But that does not mean that justice is departed out of heaven, or that the day of Judgment has been relegated to the ash-heap. For Job knows what is normal as well as Eliphaz, Bildad or Zophar. Listen again. "How oft is the candle of the wicked put out! and how oft cometh their destruction upon them! God distributeth sorrows in his anger. They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it. His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." Carnal man is concerned only with his life on earth – nothing else matters to him. His sole desire is to become wealthy, live in a big house, and dwell in pleasure all his days. But Job asks, "For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?" Life at best is short. Some day the Godless persons will have to face God, and the Christ-rejectors give account of themselves to Christ. "Sit...till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

"Shall any teach God knowledge?" Job goes on to ask. Divine wisdom is fathomless, unsearchable, right, and incredibly complete. God knows all. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows the name of every star, the number of worms in the ground, the place where the sparrow lies hid. He knows everything about you and about me. The very hairs of our head are all numbered. He knows not only what we do but the motives for it, the thoughts and intents of our heart. He knows the day of our birth and the day of our death – before we are born! There is nothing hid from the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. No record is missing, no idle word spoken is ever lost. The tears of the righteous are all in His bottle, and the laughter of fools is preserved for the day of Judgment. "Shall any teach God knowledge? seeing he judgeth those that are high." Man has his lower courts, his higher courts, his supreme courts. What judge can judge the judges of the supreme court? Only one Man, into whose hand God has committed all judgment, all authority, all power, a Man approved of God, perfect, upright. One that feareth God and escheweth evil, a Man tried by fire, a Man with infinite patience, the Greatest of all the men of the east – or the west, or the north, or the south, far greater than Job, wiser than Solomon, stronger than Samson, more beloved than Daniel. "And His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." This is the One with whom we have to do. When the light of His glory lit the Damascus road for a moment, Saul of Tarsus, blinded and astonished, cries out, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and a voice answered from

heaven, “I am Jesus – whom thou persecutest.” And a converted Paul can later say, “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Christ.” No one in either old or new testaments who had ever known God has been under any illusion about God – “Shall any teach God knowledge?” asks Job, “seeing He judgeth those that are high.” How great Thou art!

Chapter 22

“Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said, Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?” Eliphaz the Temanite, you may recall, represents reasonableness, and shows us the difference between normal and abnormal. Without Eliphaz we may fail to discern that the day of grace is actually an abnormal state of affairs. Men have, in every age, been given an opportunity to repent and turn to God, of course. Before the flood Noah was a preacher of righteousness, and after the flood came Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the nation of Israel, for God never left Himself without a witness. And of course there is that of God which can be seen by all in the creation around us, so that man is without excuse. That is the normal state of affairs. But the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ began a new era, a day of grace, and Eliphaz shows it is now actually an abnormal state of affairs today. Man has the gospel freely preached to him in all the world, if he chooses to listen. Indeed, in many countries man has the ability to read for himself the word of God, to judge directly the truth of the gospel, to see with his own eyes what Christ has done, rather than receive it secondhand from a priest. “Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?” asks Eliphaz. A man’s wisdom can profit a man, but can it profit God? Is God dependent on man? Yes, God depended on Jesus Christ to fulfill the will of God, the counsel of God. Never before, true. Never since, true. But there was a time, once, when God was profited by a Man. Eliphaz shows it is not normal for a man to be profitable unto God, for God blesses man, man does not enrich God. But God was actually enriched by Christ Jesus, if that were possible, and God was actually dependent on Christ Jesus to fulfill the entire plan of God from creation.

Eliphaz asks another question, addressing Job. “Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?” This is actually sarcastically of Job, for Eliphaz sees only what is normal, and normally man cannot profit God, nor add gain to God, nor does a man’s righteousness bring God pleasure. Normally, that is. But God took pleasure in Christ Jesus our Lord. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” He said. And the perfection of Christ’s ways did indeed bring gain to God, in the shape of many sons and daughters in the likeness of Christ. But it was abnormal, you see. Unique. Rare. Unusual. You will know better than we what word best describes it. What we want you to see is the quality of Christ, the distinctiveness, the greatness of the Lord Jesus. He was not merely another man born of woman – He was the Man, the representation in flesh on earth of the unseen God, the Son of the living God, the glory of Israel, the Light of the Gentiles, Innocence personified, Perfection in a physical body, the only Man who could profit God, who could give God supreme pleasure, who could add gain to God – and man crucified Him. Job’s righteousness cannot bring God pleasure. “Be ye holy, as I am holy,” is the command, and Job is not holy – he has fallen short of the glory of God. Job’s perfection cannot add gain to God. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” is the command and Job cannot say,

“Abba Father,” so he falls short. No, no! Job’s righteousness is for our pleasure, and Job’s perfection is for our gain, that we might take pleasure in the picture of Christ modeled for us by Job, and get great gain thereby. God is blessing Job. God is honoring Job. God is making Job great. Not the other way around. Let us not think we are doing God a favor – God is doing us a favor by allowing us into the family of God, Jesus Christ being the firstborn among brethren. The only way we can please God, the only way we can add anything to God, is by our honoring of Jesus Christ, the one Man who actually pleased God with His righteousness.

We cannot go into all that Eliphaz says, because time is not available and we are only skimming the surface of the book of Job. But let us see at least that Eliphaz is right, in spite of the fact that Job can truthfully say in the end of chapter 21 of his three ‘friends,’ “How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?” Eliphaz is right. His words apply to man, even to the best of men. In verse five here he says to Job, “Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?...stripped the naked of their clothing...not given water to the weary...withholden bread from the hungry...sent widows away empty...broken the hold (upon life) of the fatherless.” Christ gave us the water of life. Christ gave us the true Bread from heaven. Christ became husband to the widow, father to the fatherless. Job was the greatest of all the men of the east. In order to become great himself someone else had to go without. That is the law of nature. Only Christ came to give. Only Christ enriched everyone else. Only Christ could bring gain to God. The demon-possessed is found at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. The woman of Samaria is offered living water, so that she need never thirst again. The marriage in Cana of Galilee is given wine to drink. The five thousand are fed with a few loaves and fishes, the seven thousand likewise. The widow of Nain has her greatest possession restored to her. The little children are blessed. Whatever way you look at Jesus He was Perfection in the flesh. But compared to Christ, Job is merely a good man. Eliphaz is right, however false his words, for Job simply could not do what Jesus did. Our own Eliphaz will condemn us if we let him, for compared with Christ we are pathetic creatures. Listen to Eliphaz as you look at Jesus. Eliphaz says to us, “Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?” Alas, yes! We are unprofitable servants; we have done only those things which it was our duty to do. “Woe is me,” says Paul, “if I preach not the gospel.” But Christ has bestowed upon us His righteousness, and we are perfect.

You see, it was for sinners Jesus died. The wages of sin is death. The reward of the wicked is destruction. Eliphaz says, “Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?...Therefore snares are round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee; Or darkness, that thou canst not see; and abundance of waters cover thee.” That is normal, explains Eliphaz, reasonable, rational, and only to be expected. Because of our wickedness, our iniquities – therefore ‘snares’ were round about Christ, and sudden fear came to trouble Him; and darkness; and abundance of water, the floodgates of wrath. It was for sinners Jesus died. “I am not come to call the righteous,” He said, “but sinners to repentance.” What is the normal? The wicked perish. Iniquities lead to hell. Sinners expect retribution. What is the abnormal? That the wicked be saved. That iniquities are covered over. That sin is forgiven/ so the day of grace is abnormal. But what ushered in the day of grace? The Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection of Christ. So then these three are not normal, but abnormal, in the sense that there was no reason for Christ Jesus to suffer, save for our sins; no rational explanation of His death except the explanation of the

gospel; no logical cause for His great and glorious resurrection but our justification. How great Thou art! And we are justified from all things, forgiven all sin, regarded as perfect, because of Christ. By believing in Him, sinful man and a holy God are reconciled. We are accepted in the Beloved. The great “Therefore” of Eliphaz, the awful “Therefore” of verse 10 of Job 22, the logical “Therefore” of normal conditions, is annulled by our belief in Jesus, and Eliphaz is found false, for we have never another “Therefore.” “Therefore,” being reconciled by the blood of His Cross, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God for grace, for mercy, for the Sacrifice of Christ, for the blood of Jesus. Thank God for the salvation of the gospel, for the scripture of truth, for the good news. Thank God, God cannot lie.

“Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust,” – the precious gold of faith, that is – “and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks” – the foundation, if you like, for the living water to pour over – “Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defense, and thou shalt have plenty of silver.” Silver represents spirituality in scripture. “For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. Thou shalt also decree a thing,” meaning to ask in faith, “and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways.” Paul accepts Eliphaz, saying, “I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice – which is your reasonable service.” To come to God is not only sane, sensible, logical and reasonable, but should be the normal reaction of those who hear the gospel of Christ. It is not mad, stupid, illogical and unreasonable as some would have you believe, neither is it abnormal to believe in Jesus, but quite the reverse. Paul testifies, “I am not mad, most noble Festus,” and history confirms it. How do we come to God? On our knees, in repentance and tears. “When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person.” Two men stood once in the temple to pray. The Pharisee said, Thank God I am not as other men, such as this publican. The publican said only, God, be merciful to me the sinner. And our Lord said that the publican returned home justified, rather than the Pharisee. “When men are cast down,” says Eliphaz, “then thou shalt say, There is lifting up, and he saveth the humble.” Why? Because the ‘normal’ with God to repentant sinners is to justify.

Chapter 23

“Then Job answered and said...” The great debate continues, and the pressure on Job has abated only a fraction at this point. “Then Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning.” But Job is out of danger. Job has caught sight of the lighthouse of resurrection in the sea of affliction. Job has not been asked to enter the darkness. “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!” It is clearly hard to bear persecution and loss when one is innocent and upright, the calamity causeless. Job the perfect has a remarkable knowledge of God. He knows well, that for some reason as yet not understood, God is the originator of his calamity and heartbreak. “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” he says. If only he could get hold of God, if only Job could be brought face to face

with God, what would he not say to his Maker! He would soon drag from Jehovah the truth of the matter, the reason for it all, so that at least Job would understand the need for such a thing to befall a man. But God cannot explain, for the debate would never have begun if Job had understood the reason for his sufferings, and the debate – not the story of calamity – is the *raison d'être* of the book of Job. Without the debate we cannot learn the true norm in anything pertaining to Christ. Without the debate we have no way of gauging the feelings of the Just suffering in place of the unjust. Without the debate the marvelous details of the great picture painted by God using Job for a model are lost to us. Job is not asked to go into death, yet he says, “Even to day is my complaint bitter.” What then of the Just who died for the unjust? “My stroke is heavier than my groaning (conveys to you).”

What is Job saying? He is saying that, “even today,” even after the pressure has abated, the awful dread passed and the nightmare gone, the very memory makes him shudder, the appalling prospect of what might have been makes him bitter. “Even today is my complaint bitter.” And he goes on to explain that all his groaning cannot convey to us the heaviness of the stroke he had to bear. But Christ was stricken for our iniquities. Christ was smitten for our sins. Words then cannot convey the heaviness of the stroke, nor the bitterness of the cup He was compelled to drink in order that we might escape. Indeed, without Job to set some sort of norm for us, we cannot begin to comprehend what is summed up in the phrase, “Christ suffered.” We cannot pierce the darkness that surrounds the Cross. ‘We only know it was for us He hung – and suffered – there.’ Has Job performed a very valuable service for us? Has the book of Job taken on meaning for us? Has the bitterness of Job’s complaint conveyed to us some glimpse of the background of the picture? If the answer is ‘yes’ then even Job would be satisfied. There is a reason for everything that happens in our lives even if the reason be too remote to reach our comprehension. There is a design in everything God, the God of order, decrees must come about. There is a cause, a great cause and a good cause, for the causeless sufferings of Job, and therefore there must be a cause for the least comprehensible circumstance of our life before God. Sometimes the cause is in us – we have gone wrong and brought the evil upon ourselves, as happened to ancient Israel time after time. Sometimes the cause is inherited. Sometimes the cause is the suffering for Christ’s sake outlined in the New Testament. But there is no effect without a cause, if only we could discern it. And, as Job declares, the way to discernment is to get close to God. “Oh that I knew where I might find him!” Job cries, “that I might come even to his seat (throne)!” Amen!

Job continues, “I would know (comprehend) the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead (or come) against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me. 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 is up against one real difficulty – he cannot pierce the darkness. God is hidden in the thick darkness. There is a veil, past which Job cannot go, screening off the holy of holies. But that is the mercy of God. Only Christ can be asked to go into the darkness, and only by Him can the veil of the holiest be rent from top to bottom. The God of mystery, the Holy God, the Ancient of Days, is revealed to us by Christ Crucified. By Him we have access. By Him we can come boldly unto the throne and find

grace. By Him we can stand before God. Clothed with the righteousness of Christ we are ushered into the presence of God, accepted in the Beloved, called sons of God, made to stand with the Firstborn, offered grace and mercy and forgiveness and understanding and a new relationship, reconciled to God, accounted holy, blessed with His Spirit. All this comes to us by Christ Jesus our Lord. But all this was won for us at fearful cost. Job's frustration, perplexity, despair comes from his being unable to pierce the darkness. But we should see that there God is being only merciful to Job. What lies beyond that veil of darkness is too terrible for even Job to look upon. It will be many years after Job's day before there will appear on earth One great enough to enter the darkness and remove the veil. Christ must rise from the dead in order to reveal fully the God of wonder, the Almighty, the Everlasting and the Eternal God. Christ glorified is God revealed.

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (A verse to hang on a bedroom wall.) Yes, Job may have difficulty comprehending God's ways, but God has no difficulty comprehending Job's ways. God is light. Nothing is hid from Him. The thick darkness with which He surrounds Himself is a merciful screen to avoid blinding us. He knoweth the way that we take, and when He has fully accomplished His work in us, we shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. Let us not be weary of His chastening, nor faint in the trial of our faith. Rather, at the close of life, let us look back and say with Job the perfect, "My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. 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 the perfect said that, but Christ the perfect risen from the dead could say that too. Job could say that because he was not asked to go all the way – Christ could say that in spite of the way He was required to go. We, like the apostle Paul, should be able to say that, no matter where God may lead us, for in all we may suffer Christ has been there before us. "My foot hath held his steps." We follow after. We are not called upon to break new ground, or go in a way Christ has not been. If we suffer for Christ's sake, happy are we – not miserable, as Job was, for we comprehend fully the why of it and glory which shall afterward be revealed in us. The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. The light affliction which is but for a moment cannot compare with the terrific reward awaiting us. It is "His way have I kept, and not declined." Let this mind be in you, says scripture, that was also in Christ Jesus, who endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God. The way into the very presence of God Himself is the way of the Cross, but is it not worth even that?

Job knows his God. He understands better than most that the ways of God and the ways of man are not the same, and God's thoughts are not necessarily what we would have thought in the circumstances. "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?" Job tells us. We are here reminded that Christ set His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem. He is voluntarily caught. He is willingly snared – "for this cause am I come." He saw the trap long before He approached it. But He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" Not even Peter can persuade Him to desist, for the mind of God, and of Christ, is set to save the world. "And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." Christ Jesus had compassion on us. All we like sheep were gone astray. We were as sheep without a shepherd. The Lord, looking on Jerusalem, wept over it. The Lord, looking at our helplessness in face of death, wept. The Lord, seeing the sick, the lepers, the lost multitudes, was moved with compassion. We had turned every one to his own way. And He set His face as a flint to go on to Jerusalem, even though He well knew the prophecy, "And Jehovah hath laid on Him

the iniquity of us all.” But what did His soul desire? To reconcile us to God. To lead us into the way everlasting. To save us in the midst of the waters. And in spite of the way, what His soul desireth, even that He doeth. Job could not do it. Job could not even be asked to do it, great though he was. But Job could say, “For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me.” If the most perfect, upright, righteous man on earth could not perform it, and he was “the greatest of all the men of the east,” should not our adoration go out to Christ – “Thou alone art worthy” – and shall we not say of Him, “O Lord, how great Thou art!”? Job concludes, “And many such things are with him,” or as we might put it, “All this and more did He do.” Yes, He saved us, loved us, brought us to God, justified us, gave us His righteousness, and will return for us also.

Finally, in this 23rd chapter, Job says, “Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him. For God maketh my heart soft (faint), and the Almighty troubleth me: Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.” In the previous verse Job had said, “For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me.” What is appointed for man? It is appointed unto man once to die. But “He performeth the thing that is appointed for me.” Job escapes death by the skin of his teeth. But the remembrance of how close he came makes him shudder. “Because I was not cut off before the darkness.” That is what makes Job afraid. He glimpsed the darkness – “neither hath he covered the darkness from my face” – and sensed the presence of God as one who has come uncomfortably close to something beyond the ken of man, something beyond the veil, something terrifyingly menacing in absolute holiness and wrath against sin. It is the presence of God. If the perfect Job quailed before the unseen presence of God, how shall sinners fell at the revealing of the great white throne, blazing with holiness, untouchable and unapproachable, in the Day of Judgment? They shall cry to the rocks, “Fall on us!” and they will be ready to jump into the lake of fire to escape the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Even the perfect will quail at the presence of God, the nearness of God, the majesty to be revealed. Then – and perhaps only then – will the saints appreciate what Christ has done for them. “When I consider, I am afraid of him.” Well for us then if we are seen to be wearing the spotless robe of the righteousness of Christ bequeathed to us. Woe to them who are caught without it! For all our righteousness is as filthy rags. “Therefore am I troubled at his presence,” says Job the perfect, not seeing God, but only aware of how near he got to the edge of that darkness, “when I consider, I am afraid of him. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me.” But not you?

Chapter 24

Job continues to speak in Job 24, but here his emphasis is on man rather than on God. “Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?” Occasionally the English rendering is a little obscure, yet without knowledge of the meaning and purpose of the book freer translations are often misleading. Remember the subject of the great debate is, “Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not?” Job, in chapter 23 shows how he himself has suffered, being perfect, and then adds this powerful declaration in chapter 24 that the wicked never appear even to be rebuked, and says in the last verse, “And if it be not so now, who will make me (call me) a liar, and make my speech nothing worth (or, prove my speech worthless)?” Is there no justice? asks Job in effect. How is it that the wicked so brazenly get away with it,

while others suffer because they cannot defend themselves? Why, asks Job in verse one, seeing our times are in the hand of God, do they that know Him not – or, they who do not know Him – see long life, or length of days? Why are they allowed to continue? Why are they not cut down? Why is their career of wickedness not abruptly halted? “Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof. They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge. They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.” Why are they not rooted out and taken away? Our Lord answered this Himself in the parable of the tares, did He not? That the tares, or weeds, are left to grow side by side with the good grain until the day of harvest, when the tares are then gathered in and burned.

But, says Job, it was always like this. This has nothing to do with the day of grace. If it was like this in Job's day, then what difference does the day of grace make? Well, God is actually changeless, eternal. His counsels are from before the beginning of the world. The Cross of Christ is from eternity, foreknown. God is the same yesterday, today, for ever. If God had meted out swift judgment to the wicked in every generation, then earth would have been populated only by such men as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah would have been a yearly occurrence, and the flood of Noah's day a continuing threat. And where would you and I have been if judgment had been so swift? So not merely in the day of grace but in every age God has always been the same – slow to anger, plenteous in mercy, sending rain upon the just and unjust alike, not desiring that any should perish but that all, all should come to repentance, swifter to bless than to curse, long-suffering, gracious, merciful, forgiving at every opportunity, as Jonah knew He would in regard to Nineveh, if man repented. That is the changeless God, who tells us in scripture He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Man must always, in every age, be given every opportunity to repent, which is why the wicked often lived longer than the meek. No one indeed can call Job a liar, or make his speech nothing worth, for it is true enough. But the question debated is, “Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not?” and as we have seen, not only Job but Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar answer, “No.” Who then should suffer? Suffering is part of the curse, the result of Adam's sin. If the wicked do not suffer, and the righteous do not suffer, is the curse no longer in effect? So we see that in every age the suffering is borne by the meek, the poor, the defenseless, the widow and the orphan, the helpless, the stranger, the weak. It was not the righteous, or the mighty that Christ came to save.

Paul himself avers that the body of believers comprised few of the great, the mighty of this world, although they are not excluded, thank God. And the bitterest enemies of the early church were the chosen people, the high priests, the Pharisees (whose righteousness was a byword in Israel) and the scribes and lawyers, all disciples of Moses. Our Lord clearly taught that it was hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven; but, said He, blessed are the meek, blessed are ye poor. No, a truly righteous man should not suffer. And Job goes even further, and tells us plainly that the wicked do not suffer, and dares any to make him out a liar. Who does that leave? If good people should not suffer, and the rich and strong have no need to suffer, that leaves only the poor, the defenseless, to share the burden of suffering among them. The early church had it right – they had all things common, so that none suffered more than another; and they bore each others burdens, so that none was at ease and none overburdened. But that was too abnormal for us. Today we have reverted to normal – the whole burden of suffering falls on them who are least able to bear it, and we call that “the status quo,” and who is willing to

disturb it? Neither will we reprove the wicked, though Job says, “They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry.” Where? In a far country? No, in your community. “Pure religion,” says James, “before God the Father is this, to defend the widow and the orphan, while keeping oneself unspotted.” That is pure religion – the religion of the pure. All our works will in the end be tested by fire, and only those works will stand which are approved by God. If we have never shared the burden of suffering will God be pleased with us? “But and if ye suffer for Christ’s sake, happy are ye.” Yet today we are bent on the pursuit of happiness, and tend to regard suffering as abnormal, foreign to us.

Now the truly righteous man, Job, had God’s hedge around him. And the psalmist tells us that the rich man has built himself a hedge. So these two examples suffice to show that the righteous are hedged about by God Himself, and the rich hedge themselves from suffering. That is the norm, or normal state of affairs. But the day of grace is actually abnormal. So today, the day of grace, the Christian is taught to go out of the protection of the hedge, and go into all the world, and suffer for Christ’s sake and the gospel, the apostles leading the way. This applies not only to missionaries, but to all the followers of Christ. Our ‘world’ may be geographically limited, but there is suffering in it, and we should accept suffering from the hand of God in order to share the total burden. We should deliberately seek out the poor, the orphan and the widow, and take upon ourselves as much of their burden as God will give us grace to bear uncomplainingly. We are to work with our hands the thing that is good, not in order to build around us a hedge against hurt, but in order to help them that have nothing, to give to him that has needs. If we are truly righteous we will not suffer except for Christ’s sake, for God will prosper all that we do, but let us rely on His hedge alone and go out to seek the poor and the lost. Christ suffered, leaving us an example to follow. Christ gave. Christ trusted only in God. Christ bore. Christ had compassion. Christ preached to the poor. Christians are followers of Christ. Let this mind be in you, says scripture, which was also in Christ Jesus. Or again, “Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Have we ever denied ourselves a night’s sleep in order to reach him who was lost? Have we ever denied ourselves an item of clothing in order to give to someone without? Are the widows better off in your community because you happen to live there? Or the orphans? Or the poor? Or the weak? Or the sick? Or the prisoners?

We cannot go deeply into Job chapter 24 because the translation is so abstruse in places as to be almost unintelligible, and we do not wish to depart from the text used here. It is enough, we think, to consider the truth here propounded by Job, that the wicked very often appear to get away with it, as we might put it. They live full lives, and have length of life. They remove the landmarks. They violently take away flocks, to feed themselves. They make off with the ass of the fatherless, and take away the ox of the widow for a pledge. They turn the needy out into the streets, and cause the poor to hide themselves. They come to barren land and leave it even barer, like wild beasts in the desert. They spring on their prey, and these are such as can maintain themselves and their children in a wilderness. They eat well. They drink wine in abundance. And they clothe themselves at the expense of the naked. That is Job’s description of them, in vivid contrast to the teaching of Christ and the example of Christ. For He came to set up the landmarks for the poor, to be a shepherd to the flocks, and restore them to God, their rightful owner. He came to bear the burden of the fatherless, and to ease the lot of the widow and the bereaved. He

came to restore substance to the needy, and gathered the poor in multitudes around Him. He came to bring water to a barren land, and to cause the wilderness to rejoice. And above all, He came to clothe the naked, to fit us for the presence of God, having His righteousness. But did He have long life? Not so, for He was cut off out of the land of the living, by wicked hands. We are to seek to emulate Him. To restore the ancient landmarks of righteousness. To care for the flock of God. To bear the burden of the orphan. To comfort the widow. To give substance to the needy. To restore the poor. To bring living water to a thirsty world. To make the barren place fruitful. To offer the righteousness of Christ to the naked. To suffer for Christ's sake and the gospel.

Chapter 25

Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said..." and in five short verses we learn all that Bildad has to say. The debate is actually over at this point. The question debated is, "Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not?" and, as we have seen, Job answers in the negative, Eliphaz answers in the negative, Bildad answers in the negative, and Zophar answers in the negative. The great debate is over. After Bildad, there is no need for Zophar, because Zophar represents an approach or an attitude, and simply follows on more or less automatically from what Eliphaz and Bildad say. Eliphaz the Temanite is the leader, representing what is normal, and Bildad the Shuhite is secondary, representing the difference, as tears and laughter. We have already seen and learned by now what is normal, and in chapter 25 we get a last brief look at the difference. Listen now to Bildad as he speaks. "Dominion and fear are with him, he maketh peace in his high places. Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise? How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not (or, hath no light of itself); yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?" We are reminded of what another writer says, "I am a worm, and no man." And perforce we are reminded that our Lord calls Himself the "Son of Man." So we see that it is Christ who makes the difference. It is Christ who can make the difference between tears and laughter for us. It is Christ who came to usher in the day of grace, and as Bildad follows Eliphaz we should see that after we have learned what is normal, we should see the greatness of Christ.

Let us look at those verses again. "Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, Dominion and fear are with him, he maketh peace in his high places." What makes all the difference today? Surely it is the Resurrection of Christ. The tears are counterbalanced by the laughter, declares Bildad. The Man of Sorrows is now crowned with all glory and honor. The heartbreak of His disciples has turned to incredulous joy. The weeping of the women at the tomb has become rapture. The Risen Christ is a revelation of God. All power and authority are in His hands – "Dominion and fear are with him" – and He ascends to the seat of the Highest – "he maketh peace in his high places." It needs Bildad to show us the matter. If we suffer on earth for Christ's sake and the gospel, we need assurance that the sorrows of today will turn into the joys of the eternal tomorrow. Bildad assures us it will be so, for the abnormal must, in time, revert to normal. It is the resurrection that will make all the difference, just as the Resurrection of the Risen Christ has been seen to 'make all the difference' for the apostles, for the early church, for all saints since those days. Christ Crucified is not enough to tip the scales for Bildad. Christ

gloriously raised from the dead swings the balance, makes all the difference, restores normality. The weeping gives place to rejoicing. The bitterness is swept away in a flood of joy. The sorrow and mourning turn to peace and laughter. There is no need for Zophar to say anything more – the heart's-ease of the disciples is so apparent, words are unnecessary. Indeed, there is hardly need for Bildad to speak – chapter 25 could be summed up in one expression, namely, I told you so! Yes, Christ had assured them He would rise the third day. Christ had expressly instructed them to wait for three more days. Christ had plainly told them He would be with them again, and His appearance among them plainly says, I told you so! He upbraids them for their lack of faith in Him, and Thomas nearly missed it.

“Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, Dominion and fear are with him, he maketh peace in his high places.” And goes on to ask, “Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise?” We await our own resurrection with the same eagerness of hope. We have seen that Christ's resurrection wiped away all tears from their eyes, and it will be the same for us, John tells us in Revelation. All the bitterness is expunged in a moment of joy so shocking as to be unbelievable. But Bildad would assure everyone there is another side to resurrection. The mocking laughter we have endured for so long on earth will in that same instant turn into a cry of bitterness so dreadful in its hopelessness that nothing up to the present can be compared with it. Too late! The day of grace over, all reverts to normal. The wicked must look to their own defense, but, Bildad asks, “Is there any number of his armies?” Where to hide? In what dark cavern? “And,” inquires Bildad, “upon whom doth not his light arise?” Will any escape the Day of Judgment? Not one, answers Bildad, for God is waiting to propound His great question, “What think ye of Christ?” and His records will reveal what you have thought and said in your lifetime. “By thy words thou shalt be justified...” Did you witness for Christ among men? “And by thy words thou shalt be condemned” – or did you take His Name in vain? But the just who have lived by faith will, at the resurrection of the just, be justified and not brought into condemnation. His armies hold no terror for them which are in Christ, for the number of His armies is only assurance of How great Thou art! And His light shining upon them which are in Christ strikes no fear into their hearts, but only the assurance that the path of the just has opened into perfect day at last. What will be like for them? It will be joy unspeakable and full of glory, answers Paul. It will be bliss. It will be rapture. It will be pleasure for evermore. It will be eternal peace.

Bildad here in chapter 25 has two more questions for us – “How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?” Normally, says Bildad, no man can look forward to being resurrected, for the prospect of coming into the very presence of God is enough to strike terror into the heart of the bravest. Normally, all that a man might expect is a long and happy life here on earth, hedged about with abundance, and then in hell to lift up his eyes, being in torment. Normally, man cannot anticipate anything good after death, for because of sin he is unclean, and nothing unclean or defiling can enter the gates of heaven. So Bildad, anticipating Christ and His righteousness, wonders how it can be. “How can he be clean that is born of a woman?” Even the very birth of Christ would have to be different, obviously. If His birth only followed the normal, the natural course of events, how could He be clean, never mind holy? Our justification depended on His being holy – “The wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption” – because He rose from the dead for our justification who believe on His name,

and if He were not holy would He not have seen corruption? So Christ is proved to be holy, and it must be allowed He was born of a virgin by the will of God, not man. So the answer to Bildad's "How can he be clean that is born of a woman" is to refer him to Luke, the physician in the case, with Matthew as our witness, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise..." Bildad wonders, "How...? How...?" We can only say Christ was different from all other men. Vive la difference! Even His birth was not normal, for God was His Father. Only His ascension into glory was normal. That alone is what we have expected. "I go unto the Father." How obviously right!

Bildad goes on, "Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight." Wonder no more, Bildad: all that has been taken care of. There will be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Those stars are to be replaced, for they are not so pure as the righteous who will shine for ever and ever. That moon, which has no light in itself, will be replaced by another Queen of Heaven, the church glorified. And the Lord we love will Himself be the Light of the City of God, the Sun of Righteousness indeed. It will all be different, you see, Bildad. It will seem strange to you, for there will be no more tears, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. John saw His glory, and describes it in the opening chapter of Revelation. And all the apostles testified to the new heaven and the new earth. We only await the return of our Lord. We only wait for the Son of Man to come back. We only wait – and fall asleep waiting – because the day of grace cannot last much longer, and when it is over He will appear with the angel hosts to take us to be with Himself, that where He is we may be also. He has there prepared a place for us. He has seen to every detail personally, and we who know Him are well content to leave all in His so capable hands. It may seem strange to you, Bildad, and very different from anything you could have experienced, anything known on earth, anything in this life, but we are sure of it because Christ was different. Christ is unique, and we confidently expect therefore that His home will be 'one of a kind.' Christ is pure, and we agree the present stars are not pure, so we confidently expect a new heaven and a new earth, and purer stars than these. Christ is light, Christ is righteous, Christ is holy, Christ is wonderful, Christ is God. So we must expect that where He is there will be light, and righteousness, and most holiness, and everything that is wonderful, for we will stand in the presence of God.

Lastly, Bildad concludes with, "How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?" The opposite to suffering unjustly is revenge, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," saith the Lord. The worm here is the desert worm, which when crushed gave the ancients their scarlet dye. That is the picture. Christ was bruised, crushed, made to bleed, and cast into the ground. But in the scene of vengeance Christ wears the vesture dipped in blood. The war is won, the armies of God triumphant, and rebellious man is seen to be crushed, bruised, bleeding. Squashed flat! Yes, proud man with his 'Who needs God?' approach to life, is finally crushed and made to eat the dust. His mocking laugh is heard no more. His jeers, his scorn, his twisted lip are things of the past. His philosophy, his knowledge, his 'education,' his culture, his power, his pride, his might are trampled into the dust. His rejection of God rebounds on his own head, for God now rejects him. Face to face with a power greater than he, terror has replaced the self-satisfied smirk he has worn so long here. Caught in the trap he devised for others, he is ridden over roughshod by the armies of vengeance. Crushed, bleeding, defenseless he is spurned like the desert worm under the heel of the King he despised. Will God exact vengeance? Yea, verily!

And our God is a consuming fire, says Hebrews. And who assures us vengeance will one day have a place? Why, Bildad of course. The very experience of life would lead us to see that it must be so. History is full of it. None but a fool would expect anything else. Retribution is Bildad's last word. Who would believe that a just God would allow man to crucify His only begotten Son and never demand retribution, never exact vengeance, never take revenge? When the day of grace closes, what then? "Prepare to meet thy God." Amen.

Chapter 26

"But Job answered and said..." This chapter actually concludes the debate, because Job is allowed the last word, as it were, although Job's speech runs on into chapter 31. We need to clearly distinguish the parts of scripture, 'rightly dividing the word of truth,' if we are to see the matter. The whole book of Job is made more difficult than it need be by the translators, obviously because they understood little of it themselves; nevertheless, enough is conveyed to us to allow us full understanding of the great picture of Christ in it, and enough stands to allow us to perceive the debate. Recent translations are not spiritual enough to be relied upon, so we prefer the text we have used, but God's people would esteem it a favor if someone led by the Spirit, and having the necessary knowledge, would carefully restore the sense while preserving the text. Too often the text has been preserved at the expense of the sense, but modern translations seek only to preserve the sense at the expense of the text, whereas both are necessary. The Bible is first of all great literature – it should be translated by masters of the literary art only. But besides that the Bible is God's word. It should be translated only by godly men. And how can a person who has not the mind of Christ, and who is not led by the Spirit of God, claim to be able to give us the word of God regarding Christ, even by translation? The solely carnal mind, obtruding into the things of God, simply adds confusion. Erudition is not a substitute for spirituality; but neither is spirituality a substitute for erudition. However learned Gamaliel is, God doesn't use him. However unlearned Peter and John may be, God uses them. But Paul is a good example of the balance desired.

"But Job answered and said, How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?" What have you done? asks Job, in effect. What have you achieved? How have you helped him that is weak? How have you strengthened the one that is feeble? How have you taught him that lacks wisdom? How have you elucidated the matter for him that needs understanding? The debate is over – what have you three accomplished? "To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?" or, Whose spirit has been revived by thee? It is an accusation. Job is questioning Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar's ability to help. Certainly they know what should be in normal times, normal circumstances, but are they not merely 'Job's comforters' in a day of trouble? Woe to him who looks to these three for help in a day of despair! You see, in normal times men can rationalize everything. Our Eliphaz will excuse our wickedness in a wicked world – he will say that is normal, that we are no different than our fellows, that the majority are like we are. And Bildad will tell us that our generation is no worse than any previous generation, from his experience of life. And Zophar will agree with them, and concede that our approach to life is normal, rational, sane. But when the day of trouble

comes, and death stands ready to receive us, then these three will be 'Job's comforters' to us indeed. Then Eliphaz will say, "You got what you deserved, being wicked!" And Bildad will say, "Laughter is past, now it is time to wail!" And Zophar will agree with these two, and say, "Approach the judgment seat in fear and trembling." Not much help, you will admit, with death and the grave staring you in the face. Not much help with judgment and hell looming before you. Not much help in the day of vengeance.

"Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof." (That is what we mean by good 'text' with little 'sense' left to it.) Job is saying, The things of death come from the flood (of destruction), and those who suffer it. "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering." God is going to judge the earth as He did in Noah's day, and expose hell and destruction to the eyes of the wicked. This whole earth is totally dependent on God. "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." But next time God will not destroy the earth with a flood, but with fire. "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under (upon) them." And God is not seen, neither is His wrath known. "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end." Then, in the end of time, He will close the day of grace with a thud that will shake the stars out of their courses, and with glittering spear in hand He will begin the day of vengeance and wrath. "The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof." And some of the 'pillars of the church' will be more than astonished! (They are already shocked by the idea of God seeking vengeance, although scripture plainly declares it.) "He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud." The sea here actually represents the sea of humanity gathered before Him, when He will divide the sheep from the goats, and the proud will be utterly cast down. Job certainly knows his God, indeed, and is under no illusions about Him, but what help can Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar give in a day of trouble like that? asks Job. 'Job's comforters,' all three. "How savest thou the arm that hath no strength?" Can man really depend on his Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar? When God is shaking the pillars of heaven?

Now scripture is of little value to us unless we can see Christ in it. So let us look for a moment at those opening verses of chapter 26 in that light. "But Job answered and said, How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength?" Job had to endure their words in order for us to see that Christ could find no comforting thought anywhere, no help, no relief, no source of strength. Had the Lord merely been as Job was, still in His innocence, still in His integrity, still in His spotlessness, He might have drawn comfort from the fact. But Christ gives us His innocence to take our sins in His own body on the Tree. Christ sacrifices His integrity in order to bear our iniquity. Christ loses His spotlessness to become sin for us, and to suffer the wrath of God against sin. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" – the symbol of all that pertained to evil – "even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." There was no comfort in that.

God does not call on Christ to suffer because Jesus was good. No, God spared not His own Son because Christ dared to become evil for us. God does not punish goodness, He punishes evil. God and evil cannot inhabit the same domain – God has to forsake Jesus on the Cross, at the very point where Christ is most in need of God. Our Lord actually took our sins into Himself, and became what the serpent in the wilderness signifies, a thing of evil. He had to. There was no

other way. My sins – (dear Lord, forgive me) – had to be transferred to Him, if God was to be righteously able to forgive me all the debt. He bore my sins in His own body on the Tree. My sins are all punished, all paid for. But I did not bear the punishment for them – Jesus did. I am escaped, ‘set free’ – not a word even of reproof for all my sins, not one reminder, not one day in hell, nothing. But Christ suffered dreadfully just to account for every sin. His precious blood was shed to wash away all guilt from us – the blood of Jesus Christ cleanest us from all sin. Does that go for you, too? If so, we praise God, who has redeemed us by so great a Sacrifice! This is the picture Job could not portray to us. Job could only be made to sit in the seat of the sinful long enough for us to see the picture, but by no process could my sins ever be transferred to Job the perfect, who says in chapter 27, “My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.” Christ had to let go His righteousness, and suffer the reproaches of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, the reproach of His own heart, to account for my sins. Read again, at your leisure, the bitter reproaches of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, remembering that Christ had not Job’s ability to refute them, for when they would accuse Him of wickedness He was not perfect but full of sin – my sin, and the sins of many, many more. So He suffered, the Just for the unjust.

That is why Job goes on, in verse 13, to tell us, “By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.” God not only created all things, but God created the Cross of Christ. It is something peculiar to God, part of His master scheme, foreknown from eternity. The Cross is the last piece put into place, the keystone of the entire structure, the missing piece from the creation of the world. The whole creation waited for Christ. He was not only the Son of God, but the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He was not only the One who garnished the heavens, but the crooked serpent of Moses in the wilderness. His name is not only called Wonderful, but the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. “This man was perfect...” Nay, this Man was more than perfect, greater than Job by far. In Him dwelled all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In Him we find everything. He is our Saviour. Our Redeemer. Our Shepherd. Our husband and lover. Our life. Our hope. Our all in all. Our shield. Our Advocate with the Father. Our Head. Our righteousness. Our Friend. Our Brother. The Captain of our salvation. The One gone before, whom we follow after. Our Lord and our God. Our justifier. Our defender, and our defense. The supplier of all our needs. The Baptizer. Our original Creator, and our Potter to make for Himself another vessel more suited to His mind. Our strength and stay. The Author and the Finisher of our salvation. Our glory. Our Sun. Our Light in heaven. The Guider of our feet. Our comfort. What is He not to those who know Him? And Job ends the chapter by saying, “Lo, these are parts of His ways,” for we know in part, and the half has never been told. “Lo, these are parts of His ways, but how little a portion is heard of Him,” or how little we know of Him. O Lord, how great Thou art!

Chapter 27

“Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.” We see now that Job is launched into great speech, to justify himself, and this is said to be a

'parable.' A parable, it has been well said, is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. If we miss the heavenly side of it then the parable is wasted on us, and we join those in the New Testament who heard but understood not; who saw but perceived not. So in reading Job, if we miss the heavenly meaning of Job's parable, what are we profited? And we would rather not hear the Lord say, "Are ye also without understanding?" Therefore we must seek for the heavenly meaning of this earthly story in the book of Job, lest we be blind leaders of the blind. "Moreover, Job continued his parable..." Can you tell where he began? Job continues as he set out. Job holds fast his righteousness, as he says in the next verse, "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me." So the 'parable' is actually begun in chapter one, verse one; for there we see Job in his integrity – "this man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil." We have called it a picture painted in words, but then so is a parable, is it not? We have said the characters in it represent various ideas or things. Read again the Lord's parable of the sower, for instance, and see if He does not do the same thing. We have drawn a conclusion regarding heavenly things from the parable of Job's life, but in the gospels which parable has no heavenly intent? So you see we are only following the Lord in this, and not going off into the realms of the carnal mind.

What is Job saying here? He is telling us that he will not let go the integrity which upholds him, so long as he has breath in the nostrils. Why? Lest Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar would be proved right, not wrong. "God forbid that I should justify you," he tells them in verse five. Just as my sins could never, never, never be transferred to Job the perfect, so Job the perfect would rather die than accept them anyway. He goes on to say, "Let mine enemy be as the wicked..." Now Job the perfect is a truly just man. But Christ died for us while we were His enemies. Christ says in effect, "Let mine enemy be as the righteous..." Our Lord is not merely perfect, not merely just, our Lord loved us! A great man might lay down his life for the righteous, or give his life for his friends, but what man would lay down his life for the wicked, and give up his life for his enemies? "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." How can I be sure He loves me? Because He died for me. There can be no greater test, no surer proof than that. But He died for us while we were yet sinners, while we were far from God, while we were yet enemies of His Cross. Has there ever been greater love than that? Surely not. Job says, "Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous." In other words, let them go to hell! May they be lost eternally! May they burn for ever! For Job loved no one but himself, and Job justifies no one but himself. And Job's righteousness would condemn even his friends. But Christ loved everyone except Himself. Christ justifies all who believe in Him and leaves God to justify Christ. Christ took our sins upon Himself even while we were at enmity with God. He rose from the dead, not to justify Himself and vindicate Himself – He rose for our justification. He died for the one who denied Him. He died for the one who condemned Him to death. He died for the soldiers who crucified Him. He died for the malefactors who railed on Him. He died for those who rejected Him. Yes, Jesus Christ died for His enemies.

Job tells us, "This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep (for him). Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent

shall divide the silver... For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand. Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.” That is the normal, the expected, for Job tells his three ‘friends,’ “Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it.” The just Job sees that God is Just, and that the Judgment is sure, and Job is glad, for he himself is perfect and upright, and one that feareth God and escheweth evil. Job will have no dealings with the wicked at any price, nor will he give up his righteousness for a moment. And Job says the wicked get only what they deserve, or as we would say, “You have it coming to you.” And Job is glad about that, in his righteous indignation. But Christ was more righteous than Job by far, and Christ was more perfect than Job could ever be, yet our Lord could take no pleasure in the death of the wicked but would rather die than see them get what they deserve. He Himself had no need to die, because “He has done no evil neither is guile found in His mouth,” but He died because He loved us, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. We the wicked, once aliens and far from God, without hope and with nothing to look forward to but the due reward of our deeds, can now be righteously accepted in the Beloved, because of Calvary and the Tomb and the Resurrection. We now have hope, and a sure promise of eternal life, lived in the very presence of God Himself. We now have salvation and forgiveness of sins and the blessed liberty of the sons of God, because of what Christ has done for us.

Is it difficult to enter into all that Christ has won for us? Must we go on pilgrimages and do penance and afflict our souls? Must we suffer, and distress ourselves, and lie on beds of nails? No. Scripture says if we believe on Jesus Christ we are saved. Only believe, and thou shalt be with Christ in heaven eternally. This is the message of the gospel, the good news for man. This is the message preached first by the apostles: “Repent – believe.” “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus is Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Look it up for yourself. It is in the scripture of truth. “What shall I do to be saved?” asks the jailor. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house,” answers the apostle Paul. What do you mean by ‘saved’? We mean finding salvation, being born again, converted, justified, cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. How will I know when I am saved? When you are able to confess Jesus as Lord, believing Him risen. When you have experienced the new birth. When you have repented of your wickedness, and been converted. And the sign, the token of your acceptance with God, is the Holy Spirit in you, God dwelling in you, your body the temple of the Holy Ghost. What will happen to me if I go on as I have always done, seeking pleasure and trying to ‘make good’ in this world? Listen again to Job, in verse eight. “For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained (the whole world), when God taketh away his soul?” What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul, or what will a man give for his soul? Our Lord showed us one man, a prosperous man who had to pull down his barns and build greater to accommodate the increase of his wealth and power, and who reached the point where he could retire and take it easy for the rest of his life. But God came to him, and said, “Thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee. Then whose shall these things be?” Think it over first!

Many people try to hedge themselves by attending some ‘church.’ They have one foot in the world, as it were, and one foot in the house of God. They are not ‘wicked,’ but neither are they ‘saved.’ What of them, then? They are hypocrites. “For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained (access to God), when God taketh away his soul. Will God hear his cry

when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" Such a person is a fence-sitter, trying to enjoy the best of both worlds without being committed to either. "Because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will spue you out of My mouth," is the language of Revelation. The Lord Jesus taught that many would come to Him in the last day and say, Lord, Lord, we did this, we did that, we did the other 'in Thy Name.' And He said He would then confess, "I never knew you. Depart from me, ye wicked, into everlasting damnation, prepared for the devil and his angels." So the hypocrite, you see, is eventually classed with the wicked, and suffers the same fate. "For God will cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand." "I will teach you," declares Job, "by the hand of God: that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal." Job makes no secret of the fate of the hypocrite, and the fate of the wicked. "Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place." The hypocrite shall try to take his stand with the justified, and – did you ever see it done, the slow handclap that calls attention to someone, and the hisses that make him leave his stand? Too late! A hypocrite all life long, and "will he delight himself in the Almighty" at the last moment? When "terrors take hold of him as waters"? Too late! The Lord knoweth them that are His, and to the hypocrite He will say, "I never knew you." You would probably be better to be out-and-out wicked, and enjoy one world at least, than to try to hedge, and enjoy neither, but be counted in with the wicked at the last!

"I will teach you by the hand of God: that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal," Job assures us. Job is not wicked. Job is not a hypocrite. Job has been perfect, and upright, and God-fearing, and evil-hating, all his life before God. And Job know his God. "I will teach you by the hand of God," he says. What can Job teach us? That it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God. That when God reaches out His hand for you, your life is over. That the most dreadful fate you could suffer at the hand of man cannot compare with what you may suffer at the hand of an outraged God. "That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal." All this and more Job can reveal to you. But what Job cannot reveal is the gospel. That with wicked hands men slew the Christ of God. But the nail-pierced Hand holds out to you still a pardon, an offer of salvation, and hope of eternal life. What must you do? Reach out your hand to Him. Reach out your hand by faith and grasp the offer of forgiveness which is now in the hand of Christ. Reach out your hand, and put it on the head of the Sacrifice, and it shall be accepted as atonement for you. "I will teach you by the hand of God," says Job. The Christ of Calvary is stretched on a cruel Cross. His hands for you are nailed to the Tree. His righteousness for you must be given up. His life for you must be yielded to God. His precious blood is shed – for you. Why? So that when He rises from the dead the third day there will be a pardon in the hand of God – for you. Reach hither thy hand, He says to all the unbelieving, and behold My hands. Yield your life, your hand to Christ today, lest tomorrow you fall into the hands of the living God seeking vengeance. Some day you must make contact with the hand of God. Will it be today, while the offer of full and free pardon is still in His hand? Or will it be tomorrow, when the offer closes, and only terror and hell are left in His hand? "Choose ye now this day..." scripture warns. And Christ says, "Behold My hands."

As we come to chapter 28 of the book of Job, we come to one of the great chapters of the Old Testament. We need desperately to learn wisdom instead of folly, and any chapter that sets out to explain the wisdom of God to us has got to be worthy of most earnest study. We have seen in chapter 27 that God recognizes only two, or possibly three, classes of men – the ‘saved’ and the wicked, and also the hypocrite who has his foot in both camps but ends up with the wicked in hell. God has no distinctions of race or color, birth or creed. Only the two distinctions, remember – the saved and the unsaved, use what terms you will. The ‘saved’ are all those in Christ Jesus our Lord; the ‘unsaved’ are all other persons, including the hypocrite. So, using these terms, the saved are the wise, the unsaved are the foolish. This is Job’s parable, the parable of the wise and the foolish. And in the 28th chapter Job expounds on wisdom, and where to find it, and how to acquire it. Christ is made unto us wisdom. Those in Christ therefore are the wise. Those outside of Christ, whatever their educational standards or erudition or philosophy, are truly foolish, for “behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” But the fear of the Lord would bring us to Christ, and to depart from evil does not mean to become a hypocrite, because of all others the hypocrite is the one with the least understanding. If he understood the awful danger of the position he is in would he continue in it? Surely not! But Christ is our wisdom, and by His Spirit we have understanding, and God has decreed that apart from Christ there can be nothing – neither wisdom, nor understanding, nor spirituality, nor the fear of the Lord – nothing.

So Job begins his parable like this – “Surely there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it.” Silver and gold, the two precious metals, are discoverable. So wisdom and understanding are hidden but discoverable. God has hidden all His riches in Christ, and tells us that when we have found Christ we have discovered the place where God has put all His treasures. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” We are meant to discover for ourselves the riches of the Godhead cached in Christ, so that we will willingly sell all that we have in order to possess Him, in order that our hearts will be in Christ. We are meant to love the Lord our God with all our heart, first of all. We can only do that by discovering in Jesus Christ all the riches of God. Again, “Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone.” Not only the precious metals, but the metals of strength have a place in life. In Jesus Christ we shall discover the source of our strength, the things we need for everyday living, as well as the higher, more precious things. To be in Christ is not merely to be spiritually mystical and otherworldly – rather it is to find strength and help for everyday living in a world far from God. Not only are all the precious things of God available to those who discover Christ for themselves, by we are meant to find in Him the strength of iron, and the durability of brass, which will be of such assistance to us in the weary toil of life here on earth. Again, “As for the earth, out of it cometh bread.” Christ is meant to be our life-support system, our daily bread, our soul-food, our heavenly manna here on earth. Indeed, Christ is to be our all in all. Some of the verses in chapter 28 are in need of masterly translation to restore the sense to the text, but with study you will be able to see that God has listed all our necessities and answered them in Christ, so that we have no need to look beyond Him for anything.

“There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen: The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.” What is this path? It is the road back to God. But if I return unto the Lord am not I on dangerous ground? No, there is nothing to

be afraid of. All other paths have their dangers. If you faint along the way the birds of prey may devour you, or the flesh-eaters find you out, but not if you take the path which leads to God, because the fowls know it not, and the beasts cannot find it out. For the path which leads to God takes you directly to Christ, and in Him there is perfect safety. You will be numbered among His flocks, His sheep, and he Himself says, None shall pluck them out of My hand.” How do you find the path? You take one step, and then another, and then another, and so on. The first step is to repent, to turn from your wicked ways or your hypocrisy. The second step is to cry out to God, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” The third step is to come to the foot of the Cross, and look to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and hear God say, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” The fourth step is to kneel there and acknowledge Him as your Saviour. The fifth step is to look to the Tomb, and see that your old self, your old sins, your old way of life are buried there. Then the next step is to look to the Resurrection, to see the Risen Christ seated at the right hand of God in glory, and know that where He is there you shall be also. And the seventh step is to go out and confess Jesus as Lord, believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. After that there are other steps to take which others can explain as you go along; baptism, fellowship, gifts of the Spirit to receive, prayer, Bible reading, and many more, but you are to be led by the Spirit into the riches of Christ.

Ah! But at once you perceive a difficulty. There is something that blocks the way. What to do about that? Just say, “Lord, would you please remove the difficulty?” “He putteth forth his hand upon the rock,” Job tells us in verse nine. But this may be larger than a rock; it may be a hill difficulty, or even a mountain. “He overturneth the mountains by the roots,” says Job. Is anything too hard for the Lord? No, there is no obstacle He cannot remove if you are determined to take the steps that lead to Christ. You are going to get all the help God can give. He is going to give you His own Spirit to assist you. “He cutteth out rivers among the rocks,” says Job. But can you be led to discover for yourself all the treasure hidden in Christ? Job adds, “And his eye seeth every precious thing.” But what will happen to me later, when destruction comes to threaten me? “He bindeth the floods from overflowing,” says verse 11. God will not allow you to be overwhelmed so long as you walk with Him on the path set before you. But what about the snares, the nets, the traps along the way of life? Be assured, He knows every snare you can possibly fall into, and He will expose them one by one as you listen to His word. “And the thing that is hid bringeth he forth to light,” Job continues. “But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?” At the Cross of Christ. Yes, it is foolishness to the world, and folly to the worldly-wise, and idiocy to the great philosophies of this world, but to us it is the pure wisdom of God. We are not great and wise; we are not philosophers and men of much intellect and genius – we are only poor sinners desperately in need of a Saviour; lost souls who cringe before the flames of everlasting destruction; foolish and unlearned mortals seeking for life and immortality in place of certain death and damnation. And as no worldly philosophy could help us, no system of religion save us, no deeds of the flesh ever reconcile us to God, we turned to Jesus Christ.

Listen to the Lord Himself for a moment. “He that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” “I am the way, the truth and the life.” “No man cometh unto the Father but by the Son.” “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” “He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst again,

but it shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” “I give unto them eternal life.” “That where I am, there ye may be also.” “I am the true bread of heaven. Except ye eat of My flesh and drink of My blood, ye have no life in you.” “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.” The path is clearly outlined in the gospels, for all who will believe. The apostles found it. “Christ is made unto us wisdom,” they wrote. The saints of the early church found it. Millions have followed it since their day. And the gates of hell could not prevail against the church, nor the floods overflow them. It is the path of the just, the road back to God, the way of wisdom, the strait but only way to life eternal. Yet few there be which find it. For alas! Among the teeming millions on earth in any generation only a handful at any one time are seeking the path of wisdom. Could you be among them? If so, God be praised! For the riches of God in Christ Jesus our Lord are not only inexhaustible, but priceless beyond any comparison. “It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.” The price of this wisdom is above rubies. “The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold.” Who then would not want it? But the wicked despise it, and the hypocrite never learns the value of it. So only those in Christ can tell you how priceless the treasure they have found in him, and who hath believed our report? All that treasure lying unused, waiting to be discovered, and man perishes with hunger! “But what to those who find? Ah, this, nor tongue nor pen can show; the love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know.”

“Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?” Job asks the question, and Job answers it. “God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.” So man must come to God to find wisdom and understanding, for no one else can reveal it to him. But God has decreed that man may only come to Him through Jesus Christ the Lord, and, as we begin to come, a marvelous thing happens. “Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear,” God declares. So in coming to God for wisdom and understanding we are directed to the Cross of Christ, and as we kneel there we suddenly realize that already we have discovered the source of wisdom and the place of understanding. The darkness dispels. “He setteth an end to darkness,” Job declares. Light springs up in our darkness, and the path of the just, hidden from eagle eyes, is illumined before us. “And searcheth out all perfection.” The light reveals perfectly, revealing everything in perfection. As we step out into the light, we step over what Job calls “the stones of darkness,” and as we enter the path of the just we step out of “the shadow of death” into life. We walk in the light. “The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men.” The wrath of God is a thing of the past now, as far as the just are concerned. Job is looking back to the flood of Noah’s day, when the wrath of God came to man as waters of destruction. But as we step out on the path of wisdom they are the “waters forgotten of the foot,” and dried up, and gone away. We shall not come into condemnation. The light will shine more and more unto the perfect day. We are walking the way trodden by all the saints before us, the way of wisdom, the hidden path we understand now, the way taught in scripture, the road lit by the glory of God, the highway to our God, and the long road home. Where did we start? Looking back, we see we started at the signpost, the old rugged Cross which points to God, and directs us to Christ now seated at the right hand of God.

“Moreover, Job continued his parable, and said...” We need to see that this is a parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. As we come to chapter 29 of Job we are tempted to see once again only the earthly story, for here is Job’s autobiography. But the opening verse of this chapter tells us again, reminds us, that this is truly a parable. So even as we look at Job, even as we read his autobiographical account of himself, even as we see his righteousness and admire Job, let us remember that this is scripture, and scripture is talking about Christ. If indeed we saw Jesus Christ in Job 29 instead of the man Job, we would be closer to the mind of God towards us, for Job cannot help us much but our Lord Jesus Christ can help us greatly. We are not studying history, we are studying scripture; we are reading the word of God; we are learning of God; and as we saw in the previous chapter we are finding the path of wisdom which leads to God. But the path of wisdom which leads to God leads us by way of the Cross of Christ, the Tomb, the Resurrection of Christ, for scripture simply has no other way. There is no other Way. We cannot come to God via Job, or Abraham, or Paul or any other. We can only come to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, however fascinating we may find the details of Job’s life, or however interesting we may consider the historical data of the book of Job, or however learned our discussions on Job, if we have seen little or nothing of Jesus Christ throughout the book we have got no closer to God, no nearer the understanding of the Almighty, no wiser regarding our walk below. Indeed, we can go so far as to say, if we have seen nothing of Christ before, that we have missed the path of wisdom and understanding, and our lion-like mien and eagle eye are all outward show, deceiving others and deceiving ourselves.

“Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness; As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle; When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil...” What is the parable? The just man is seen in the place of the unjust. And for what reason? To teach us what the just man might feel, might think, might say in that position. Christ on the Cross never says it, but Job says it for Him. “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness.” That is the expression of the just in the place of the unjust. That is the cry of the soul that has come to a time of sorrow. That is the unspoken thought of Him upon whom the wrath of God fell. Christ by the eternal Spirit offered Himself a living Sacrifice unto God, but beforehand His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and His flesh shrank from the darkness at noon. The Spirit was willing, but the flesh had to be mastered with an iron discipline, and even the soul had to be coaxed. When He gives up the spirit, crying, “It is finished!” the soul departs and the flesh deceases, and Christ is dead upon the eternal Tree. The three days in the Tomb are the witnesses to His being dead, according to the law of God, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses let every word be established;” but if we could see aright we would realize that the body of flesh could scarcely wait to die, and the soul longed for the end of the torment, and the spirit released sprang back to God with joy. This is the picture we see in Job. Job could not portray it properly, for Job is the unwilling sacrifice, however perfect he may appear. But Christ is the willing Sacrifice, the

voluntary Offering, the free-will Offering. But He Himself told us, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

“As I was in the days of my youth...” As we explained earlier, Christ does not look forward to the Tomb. Death is utterly repugnant to One who has life in Himself as the Father has life in Himself. He can therefore only look back. Yet it is as we approach death and the tomb, that our past life becomes more and more distinct to us. And again, Job cannot fully portray for us the mind of Christ, for Job here is not dying but actually recovering, and not long after is restored to greater glory than he had previously, but it is nevertheless a ‘parable,’ according to the scripture of truth, even if it be not an exact parallel. And Job cannot properly convey the scene to us, for God is merely hidden from Job, Job is not forsaken. But the scene is there, that we might grasp it. Scenes from the past life, poignant, distinct, flash from verse after verse. “When I went out to the gate through the city... The princes laid their hand on their mouth... When the ear heard me, it blessed me... I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him... and (remember Nain?) I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy... I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame... I brake the jaws of the wicked, and (remember the woman taken in adultery?) plucked the spoil out of his teeth... Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel (remember ‘Never man spake as this Man’?)... And they waited for me as for the rain... I chose out their way (for them), and sat chief (among them), and dwelt (remember the disciples?) as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.” No doubt it is a picture of Job’s life, but can we fail to see Christ in chapter 29 of Job? If we have taken liberties with the text, it is merely to make the sense clearer. Some will dispute our contention, but to us at least it is clear as day, that this is a ‘parable’ if not a parallel, and God has chosen Job because no other life came close enough to being perfect as to give us a summary in one chapter of our Lord’s beautiful life here among men.

But remember, it is as one is about to die that the past life flashes before the eyes. Young men do not write autobiographies. Job looks back as one to whom the present is distasteful, the future hopeless. Job goes right back to boyhood, to the pleasant days of his youth. Job shows us a life lived unto God, a life that should be an example to every Christian, the life of a perfect man, in fact. How should we live? Like Job in chapter 29! Read it again – and again! “As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle.” When should we get ‘saved’? In youth. “When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me.” Can I serve God as a family man (or woman)? Job did! “When I washed my steps with butter,” wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? “and the rock poured me out rivers of oil” – fully anointed, in the power of the Spirit. “When I went out to the gate through the city,” known in the gate, “when I prepared my seat in the street!” known publicly. “The young men saw me, and hid themselves” their brashness gone, “and the aged arose, and stood up” – honorable. “The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth” – authority. “The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth” – all they that heard Him were amazed. “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me” – and if we gave them the words of the Father would it not be a blessing today? – “and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me” – not in word only, but in power and demonstration of the Spirit – “because...” But read it for yourself. Whose righteousness do we have? The righteousness of Christ. Then what manner of life should we lead? The life of the perfect man. It was Christ Himself who said, “Be ye therefore perfect,”

but He did not say, “even as Job was perfect, or Noah, or even Christ,” but He said, “Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Yes! “Be ye holy...”

But if all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, why are we to be righteous? And can man be holy? The path of wisdom, the path of understanding is before each one of us. Let us not fear to tread the path. If the secret of God is upon our tabernacle, and the Almighty is yet with us, then nothing is impossible. As we learn the secret, as we do the will of God, as we work the works given us to do, we can leave the matter of our being made perfect in the hands of God. It is God who sanctifies us, and calls us ‘an holy nation.’ It is God who reveals the trackless path of wisdom to us. It is God who gives us His Spirit and empowers us to fulfill His will. We walk by faith, never by sight. We may not even see where unto we have attained, but we press toward the mark. It is a high calling. The prize is only to hear Him say, “Well done,” for when we have done everything and done it perfectly we have done only that which was required of us – nothing more. But Christ has Himself left us an example, and we are to follow Him in all things. The righteousness of Christ bestowed upon us does not free us from our righteous obligations under grace to be like Him. Even the perfect liberty of the sons of God does not emancipate us from the obligations of sons to be like the Father. Nay, rather –! The closer we are to God the more responsible we are to walk worthy of the high calling wherewith we are called. If God makes us kings we should act as kings, as Job teaches us. If God makes us priests we should act as priests before Him. If God makes us prophets we have the example of the prophets to follow. We are ambassadors for the King of Kings. We take our cue from our Great High Priest, unblemished, spotless, holy. We are the prophets of the Highest to our generation. What shall we say, then? Shall we sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. No! Let us learn from Job chapter 29 how to live so as to be pleasing to God, and pleasing to Him who was greater than Job.

There is one verse in chapter 29 which we should see clearly, verse 18. Job says, “Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand.” Actually, Job, for all his despair, did die ‘in his nest,’ and did multiply his days ‘as the sand.’ But Christ died on a Cross, and His days are cut off from the earth, for “who shall declare His generation?” asks the prophet. The perfect life is meant to end perfectly, in quiet old age, by simply falling asleep, gray-headed but content, as the path opens into perfect day. Yet those who follow the Lord closely may be called upon to suffer death as Christ suffered death. All other deaths speak of an imperfect life, some serious flaw somewhere. Enoch was translated, so that he should not see death. The ancients and the patriarchs generally lived full lives and died ‘in the nest.’ Even a fighter like David dies in old age. But the prophets were stoned, sawn asunder, murdered in most cases, and died as they lived – miserably, that they might receive a prophet’s reward. And the apostles and prophets of New Testament scripture were too apt to be counted as sheep for the slaughter, and the church has a long list of her martyrs. But two great names stand out in scripture – Elijah and Elisha. Elijah is caught up to heaven in a whirlwind; Elisha dies of a sickness. Which then, think you, had the fatal flaw? Or is that too difficult for you? We draw attention to this only to avoid the eulogies of unthinking clergy who at life’s end praise each and all alike, as though one life were very like another, and the manner of dying irrelevant to the manner of living. “Let me die the death of the righteous,” cries the false prophet, but does he? Does Christ? No. He was numbered among the transgressors. He made His grave with the wicked. Why? Had He done any

evil? No, no! “Because He had done no evil, neither is guile found in His mouth,” Isaiah told us. But the perfect, on the path of wisdom and understanding, are not perplexed by that at all!

Chapter 30

Now as we go on to chapter 30 of Job we see that, in fact, the parable continues. Job begins chapter 30 by describing the baseness of the men who now surround him. “But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.” Remember, Job is not proud, Job is honest. His honest assessment of the men about him is meant to be a part of this parable. If we go back to the gospels we will see that the mob who came to surround Jesus can best be described as ‘the rabble,’ a motley collection of base fellows led by one Judas Iscariot. These were not the common people who had heard Jesus gladly. These were not honorable men, or thoughtful men, or honest working men, or the law-abiding public of that generation. No. These were the trash, the scourgings of humanity, the men Job would not have set with the dogs of the flock. Job would not have employed them in any capacity – “Yea, whereto might the strength of their hands profit me?” – for he goes on to describe them as misfits, the unwanted, the beastly, wild asses, children of fools, base, vile. The description is only marred by lack of understanding of the translators, but a careful reading will make it very clear indeed. The vile work of the murder of the Innocent can only be performed by the vile. Our Lord once said, “The poor ye have always with you.” In each generation we can truthfully say the vile are likewise always with us. For any evil work it is always possible to gather a gang of cutthroats, villainous men, robbers, who for a price will undertake almost anything. But for truly vile work there are those who would do it freely, for the pleasure of wallowing in muck, for the insensate cruelty of it, for the lust of it, and such surrounded the Lord of Glory.

“And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword.” We seem to hear that ‘song’ in the gospels. It is a chant, only a phrase chanted over and over, monotonous, derisive, chilling to the ear of the victim – “crucify him, crucify him.” It is the song of the rabble, the base, the vile, the bloodthirsty, the exultant mob. The song of the many voices. The song that will carry the day, that will persuade the judge, that will bring about the death of the Innocent. Just to stand there and be forced to listen to that voice of the crowd, to that all-persuasive chant, is to feel again the sick intensity of hatred that surged around the Man in whom none could find a fault. Flawless, perfect, gentle, holy, the Lamb of God waits silently for the executioners to come. Recall if you will the righteous indignation of Job, the just made to take the place of the unjust, as we hear him say, “And now am I their song,” and feel the depths of the emotions of the righteous man in the sinner’s seat. Betrayed! Without cause! Made mock of. Despised. Scorned. Hated. For envy. “Yea, I am their byword.” Physician, heal thyself. “They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face.” The parable of Job is almost too revealing, as though we too stood in the judgment hall. “What think ye of Christ?” If we can empathize with Job; if reason alone would allow us to see the injustice of all that befell the just Job; if we can weep with them that weep in the ordinary sorrows of life; shall we feel nothing for the Man of Sorrows in His solitary suffering? Shall no tear fall for the King of Grief? Shall no heart mourn over the heart that was broken because He loved unto death? “What think ye of Christ?” Can none today or yesterday

spare a moment of time to give remembrance to the One who died for all? Come. “What think ye of Christ?”

“And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me.” He hath poured out His soul unto death, said the prophet. He was despised, and He was afflicted. As He goes down, down, down into the pit, into the mire, into the dungeon, who rises up, up, up? The vile, the base, the evildoers, the rabble, the dregs of any society, the sons of Belial. It is their hour. It is their time to exult. It is their opportunity. To do what? To practice wickedness. To let loose their lust. To shed the blood of the Innocent. To practice cruelty. To loose their viciousness. To wallow in the filth of their evil ways. The beasts of earth and the hounds of hell combine to lay on the spotless Lamb of God every evil indignity known to man or devil. It is not enough merely to kill. They must mock Him first of all; they must spit upon Him; pull His hair from His face; scourge Him; crown Him with a crown of thorns; strike Him with the palms of their hands; deride Him; blindfold Him; terrorize Him; belabor Him. We do not know it all, for the half has not been told. But we know it was their hour, the hour of the triumph of darkness over light, however briefly. And we know that this was but the prelude. The main event, the Crucifixion, was still to come. To watch Him die, painfully, slowly, agonizingly, dreadfully – how they licked their lips at the prospect! Compared to Him, Job had a happy lot! It was the hour of the powers of darkness. It was the greatest event in the calendar of hell. It was the exultant triumph of evil in the affairs of man. Neither Job nor any other can closely parallel this. We are left only with a parable, after all. For the Cross is in itself only the gateway to death, horrible as it must have been. The worst is still to come. The wrath of God for sin must consume the Sacrifice. “I am become,” says Job, “like dust and ashes.”

Verse 20 goes on to tell us, “I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me.” We wonder sometimes what it must have been to have suffered as Christ suffered at the hands of man. We scarce can grasp what it must have been like to have been handed over to Satan – with not one restriction put upon him – to do whatever he liked with the Victim. But our Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar assure us from our own experience of life, or of what we have learned or heard or seen of life at least, that it is reasonable to suppose that Jesus Christ must have endured all the most unspeakable indignities and terror and agony it was possible for man and Satan to furnish Him with. But there experience must halt, for none but Christ has ever been forsaken of God in the hour of darkness. There is a limit even to imagination. The very meaning of the parable is lost upon us. “Thou art become cruel to me.” What is behind the words? What do they picture for us that we cannot see? What extravagance of suffering is compressed into the verses here? Men have been known to endure brutality at the hands of men before. Others besides our Lord have been known to have been crucified. But what was it, do you think, that caused Him to sweat as it were great drops of blood before it happened? The prelude to the Crucifixion? The Crucifixion itself? Or a horror of great darkness at the time of the evening Sacrifice? Only the cry, that terrible cry that came from the darkness around the Cross, “My God, My God, what hast Thou forsaken Me?” speaks to our hearts. The sinless One. The sins of the world. Wrath against sin. Consuming fire. These are only words to us. They convey no sense of experience. They fail to touch the responsive chord as other words may do. We are not sinless as He was sinless. We could not bear the punishment for our own sins – what then of the sins of the world? We have never seen the consuming fire.

Job is more perfect than we, for Job says of himself in verse 25, “Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?” Simple justice would cause us to feel indignation over man’s treatment of Christ. Sympathy alone would cause us to mourn for the Man of Sorrows in the hands of demons. But only the Spirit of God can cause us to weep for the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, and only the Spirit within us can cause us to grieve for the King of Grief. As His grief was beyond our comprehension, so our tears are beyond our comprehension also. But the perfect life would include tears for “him that was in trouble,” and the soul of the upright would grieve for the afflicted One. If we have had no such tears, and no such grief, how shall we say we love God with all our heart? And would not the apostles tell us to go out into all the world and shed those tears over others who are in trouble, and let our soul grieve for the poor in many lands, for if we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we claim to love God whom we have not seen? Thus the love of God shed abroad in our hearts would include more than the love of brethren only, and the Spirit in us would lead us to have compassion on the multitudes today. The ‘parable’ of Job is more than just a picture. It is a means of teaching those who love their Lord to follow on in the ways of God outlined in scripture. It is not a history lesson, but a lesson in living a life pleasing to God. It is not an out-of-date story, but a revelation to man of the perfect life, and if we have seen Christ in it then should Christ in turn not be seen in us? So that we might be living epistles known and read of all men, and our life, like the life of Job, a parable indeed for our own generation? Lord, soften our hard hearts, and let us also have divine compassion.

“My harp also is turned to mourning.” So ends chapter 30 of the book of Job. We need to see that we are following in the footsteps of the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. First as we come to God we mourn over past sin. Later we learn to mourn for the fact that, “the good that I would, I do not, but the evil that would not, that I do.” Later still, perhaps, we learn to mourn for the fact of sin; sin in us, sin among the brethren, sin in the holy things of God, sin around us in the world. We see that all creation groans under the curse. We see that the time of harps is not yet, that the songs of Zion are sung ere unaccompanied, as it were. Our ‘sorrow’ is a godly sorrow. We are sorry for the fact that Christ had to die for sin in order to rescue us from our pitiful plight. We are grieved when we discover that it was our sin that kept Him there on the Tree. We learn God’s abhorrence of sin. We learn the meaning of the wrath of God against sin. And we learn to avoid sin as one would avoid the plague. But even in our mourning we have the sure hope that as Christ was raised from the dead to sit at the right hand of God where all is most holy, so we too shall be raised in newness of life to be seated in heavenly places with Christ, where naught that defileth can ever enter in. There shall the harp of pure joy sound the praises of Him who endured the affliction of sinners against Himself, that He might present us in perfect righteousness before God and the Father. There shall the harp accompany angels’ songs and sighing and sorrow shall flee away. There where at last we are delivered from this body of flesh that defileth us, shall we tune our harps in truer accord than is possible on earth to give praise and honor and glory to our God, and to the Lamb that was slain, but alive now for evermore.

Here endeth “the words of Job,” in chapter 31 of the book of Job. We have seen that earlier in the book the “words of Job” arranged a vent for the increasing pressure forced upon him, and now we see that the pressure has abated to the point where it may be borne thereafter in silence. God’s great purpose has been achieved and the picture painted, and the debate accomplished, and Job has not died. True, Job has been through an experience he will not easily forget, being made to sit in the sinners’ seat and to suffer like the wicked, and we have heard of the patience of Job, and we have learned many lessons from it all, but Job has not died. Is God pleased with Job or not? Yes. God is very pleased with Job! God is so pleased with Job that God will shortly come to Job and answer him, and vindicate him, and restore him, and make him greater than ever before. But first let us consider the words of Job in chapter 31. Again, the translation here needs careful revision, but that difficulty is not great. “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” Job is saying, “I covenanted to keep my eyes pure.” In verse two, “For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high?” Job is saying, “For what portion of God is there from above the wicked? And what inheritance of the Almighty from on high for the workers of iniquity? And goes on in verse three, “Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?” And Job adds, “Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?” You see, Job feared God. Job knew his God, and therefore Job kept himself pure, and eschewed evil. Job would not even allow his eyes to look upon evil – or to look upon a maid – lest he be tempted in his heart to commit adultery or to compromise his position before God in life.

But the ‘parable’ continues here. Why did God forsake Christ? Because “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” As Christ took our sins upon Himself on the Cross of Calvary so the darkness shrouded the scene from sight. But as Christ took upon Himself our iniquities so God withdrew. “I made a covenant with mine eyes,” declares Job in his parable, “why then should I look upon a maid?” Now Job was perfect. His eyes were pure. The ‘maid’ here speaks of the weaker vessel, broken, bleeding. Job refuses in effect to look upon a weak vessel, broken, bleeding. But it is only a parable, not a parallel. It is only to give us a hint, a clue, to the picture of the chapter. “For what portion of God is there from above? and what inheritance of the Almighty from on high?” Christ on the Cross looking up can receive nothing from above, no help from on high. But scripture tells us a wonderful fact, far beyond our comprehension, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” We cannot tell how it is done. We can only see in Job’s ‘parable’ that there is no portion of God from above, no inheritance of the Almighty from on high. We can only see that Christ was forsaken. We can only see that for the eyes to remain pure, the gaze must be averted. We only know that destruction is on account of wickedness, and the ‘strange punishment’ is on account of iniquity. Already Job’s parable has carried us too far, out our depths as we speak, yet the parable clearly says that a perfect man (Job) must avert his eyes to remain pure. What then of a holy God? Job, clinging to his own righteousness, asks, “Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps?” Yes, even in the sinner’s seat Job is never lost sight of. Why? Because no sin is seen in him. He is suffering the punishment of the wicked ‘without cause,’ as God Himself said in verse three of chapter two, in order to bring us this parable. But Christ, in taking upon Himself our sins, and our iniquities, is lost sight of.

We saw this earlier in Genesis, did we not, when the flood of God's wrath came upon the earth. Scripture says, "And God remembered Noah." It is put like that in order to make us wonder if God had forgotten Noah. But the ark rides above the flood, in the sight of God, never out of His sight. Noah cannot say, "All thy waves and thy billows passed over me," but only "God rideth upon the flood." so Job can only say, "Doth not he see my ways?" Indeed, Job goes on at great lengths in chapter 31 to prove, by a series of "If...then" arguments, that his integrity is intact and his own righteousness retained. So we see it is not Job, but Christ who is shown here. Further, Christ is depicted here as a vessel in weakness – the maid, the woman, the wife, the widow, rather than the Son, the Man of Sorrows, the Husband, the Lover. But whether we see Him as the manservant or the maidservant is not important, for Job uses both "he" and "her" in verse 18, but that we learn from the 'parable' what the perfect life consists of, and what the portion of the wicked is. God, accepting us in the Beloved, numbers us among them that are perfect, and forgiveth all our iniquities. How can the holy God accept us righteously? Because He has laid on Him the iniquities of us all. But the Vessel into whom all was poured is broken for us. The maid is the symbol, not of strength but of weakness. The servant is shown both as the manservant and as the maidservant, their cause despised. The woman eats of the fruit forbidden, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. The wife is ravished, the eyes of the widow fail. Only Job is perfect in his righteous indignation at these things. Only Job the upright would disallow it. Only Job, who feared God and eschewed evil, speaks out bluntly at the unfairness of it all. Is God pleased with Job? Indeed He is. And God would be better pleased with us if we spoke out bluntly, rebuking the Christ-rejecters for their callousness, and weeping for Him that was in trouble, or those near us in His likeness.

We have not time or space here to go over chapter 31 in detail. Rather we leave it to those who may be exercised thereby to take it to the Lord in prayer, to be led into it by the Spirit, to be blessed, like Simon, in revelation from God the Father. What to look for? The Cross of Christ. Verse 11 tells you, "For this is an heinous crime." Job is afraid, for he asks in verse 14, "What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?" Again, in verse 23, he says, "For destruction from God was a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure." Job has to cling to his righteousness as a man in a flood clings to a life-raft. When his feet are swept from under him, as it were, he must cling to something in order to escape from drowning in the flood, and his own righteousness is all that he has to cling on to. But Christ must not merely accept the flood, Christ must be prepared to cling only to the God who forsakes Him, and Christ drowns in the flood having voluntarily exchanged His own perfection for the sins and iniquities of others. Job could not do that. Indeed Job was desperately afraid of the flood. The thing that he feared most came upon him, for destruction from God was a terror to him, as though Job sensed the trap his own righteousness would lead him into, yet could in no wise avoid it. Only Christ, who saw that trap, could have easily avoided it; but we know that our Lord willingly let Himself be lowered into the pit in order to rescue those whose destiny was the pit and whose end was sure destruction, had He not intervened. So today we do not cling to our own righteousness, but rather we cling to Him who is our sure hope. We speak of Him as our Lord and Saviour. We desperately fasten our hold upon Him, our only fear lest we be dislodged by the attacks of the enemy, our only comfort the word of God (who cannot lie) telling

us that nothing, neither death nor life nor any other part of creation can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen!

Listen once more to Job. "Oh that one would hear me! behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me, and that mine adversary had written a book." Well, the books have indeed been written, but who has heard Job? Oh, we have often heard his story, no question of that. But who has listened to his 'parable,' and expounded it unto us? No one. The wise and famous have come and gone and left us in ignorance still. Why? Because a parable, according to our Lord, is for him that hath ears to hear. We need to come to Christ to have parables explained to us. Men could see that the apostles were unlearned and ignorant, humanly speaking, but they took knowledge that they had been with Jesus. The same divine wisdom that was in Him appeared in their speech. The same divine understanding that was in Him appeared in their very faces. The same divine Spirit that was in Him appeared also in them. We are all meant to be like that. We are meant by reason of use to have all our senses exercised, so that we may know and hear and understand and discern. We should be able to go through the book of Job and see for ourselves Christ in its pages. We should be the answer to Job's prayer – "Oh that one would hear me!" Our desire, like Job's, should be that when we come to God for wisdom and understanding that God would answer us. And if, for any reason, God Himself appears to be against us, we should be able to turn to the Bible, to turn to the book He has caused to be written, and find the answer for ourselves. Have we the righteousness of Christ, or are we still clinging to our own righteousness? Have we seen the corruptness of our own flesh, or are we wondering from whence come these disfiguring boils? Have we read what He has caused to be written regarding Christ, and have we then turned to Jesus as Saviour, as the Lord of Glory, as the only Son of the living God, as the only hope for sinful man to be reconciled to an holy God?

What then do we learn from the 'parable' of Job? We learn to better appreciate what Christ has done for us. We learn to weep for Him that was in trouble. We learn what the perfect life is before God. And as we begin to appreciate the sufferings of Christ, and as we begin to weep, and as we see the perfect life, something happens within us. Our hardness of heart begins to melt and disappear. We look around for others in trouble to whom we can bring comfort and hope. And our abhorrence of sin commences, and grows as we see that our sin was the reason for Christ's suffering. These are the fruits thereof, the fruits of the furrows and the fruits of the Tree, produced in us by the Spirit of Christ. Our lives are meant to be fruitful to God, to take after (in some measure) the example of the perfect Life set before us in Christ. Our Saviour becomes our Lord and our God, our example, our healer, our instructor. His Spirit in us should be given liberty to lead us into the paths of righteousness for His name's sake, not in order that we should have our own righteousness to cling to, but in order that the righteousness of Christ might be glimpsed in us by those who 'read' us rather than any other book. Our part is not to try to produce the fruit – that is the work of the Spirit in us. Our part is to try to fasten our eyes upon Jesus, looking upon Him as He walked; beholding the Lamb of God; marveling at the perfection of His life; awed by the immensity of His death; joying in the glory of His resurrection; looking for the sure promise of His soon coming again. Once we take our eyes off Jesus to look around at others we go wrong. Christ can be seen by the eyes of faith seated at the right hand of God. All scripture testifies of Him. The Holy Spirit will bring the things of Christ before us at every opportunity.

God Himself will say, “This is My beloved Son: hear Him!” And when we lift up our eyes on the mount we will see no save Jesus only. How great, O Lord, Thou art!

Chapter 32

“So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.” We saw earlier that the purpose of the book of Job was the great debate, “Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not?” We saw that Job answered No, and Zophar answered No. Who then is this Elihu? And what does he represent in this ‘parable’? Well, let us see. In every debate there is a subject debated, and after each speaker in turn has presented his side of the matter from his standpoint, then comes one to sum up, to summarize all that is said, and to give an overview. This is the foundation of Elihu, as we will see. He is left to give us a concise summing up at the end of the great debate. We said earlier that the debate was, in fact, over somewhere around chapter 25 or 26, because Job is allowed the last word, and from 26 to 31 Job speaks. Now even Job falls silent, and chapter 32 shows us that these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not? What is your answer? Only our Lord puts it another way – “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” Yes, Lord. For without Your suffering for us we are lost, condemned, and without hope. In that sense only can the answer be Yes. But apart from Christ, the answer must be No. So we see that the sufferings of Christ are not to be regarded as ‘normal’ but abnormal.

“Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram.” This description of Elihu tells us all we need to know. He is shown to be angry, which none of the others were, and that proves that he is not a judge – judgment depends on an unbiased, disinterested, calm, judicial manner, for the wrath of God follows the Judgment – not a judge but an extension of the debate itself. His name is good, Elihu, and means a man of God in truth. He is shown by genealogy, to establish his position. “Elihu the son of Barachel” means he is begotten of contention, “the Buzite” simply implying speech. But the genealogy is “of the kindred of Ram,” or authority, to show he is properly authorized to play this part, for his words are incorporated into the scripture of truth. It is a lengthy and full description so that we will not be likely to get it wrong. We see his kindred, his genealogy, his name and his character. We observe that his words are added on to the words of the debate after the three men ceased to answer, and after Job has had the last word, as it were, but the words of Elihu are obviously a part of the debate itself rather than an independent judgment; an extension, an appendix to the previous words, without altering the debate or resuming it in any way. Therefore we can conclude that, as no debate is complete without a summary, this is the summary. Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not? What in the end is the final conclusion, what is the sum of the words of the speakers, what may we take home with us? This is the importance of the words of Elihu. We should be careful not to regard him as merely a “Johnny-come-lately” to the debate, a fourth speaker where three were ample, an unnecessary and useless appendage, but as an authority fully authorized to teach us of Christ.

“Against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.” The wrath of Elihu is distributed equally, although shown in separate parts because the reasons are different. Elihu is angry with Job because Job could only justify Job, rather than God. The conclusion we must come to therefore, as Elihu leads us, is that man cannot be justified before God through his own righteousness. If the New Testament is looked at as the conclusion or summing up of the Old Testament, we should discover the same thing – man cannot be justified before God by his own righteousness. How then may man be justified? By the righteousness of Christ, who rose from the dead for our justification. This is New Testament teaching; the doctrine of the apostles; the words of all men of God in truth; the scripture. Our Lord’s parable shows that to be justified we must first acknowledge that we are sinners, rather than cling to our own so-called righteousness. Job’s boils speak of corruption of the flesh, for even Job had to be taught this doctrine. But Elihu is also wrathful against the three friends of Job, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. The conclusion we are led to see is that our Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar do not have the answer. If Christ were merely a teacher of new doctrine then His death would have been normal, and if Christ were merely an insurrectionist He could have expected to be crucified by the Romans in Jerusalem. But Elihu is angry with such a conclusion, and would lead us to see that that is not the answer, for it condemns the Innocent. It is upon the authority of scripture, the scripture of truth, the New Testament, that we can state categorically that Christ was the Son of God, perfect, sinless, faultless, holy – and our conclusion is that He died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, and all men of God in truth will agree with that.

“Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they were elder than he.” The authority is no less great because it is younger in time. The New Testament is newer than the Old, but it displays nevertheless the authority of “the kindred of Ram.” It waits till the ‘elder’ has spoken, but it is the words of men of God in truth. (Not that Elihu by himself represents the New Testament, but only the conclusions.) Christ comes in the fulness of time, after all the prophets have spoken, from Abel onwards. Indeed there is a pause after the words of the ‘elder,’ which is only implied here, before the ‘younger’ speaks. “I am young, and ye are very old,” says Elihu, “wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion.” After the Resurrection, Christ begins at Moses and all the prophets, to show things concerning Himself to the disciples. ‘The New is in the Old contained; the Old is by the New explained.’ In other words, the New is not new, but only younger. The God of the Old is the God of the New, changeless, eternal, fulfilling His own will. And Jesus Christ is not new, but the same yesterday, today, and forever. “Thy throne, O God, is from everlasting to everlasting; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.” That is God speaking to the Son, in Hebrews. We tend to cling to the New Testament and relegate the Old Testament to oblivion, because it appears to us that the God of the New Testament is a far kindlier figure than the God of the Old. Absolute nonsense! It is the same God, from eternity to eternity. The only difference is that we see God in the person of Jesus Christ, and God seems less remote – more human, in fact! Our Lord said, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father,” and, “I and my Father are one.” But what we are seeing is God manifest in flesh, as though the God of Job had stepped into our midst. But away back in the beginning the Word was

with God, and the Word was God – and the Word became flesh, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, according to Elihu.

Listen now to Elihu. “I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” We see therefore that it is not merely the Old Testament which is inspired of the Almighty but the younger or New Testament which has the Spirit of God, too. And that the true wisdom and understanding is to be found in the New as well as in the Old. Indeed, Elihu goes on to say, “Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment. Therefore I said, Hearken to me...” It is as one says, “That they without us should not be made perfect” (or complete). The words of Elihu are necessary words, rather than only additional words, to give us complete or perfect understanding of the matter. Christ is not merely another Word, but the Word from the beginning, the Word without which all that the prophets had spoken was incomplete, imperfect, found false. He is the completion of prophecy, the fulfillment of the law, the last Word. But He is the first and the last; the ‘Our Father’ and the Amen; the Alpha and Omega, or as we would say, the ‘A’ and the ‘Z.’ Elihu goes on to say, “Behold, there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words.” Up till Christ came, righteousness was an individual matter, and the perfect life was a matter of keeping the law of God perfectly. The whole of the Old Testament could not have convinced Job otherwise, neither could the voice of experience or any other, for the thing was normal in Job’s day. But Elihu tells us in verse 19, “Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.” It is the younger, the New Testament, which contains the new wine. This indeed, according to John, is the ‘first’ miracle that Jesus did. He transforms the ‘water’ of the Old Testament into the ‘wine’ of the New, that we may feast, and be wed to Him, and see His glory. How perfect he is! And this conclusion we are led into by the words of the men of God in truth.

As Elihu prepares to speak, he ends chapter 32 by saying, “Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away.” This is the last piece of knowledge we have concerning Elihu. He was impartial. His wrath, as we said once, is equally distributed, and his words, as we now see, will be impartial in that they will not show Job up in any favorable light, or his three friends either. This is a characteristic of Elihu. We find it so as we turn to the gospels. Christ is presented factually, impartially, as evidence is presented before a judge, so that we have no excuse to return to the question, “What think ye of Christ?” unless we cannot read or write. What a pity that those who claim to represent Christ on earth, the modern Elihus, so misrepresent Him that we get a false picture of Him! Surely they must at least have read the book? Only men of God in truth have this faculty of representing Christ to us without fear or favor, leaving us to judge for ourselves. And if any say, O Lord, how great Thou art! remember, it is not by any means a flattering title, but a factual phrase. His name shall be called Wonderful, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Not a flattering title among them, but the words of men of God in truth. Peter calls Him the Lord of Glory. John calls Him the King of Kings. Paul refers to Him as the One in whom is hid all the treasures of the Godhead. Others have said He is our great High Priest, our Saviour, our Lord and our God, our Messiah, our Redeemer, our Atonement, our all in all. But not a ‘flattering title’ can be found in the whole of the New Testament, nor in the Old Testament for that matter, for holy men of old spake as they

were moved by the Holy Ghost. It is a characteristic of God to be impartial. It is a characteristic of every man of God in truth to be impartial. It is the mark of Elihu. It is equally true of Christ.

Chapter 33

“Wherefore,” says Elihu, “wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words.” Elihu represents the man of God in truth. We have seen already that Elihu represents in a sense the conclusions of the New Testament, the doctrine of the apostles, the teachings of the gospel writers. Wherefore even Job is admonished to hearken to all his words. But as we read this 33rd chapter we are struck in the words by the similarity to Christ Himself. In verse four, “The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” Our Lord said, “The Spirit of God is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach...” In verse five, “If thou canst answer me, set thy words in order before me, stand up.” In the gospels we read there was none could answer, neither dared any man ask Him any more questions. In verse six, “Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay.” Christ is God manifest in flesh, according to Paul; the Man of God in truth. Listen again to Elihu in verse three, “My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.” Christ came to bring us the words of the Father, to be the living Word among men, to make clear the knowledge of God. And could He who was before Abraham not say to Job, as Elihu says in verse eight, “Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of thy words”? Yes, Elihu here represents the Man of God in truth. We should be aware of this also. It is Christ who is the conclusion of every debate about righteousness. It is Christ who is the sum total of all that is said in the Old Testament. It is Christ who is both the Author and Finisher of the faith of the just.

Now having said that, let us consider Elihu more properly as the summing up of the debate, the conclusion, the end of the matter. We see in verse nine, ten and eleven a little review, as it were, when Elihu says, “I have heard the voice of thy words, saying, I am clean without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me.” (These are Job's words.) “Behold, he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy, He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths.” And Elihu tells Job in verse 12, “Behold, in this thou art not just.” So the conclusion, as we have said, is that no matter how upright we may be, no matter how innocent of fault, no matter how free from iniquity, we cannot justify ourselves before God, but rather must seek the justification of Christ alone which is by faith. That is the first conclusion we come to, as Elihu would lead us to see. “I will answer thee,” Elihu tells Job, “that God is greater than man.” So we find this teaching in New Testament scripture, that God in fact is able to justify the ungodly, because of what Christ has done, and God has decreed that apart from Christ no one can stand before God and justify himself. All flesh is corrupt in His sight. Job cannot be accepted into the presence of God in spite of a perfect life, because of the corruption of the flesh, denoted by boils. Now if Job cannot stand before God, how shall the wicked fare? Or as the New Testament puts it, “If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and the ungodly appear?” The Cross of Christ is the only point where man and God may meet to effect a reconciliation, because of the innate holiness of God and the innate sinfulness of man. And the

Justifier has to be the living Christ who is risen from the dead, for, says Paul, if Christ be not risen ye are yet in your sins. So the conclusion is that justification without Christ is impossible.

Elihu goes on to ask, “Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters. For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not.” It reminds us of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks,” he is told. Saul of Tarsus was a Pharisee of Pharisees, whose righteousness was a byword in Israel. No other group of men ever strove so hard to live perfect lives, yet Saul is cast to the ground and asked, “Why dost thou strive against him?” God spoke once, and told them to keep all His law, which they failed dismally to do. But God spoke again, ‘once, yea twice,’ and told them to believe on Jesus Christ, and again they failed. It is the second speaking which man perceived not. But if we fail to do what God tells us – that is, to believe on Jesus Christ – we are not doing His will no matter what else we may do, for this is His will, that we should believe on Him whom the Father hath sent. We are striving to do something different, and we are shown to be striving against God, not perceiving that God has spoken twice. What? Shall we then accuse God of dealing unjustly? asks Elihu. God is not accountable to us – “For he giveth not account of any of his matters.” We are accountable to God, and must give account of ourselves before Him in the end. This is again a further conclusion we must learn from the book of Job. The first speaking was the law, the second speaking was of grace. Now when we perceive that God has spoken twice, we find we are no longer under law, for by grace we are saved. This too is found in the ‘younger’ part of scripture, the New Testament, so-called. It sounds like a different God speaking, but in fact it is the same God. What we are to perceive is the difference in the speech, for the same God who spoke once has spoken twice, and it is Christ – by the Cross, by the Tomb, by the Resurrection – who makes the difference.

In verse 15 of chapter 33 Elihu explains, “In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.” Again, the conclusion is found in the New Testament. We are to cease from all our labors, and to enter into rest, for our salvation is not of works lest any man should boast. What would we boast of? We would boast of our integrity, our righteousness, our perfect living – in the language of the Pharisee, “I thank Thee I am not as other men.” No, no! says Elihu. It is only when we have ceased from these things, and entered into rest, that the vision is granted to us. As long as we are striving to please God with our own works, our own righteousness, we are going contrary to His revealed will. We must accept by faith the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and trust in His redeeming blood to please God and to suffice for us. “In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed...” Sleep is typical of death. We must die to self, and cease from self-righteousness, in order to hear His word to us. Our baptism is the outward, public demonstration of our inner hearing of God’s instruction. It is not something we do in order to please God. It is the result of ceasing from our labors, and listening instead to the word of God which we receive in faith, and then following His instructions to us. There is a world of difference. Our communion is the outward, public demonstration of our inner hearing of God’s instruction. It is not something we do in order to please God ourselves. Our fellowship, our way of life, our evangelization, our praying, our weeping, these are not self-righteousnesses,

but the result of seeing the vision, the result of dying to self, the result of hearing God speak; these are our instructions.

“That he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.” Elihu is the man of God in truth, speaking with authority. Man only perceived, like Job, that he must strive to please God by a perfect life. Few ever succeeded like Job, but man made it his purpose. And man became proud when he was in any way successful. But the vision was given to withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. Pride is the original sin, and God sees that so long as man has whereof to boast, man will be proud of that, and so sin. Wherefore God by Jesus Christ made a perfect Way, by which man could achieve true righteousness without having whereof to boast. Indeed, it is humiliating to proud man to have to accept Another’s righteousness for himself. Man has to humble himself at the foot of the Cross and ask for the righteousness of Christ to cover his nakedness before God. But in love and grace, this one Way saves man from pride – “He keepeth back his soul from the pit” – and this one Way is now therefore the only Way, as our Lord told us, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” And this one Way, this one Truth, is the way of Life, to save us from perishing by the sword (of judgment). “He that believeth on Me shall not come into condemnation,” Jesus says, “but is passed from death unto life.” In the debate in the book of Job the question is, “Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not?” No, says Job. No, no, no, say his three friends. But how do we become truly righteous? By accepting the true righteousness. Shall we then suffer as the wicked? No, says Elihu. No, says scripture. No, says our Lord. No, says God. Seven times No! No, affirm the apostles. No, repeat the saints. No, proclaims the Church. No, cry the evangelists. All say no. This is a firm conclusion, based on faith in the God of truth.

Now we cannot linger over each precious verse, but Elihu goes on to paint a picture of the Cross, for us, and the Resurrection, and the way to salvation. His conclusions are all to be found in the ‘younger’ or New Testament. But running on down the chapter to verse 31 we hear Elihu say, “Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak.” So if we have been clinging, like Job, to any righteousness of our own, and ignoring the too-obvious corruption of our own flesh, let us mark well, and hearken to Elihu, and hold our peace, and listen to the truth. Elihu then goes on to say, “If thou hast anything to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee.” Do we wish to argue? Do we want to answer back to Elihu? He is not against us, as he says, “for I desire to justify thee,” but in view of his conclusions can we any longer justify ourselves. There is no reply from Job the perfect, greatest of all the men of the east. What about us, then? Perhaps we are neither as perfect nor as great as Job. Can we stand where Job failed? Can we justify ourselves by any answer if Job could not? “If not,” continues Elihu, “hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.” Yes, we do well to hearken unto Elihu, and learn wisdom. Christ bought salvation for us at enormous cost. “His flesh,” Elihu tells us, “is consumed away that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out.” In dying like that for us, we are told in verse 24, he can say, “I have found a ransom.” But Elihu speaks of the Resurrection also, “He shall return to the days of his youth,” and shows the way of salvation: “If any say, I have sinned...He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.” This is the message of the ‘younger’ Elihu. It is worth hearkening to, if we have not done so before. The conclusion of the book of Job, the parable, the debate, is that man needs a Saviour, and only Jesus Christ the Righteous can ever save us.

Chapter 34

“Furthermore Elihu answered and said, Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.” We have seen the first conclusions Elihu has led us to see in the previous two chapters. Now we come to the ‘Furthermore’ chapter, chapter 34. Elihu is speaking now to the wise, to men of understanding and knowledge. “For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.” Strong meat is not for babes, but for the experienced, those able to ‘try words.’ “Let us choose to use judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good.” It is as Paul says, “Let one speak and let the others judge.” But who can judge? Only those who are wise men, that have knowledge. Are you qualified to judge? Do you really know God? Are you knowledgeable in scripture? Have you the spiritual wisdom? Then judge, and find if the conclusions Elihu reaches are the conclusions you would have reached had you been asked to sum up the debate in the book of Job. “For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment. Should I lie against my right? (or, Should I lie and say I am not righteous?) my wound is incurable without transgression (or, My wound is incurable, yet I have not transgressed).” Well, you have read the book of Job up to this point – how do you judge? Is Job right or wrong? What conclusions have you reached? How would you sum up? You are no longer ignorant of the truth, but the question is asked, “Is Job right or wrong?” What answer can you give at this point? Are you among the wise men? Are you among the ‘ye that have knowledge’? Exercise your judgment. Exercise your discernment, your spiritual eyesight, your God-given ability to judge. You have heard what Job has said. Is it right or wrong? And what of Christ?

“What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water? Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men. For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God. Therefore hearken unto me ye men of understanding.” Christ came to do the Father’s will. He delighted Himself in God. His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him, yet when He sat in the sinner’s seat, took the sinner’s place, was found in the place of the wicked and company with the workers of iniquity, the wrath of God fell upon Him there. What then, is Christ unrighteous? Judge ye, O wise men, and men of all understanding! Of course not. The wrath He bore was against your sin, your iniquity, your wickedness. In Him was found no fault at all. He was the Innocent; the perfect, the upright, the unblemished, the spotless, the immaculate Son of the living God. But was God unjust, then, to lay on Him all the sin of the world and to make Him the once-for-all Sacrifice for sin? Of course not. There is no unjustness with God. Christ was the voluntary Offering. “No man taketh My life from Me; I lay it down of Myself.” The whole book of Job is given to us to teach us to distinguish this one thing. God cannot deal unjustly. Elihu says, “Far be it from God, that he should do wickedness (or, Wickedness is not with God); and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity (nor iniquity with the Almighty).” God cannot lay sin on Christ unless and until Christ sit in the sinner’s seat. The Lamb of God is most holy. Wickedness is not with Him, nor iniquity with the Lord. It is ‘far from him’ in that sense. He took our sins – a voluntary action – in His own body on the Tree. God hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Amen! This is the conclusion we come to at the end of the great debate, “Should a truly righteous man suffer, or

not?” This is the sum of the teaching. This is for the wise to understand. This is Elihu. “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.”

“For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways.” Read the New Testament. Is this not its teaching? Every man must render account unto God. God will reward the just, and punish the evil-doers. The righteous go away into life eternal, the wicked into everlasting damnation. Read the words of the Man of truth and verify it. “Yea,” adds Elihu, “surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.” No, no, no. “God is just,” says the New Testament, adding, “and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” If Christ suffered, it could only be for my sins. If Christ died, it could only be to atone for my iniquity. If Christ lay in the dreadful Tomb it could only be that I should never taste of death, but have everlasting life. And if Christ rose from the dead, it could only be for my justification, not His. Did Christ die, and rise again? Hallelujah, yes! (Friend, I have used myself only as an example – I cannot speak for you.) Having heard the debate, what is your judgment? What conclusions have you come to? Did Christ die, and rise again – for you? Or do you believe there can be some other reason why He died and rose again. If you have seen the great picture in the book of Job of the Innocent made to sit in the sinner’s seat, then surely there can be no other conclusion than that which Elihu leads to. “Job hath spoken without knowledge,” Elihu tells us. Poor Job! There was no way he could have had knowledge of the matter. Was Job to know that God had provided Himself a Lamb? God could not explain it to Job without ruining the picture, for if Job had had knowledge of all this he would never have spoken in his own defense, and we would never have learned the feelings of a righteous man made to suffer as the wicked. Apart from Christ, is it possible to justify God, and Job as well? Yet both are said to be just! Wherefore to leave Christ out of the book of Job is impossible!

Now there are a number of conclusions that Elihu would lead us to see, and we have neither time nor space to dwell upon them here, but let us at least grasp these basic conclusions, and be established in the truth, so that our faith in Christ becomes unshakeable. The debate set out for us in Job must at least answer the question, Should a truly righteous man suffer, or not? The speakers at least give us the answer, if we have followed their arguments with any degree of care. And in the summary of Elihu we find the answer is clearly “No.” Now if God is Just, which is what Elihu says in this 34th chapter, it follows that Christ Jesus must have been suffering for other men’s sins. This in turn proves to us conclusively that He must be the Lamb of God, and His Cross the Sacrifice for sin. No other conclusion is possible. But what of the speakers? Elihu says in verse 35, of Job, “his words were without wisdom;” and God in chapter 42 turns to Eliphaz the Temanite, and says, “My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.” If the speakers are all wrong, surely the debate is invalid? No, no! This is scripture, remember. This is the scripture of truth, the scripture that cannot be broken. And scripture, as we pointed out, is inspired of God. “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” If we cannot understand that, it is because the wisdom of God is too great for us, but if we accept it by faith we will see it is so, nevertheless. Christ is actually the Word. Scripture is the Word of God. Christ is the Word made manifest, dwelling among us. Christ in us is the Word in us, and we in Christ are to be found in the Word of God. “My word shall not return unto Me void,” God

declares, “but shall accomplish that whereunto I shall send it.” Christ is sent by the Father. Listen again as you kneel by the Cross. “It is finished!”

So we see that whatever the speakers may say, the speech is now scripture, the scripture of truth. Elihu is right, of course, when he says that Job has spoken without knowledge, and his words are without wisdom. We who are wise, men of understanding – Christ being made unto us wisdom – see no contradiction there. Job, without knowledge of Christ, cannot speak from knowledge: and Job, without Christ, lacks the wisdom available to us. But God, who is over all, blessed for ever, tells us that Job has spoken the thing that is right, for Job serves God. It may be a paradox, but it is not a contradiction. We are to rightly divide the word of truth. We dare not jump to too-hasty conclusions, nor allow the carnal mind to intrude into spiritual things. We are to discern the rightness of Job’s speech, and the rightness of the debate, and the rightness of the summary. And if we never before discerned the rightness of God in the book of Job, were we such men of understanding after all, or were we estimating ourselves too highly, as usual? Elihu says, “If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words.” And goes on to ask, “Shall even he that hateth right govern?” If we cannot see, and refuse to see, the rightness apparent in the book of Job, are we fit to lead the people of God? If we never reach the conclusions of Elihu, never hearken to the voice of his words, can we be ‘elders’ in the church of the living God? If we remain blind to the obvious truths in Job, shall we continue to lead the blind? We are not ‘masters of theology,’ but servants of God. We are not here to build ourselves up, but to edify the church of Christ. We are not ministers of sin, but slaves to the brethren to wash the feet of the saints. Christ came to men with the words of the Father, but when He spoke of His flesh as the living bread from heaven, it was too hard a saying for most of them, and most left Him and went away home. Was He right or wrong? In your judgment?

Elihu concludes this chapter with the words, “My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end (or utmost) because of his answers for wicked men. For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.” The man of God in truth is angry with Job, as we saw in chapter 32 verse two. The conclusion is that anyone still clinging to self-righteousness, after all we have been shown, deserves to come under the wrath of God to the utmost, and will indeed come under the wrath of God in the end. For it was the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, the priests, the rulers of the people, who sought the destruction of the Son of Man in Jerusalem. With wicked hands they slew Him, says Peter. They committed murder, they brought about the death of the Innocent. The self-righteous, we conclude, must be classed with the wicked, as Elihu says. Job is saved in chapter 42 by repentance, not self-righteousness; for Job is the servant of God, and in his day greatest of all the men of the east. But we need to see why Elihu is so angry with the self-righteous. It is because the self-righteous are actually in rebellion against God, and against His holy child Jesus. They are not justifying God but justifying themselves. They are not glorifying God but glorifying Satan, for Satan is the leader of rebellion against God. They are not honoring Christ but dishonoring Christ. “He clappeth his hands among us.” He applauds himself, in other words. He approves his own ways, so right in his own eyes. He congratulates himself, “I am not as other men.” But our Lord told us that except our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (or the righteousness of Job, for that matter) we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Whose

righteousness is greater than Job's? Only the righteousness of Christ. That is what we must have, as all men of God know.

Chapter 35

“Elihu spake moreover, and said, Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?” It is not difficult to see how Job arrived at that very wrong conclusion. Job was perfect and upright, and God destroyed him “without cause,” according to scripture. But our attitude to God must be, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” If Paul had believed that God was against him every time trouble afflicted him, the Gentiles would have needed another apostle. Our difficulty may be like Job's – except we prosper how can we tell that God loves us? But we need have no such difficulty. God has proved His love to us in sending His only-begotten Son to die for us. “Greater love has no man than this,” Christ explained, “that a man would lay down his life for his friends.” If we have taken advantage of His offer of free salvation, we can have no doubt that we are accepted in the Beloved, and loved equally with Christ. Therefore whatever happens to us after that – whether beatings or stripes, bonds or imprisonment, shipwreck or death – we understand is allowed for our greater good, to bring us glory in the life everlasting, provided only that we suffer for Christ's sake and not for wrongdoing. Job could not see that, as Christ had not then been manifested. Therefore Job could by no means understand how he suffered “for Christ's sake.” It only appeared to Job that he was right and God was wrong. But as led by Elihu we must see that God is just, and our conclusion must be that however appearances may be to the contrary, that God loves us in Christ Jesus our Lord, and God's rightness cannot be called in question, ever.

“For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? and, What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin? I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee.” Well, of course, if Job were right and God were wrong, what advantage would righteousness be to Job, or what profit to be clean and free of sin? Job, like us, must be able to count on a just God. We who believe have said to our soul that God is true. Paul says, “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” We must be sure, we must be one hundred percent sure, that God cannot lie, and that the Judge of all the earth does right. We must see it for ourselves in the book of Job. We must get rid of our misconceptions about God. God does not deal capriciously with Job. Job's sufferings are not the whim of some idle hour in heaven. God cannot be tempted by Satan to make Job suffer. If we fail to see the picture of Christ in the book of Job, or if we refuse to see it, we are left only with a false idea of what God is like. If we continue to believe that God allowed Job to suffer terribly merely to teach Job a lesson, or to prove a point in an argument with Satan, we will doubt the worth of our own salvation in a day of testing, and reach a very erroneous conclusion if we fail to prosper in this life. Our Eliphaz, our Bildad, our Zophar will be wide of the mark. But if we will follow Christ closely as our Man of God in truth, we will come to the correct conclusion that God loves us, and that all things will work together for our eventual good, that Christ may be seen in us. Let us therefore listen to Elihu. We must be assured in our own minds that God cannot do wrong, can never be wrong, can have no affinity with Belial, can never be unjust, or anything to us other than love.

“Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds which are higher than thou. If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?” Elihu would first lead us to see that God is greater than man, not the other way about. We are instructed to look up, not look around; for if we see only this earth, this generation, this life, this our day on earth, we will be led to wrong conclusions. Sin only hurts man, not God, and man’s righteousness can only profit mankind, not God. Indeed, God is unaffected by either. God did not send His Son to deal with sin and leave us His righteousness because it affected God, or because the heavens were in danger. No, no! God sent His Son because He loved us. It was an act of love alone. There was no other cause for it. God is eternal, unaffected by any event in life or death outside of Himself. He could have smashed the whole wretched affair of man and evil to atoms and created only perfection. But because he loved us, pitied us, had compassion on us, felt for us, longed for us, wept for us, God sent His only-begotten Son into the world to die for us. And God raised Christ to justify us, and to offer us newness of life. If our ‘three friends’ lead us to any other conclusion, it must be false, for Elihu is the man of God in truth. Therefore this conclusion is forced upon us, and we refuse it at our peril. Our wrong conceptions of God are based on our mistaken ideas of man’s sins or man’s righteousness. We forget to look up, to see that man is finite but God is infinite; that man in all his glory is not more splendid than the flowers of the field; that life is but for a moment and these light sufferings cannot compare with the glory which shall be revealed in us. We forget – that only God is great.

“Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.” Christ became man. Christ was in flesh. Christ dwelt among men. The only way that good or evil could affect God was that Christ was called upon to atone for the evil. The less Job sinned the less Christ had to bear. The more righteous Job was, the more it profited the Son of Man. If all had been as perfect as Job, Christ would have had to suffer little. But this applies to each of us. What weight of sin did He have to bear for you, for me? Were we as Job was – perfect, upright, God-fearing, evil-hating? Far from it. But it was our sin that dragged Him down, our sin that was more than He could bear. He had to be nailed to the Tree to bear it, nailed into position to keep from collapsing under the weight of it. “Thy wickedness may hurt a man.” He was a “Man as thou art,” Elihu tells Job. How much hurt did we do our Lord that loved us? Father, forgive! We little know. “By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry,” Elihu tells us. And the gospel writers tell us He cried with a loud voice. When He had taken to Himself the sin of the whole world, and God who foreknew you added your sin to that monstrous burden, was it ‘the last straw,’ as we often say? Was it only the addition of my sin that forced the cry from His life? Christ was the great burden-bearer, but there comes a point at which even the greatest must cry a halt. But God could not leave you out – or me out. Even though the staggering cost was beyond conjecture, our free pardon had to be won for us. At whatever the cost, the salvation of God must be offered impartially to all, for all have sinned, and God must remain impartial. To leave one out would be discrimination against one, and that was unthinkable. But for Christ the cost was beyond belief. This also is a conclusion of the book of Job.

“Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it. Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him.” All other conclusions are vain,

according to Elihu. The feeble excuses men propound to alleviate their conscience will be poor material on which to rest their case in the day of Judgment. “Although thou sayest thou shalt not see Him,” it is a false conclusion, for in the day of Judgment it will prove vain. True, God is invisible, but what excuse is that for not believing in Him? True, no one can prove to your satisfaction that God exists, but how much water will your argument hold in the day of wrath? What conclusion would Elihu lead us into? “Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him,” or have never seen Him, or cannot see Him, or cannot understand Him, or cannot believe in Him, or any other, “yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.” Therefore trust thou in Him. That is Elihu’s summing up of the matter. All argument is vanity. The fact of the matter is that Christ died for your sins. The fact of the matter is that Christ died because God loves you. The fact of the matter is that Christ is now risen from the dead, and this is the day of grace, and God expects you to believe, and those who are ‘in Christ’ shall never come into condemnation. The fact of the matter is that whatever man says to the contrary is only vanity, and for those who reject Christ and His love and His suffering and His offer of full and free salvation there is only judgment ahead. And the conclusion reached by Elihu stands today as it did in Job’s day – “Therefore trust thou in him.” We cannot put it plainer or make it clearer. That is the summary of all the teaching of all men of God in truth. That is the final analysis of the whole debate of the whole book of Job.

The last verse of the chapter states again what was said in the end of chapter 34. “Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge.” No, we cannot be guided by Job. Nor can we be guided by Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. It is repeated simply to underscore the point that Elihu should not speak in vain, nor multiply words without knowledge. If we yet fail to trust in God, then Elihu has spoken in vain. If we are like Job and depending on our own righteousness to please God we are agreeing with Job, not Elihu. We are warned again not to do so, for Job has “spoken in vain.” The conclusion we must come to in our own minds is that Elihu, not Job, is the final authority. The law of God in the ‘elder’ Testament cannot save us, even if we keep it as perfectly as Job. It is the law of grace in the ‘younger’ Testament to which we must pay heed today. We find the words of the most upright are vain if they speak of self-righteousness only. There is a new type of righteousness available now – unavailable in Job’s day – which alone is acceptable before God. If Job never saw the Lord, neither did we, but we live by faith. The conclusion begins with a ‘Therefore’ – “Therefore trust thou in Him.” This is the answer. This is the end of the argument, the summary of the debate. This is the teaching of Christ Himself, the Man of God in truth; and the apostles’ doctrine, the men of God in truth; and the conclusion all the saints have come to in every generation, as they too were men of God in truth. The reiteration of the verse which condemns Job’s argument only serves to reinforce the belief of all those who have put their trust in God, through believing on Jesus Christ the Lord, that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to die for sinners such as we.

Chapter 36

“Elihu also proceeded, and said, Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on God's behalf. I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my

Maker. For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.” Elihu is the summing up, the summary of the debate in the book of Job. He is not representative of any one thing, but rather characterizes the many conclusions of scripture. For instance, we can say that Christ died for all, but not all are ‘saved’ by His death. The conclusion therefore is that the ‘unsaved’ have rejected Christ. This ‘right’ conclusion is an Elihu, if you can see that. There are many wrong conclusions. In the instance given, if we say Christ died for all, therefore all are ‘saved,’ we have reached a false conclusion, for not all are ‘saved’ by any means. That is not Elihu. In other words, that conclusion disagrees with all men of God in truth. Only a conclusion which agrees fully with the men of God in truth can be retained among the perfect, for Elihu says that he “that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.” If a false premise, however logical, is held among any, then Elihu cannot be present. Scripture teaches that the man of God should be perfect. We cannot be true men of God if we hold false conclusions, error, misconceptions and such, among us, because Elihu is not present. The Lord Jesus said that, “where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst.” He was speaking of being in the midst of men of God in truth. If two or three are gathered together in His name, and only one is ‘saved’ and holding the truth Elihu-like, Christ is not “in the midst” of that gathering, for Elihu says, “He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee.” Perfect knowledge therefore is a must in any assembly.

“Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom.” Amen! All men of God in truth hold to that conclusion, summed up in a phrase, How Great Thou Art! For this is that ‘perfect knowledge’ characterized by Elihu. Peter and John might seem ignorant and unlearned in the eyes of the worldly-wise, but they had been with Jesus and therefore had acquired ‘perfect knowledge’ of the greatness of the Lord. Do not be put off by the phrase ‘perfect in knowledge.’ It does not mean to know everything perfectly, but it means that the knowledge we have is ‘perfect’ – that is, free from error, false doctrine, wrong teaching. If we know we are ‘saved’ we can be said to have ‘perfect knowledge’ of salvation, even though we might have grave difficulty teaching it to someone else; whereas if we know everything there is to learn about salvation, yet we ourselves are not ‘saved,’ we do not have ‘perfect knowledge’, neither are we ‘perfect in knowledge’ on that point, for we have not been with Jesus, and Elihu is not present with us. Again, if we are masters of theology, and have learned all that colleges and professors can teach about the mighty God, mighty in strength and wisdom, yet have never ourselves stood in His strength and acted according to His wisdom, we are not Elihus, and must ever remain imperfect in knowledge, for “they that do His will shall know of the doctrine.” The blind lead only the blind, because those who see never need their help. We should get up tomorrow cheerful, for He that is in the midst of thee is mighty. He is mighty to save. He is able to keep. Nothing is impossible with God. If we get up tomorrow unsure of our future, is it only that we ‘know’ these things yet have not actually experienced them? That is not ‘perfect knowledge.’ We must look again. Somewhere we have acquired error, misconceptions, wrong conclusions about God. Paul in prison is assured of his future, for he is ‘perfect in knowledge’ of the mighty God.

We do not have time or space to discuss in detail all the conclusions of Elihu – that is for you to do at leisure. But in verse 16 he tells Job, “Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness. But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice

take hold on thee.” Job, you see, was made to sit in the sinner’s seat – “But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked” – for reasons known only to God. We can learn a lesson from this, and be very careful not to sit in the sinner’s seat nor stand in the place of wicked men. It is not self-righteousness. If we ‘eschew’ evil, and do good, we are not going about to establish our own righteousness but merely avoiding at all costs being found in the sinner’s seat. The apostles, Peter and John, are in trouble because of the ‘good deed’ done to the impotent man. Paul is in daily trouble because he “preached Christ, and Him crucified.” Stephen is put to death because he looked up to heaven and “saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” And Christ Himself was in mortal danger every day among men because He did “only those things” that pleased His Father. We should be like Christ, and like the apostles, saints and martyrs before us, but we should never be caught sitting in the sinner’s seat or standing in the way of the ungodly. This too is a conclusion of Elihu. This is a summing up of the teachings of scripture, both ‘old’ and ‘new.’ If we are in dire straits, as we say – under pressure, harassed, troubled, at wit’s end, despairing – is it because we have done only those things that please the Father, or is it because we have sat in the sinner’s seat? Job is an extreme case, obviously. But in lesser degree, are we suffering, like Luther, because, “Here I stand; I can do no other,” or are we suffering because of sin? “Be not weary in well-doing,” says ‘Elihu.’ That is to say, never sit down to rest in the sinner’s seat.

“Behold, God is great,” says Elihu in verse 26. The text in the book of Job is difficult to follow at times because of poor translation. It is not what we would call ‘perfectly’ clear, although the original obviously must at one time have been perfectly clear. Added to that is the fact that God is great, far greater than we can grasp, and we have not yet got ‘perfect’ understanding of the Almighty, beyond nodding assent to the word of Elihu. “Behold, God is great, and we know him not.” It is not so much that we lack ‘perfect’ understanding of God, but that we hardly know Him. He is not familiar to us. Indeed, Elihu speaks the truth, we “know him not.” For as high as the heaven is above the earth, so high is His way above our way, and His thought above our thought. God is too great for us. God is too high for us. God is before us, and will be after us, in time, “neither can the number of His years be searched out.” What then may we grasp of God? What will be small enough of the Almighty to fill our little mind? “For he maketh small the drops of water,” Elihu adds. Then all we may know of God is merely a drop in the ocean, as we speak. We look up, and let the drops trickle into our mind, and water the seed of the word. We seek those things which are above, and one by one the drops accumulate that alone may quench our thirst for God. “Which the clouds do drop” – Elihu – “and distill upon man abundantly.” There is a sound that accompanies the experience, the sound of abundance of rain. For us it is the latter rain. For us God has poured out His Spirit upon man. For us Christ has uncovered the living water which springs up into everlasting life. “Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?” asks Elihu. Well, not understand, certainly, but we can at least experience it, and ‘perfect knowledge’ follows, never precedes, experience. We conclude, then, that to have knowledge of God we must experience God in us, but, “Behold, God is great, and we know Him not.”

“At this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place.” What is “this also” that causes Elihu to add one more chapter to add to our understanding of God? Let us see. Elihu is the summary, or the summing up, of the debate in the book of Job. He represents the conclusions, the right conclusions, we should by now have arrived at as we come to chapter 37. If we have followed him closely, and paid attention to Elihu, we will have reached at least this one right conclusion, “Behold, God is great,” arrived at in chapter 36. But Elihu obviously has something further to show us of the greatness of God. And it is something that causes the heart to tremble, and to move. Conclusions, however right, are not enough. The final result must be movement. We are not to be hearers of the word only, but doers of the word. We can deceive ourselves by reading or hearing about God in such a way as to think we are being godly in so doing. No, no! Our Lord Jesus, in His parable of the two sons instructed by the Father to work in the vineyard, taught that both heard equally the instruction of their Father, but only one did the will of his Father. The first son received the instruction gladly, but did nothing about it. The second son, perceiving that to obey would impact all his self-made plans for his day, rebelled and refused at first, but afterwards repented and went. But only one of the two, or fifty percent, ever did the will of the Father. Christ sets us the perfect example – He came to do the will of the Father. He did the will of the Father perfectly. And He did the will of the Father right to the end, cost what it might, until He could say, “It is finished.” And what is the will of God for all men? That they should believe on Him whom the Father hath sent. If we have not already done that, if our heart has never trembled and moved out of his place to allow the Lord in, then we have stopped short of the will of God.

“Hear attentively the noise of his voice,” verse two, “and the sound that goeth out of his mouth.” The hearing comes first. It is right that we should listen to and hear attentively, the instructions of the Father. It is right that we should pay close attention to the words of Elihu. It is right that we should study the scriptures for ourselves, and listen to men of God in truth teaching us, and hearken diligently to the noise of God’s voice. Man doth not live by bread alone, but by the “sound that goeth out of His mouth.” The Word, in fact. Now the ‘noise,’ the ‘sound,’ is first of all the gospel. “He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning (or, illumination) unto the ends of the earth.” Christ’s instructions to His disciples were that they should take the message into all the world. The gospel is directed, not locally to us, but to all men everywhere, “under the whole heaven.” And the ‘sound’ is followed by the ‘flash’ that illumines the souls of men. Light springs up in their darkness. Elihu gives us a great description in these verses of the power of the gospel, comparing it to the natural forces of thunder and lightning in order to give us an idea of its effects. The word of God thundered forth around the world should be the thing that teaches man the fear of the Lord. But that is not all. It should everywhere be followed immediately by the phenomenon of the light from heaven that illumines and startles. The whole effect is to make the heart tremble, and be moved out of his place. We call it conversion. Occasionally, the order is reversed – in the instance of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus the ‘lightning’ strikes first, followed by the ‘noise of his voice.” But where an evangelist is used, in the instance of Philip and the eunuch, the voice precedes the illumination. God is sovereign. We can only generalize. But let us not be hearers of the word only, but let us be lit up by the power of God also, so that movement is observed with us. “I read a great book on evangelism.” “I converted a sinner today.” Which, think ye, did the will of his Father?

“God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.” We said earlier that our conclusion arrived at in chapter 36 was, “Great is the Lord.” Yes, God is great, but chapter 37 is added to show us one more truth – “great things doeth he.” After all the conclusions are in, there must be added one more word – ‘doing.’ Great things doeth He. God is not passive, lolling about in heaven awaiting the return to earth of Jesus Christ. God is active, not desiring that any should perish but that all should come unto a knowledge of the truth. What then of us His sons and heirs? Are we content to loll about in our ‘paradise,’ hoping only that Christ’s return will free us from the chore of living? Or are we like our Father, ever active in the cause of the gospel? Are we doing “great things” for God? Elihu points to a number of aspects of the work of God. “For he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth.” Those who cannot thunder can work quietly to bring to man the treasures of the Lord. “Likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength.” If we only get a small drop of the knowledge of God, we are no less to water the earth than those who have “great rain of his strength.” “He seaeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work.” It is by our hand that all men are to learn of God. “Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places.” As we proceed, beastliness will be forced to retire, and return to its lair. We are to be instant in season and out of season. It is not enough to say Amen to “God is great,” but to experience God working in the affairs of men to which we can add, “Great things doeth He.” That is why Elihu adds his great chapter on ‘doing,’ the marvelous 37th chapter of Job. If we looked closely we could see Christ there too. Christ thundering out the sermon on the mount. Christ lightening up the darkness surrounding Nicodemus. Christ falling soft as snow on the woman at the well. Christ the small rain to His disciples, Christ risen the mighty rain to us. And Christ the whirlwind, from whence God speaks to Job.

“Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.” Hear – stand – consider. But consider what? Consider the words? No. Consider the works, the wondrous works of God. The Bible is good, but is it enough? If men are not converted, not ‘saved,’ not made to tremble so that the heart is moved, then nothing has been accomplished. Man is destined for everlasting damnation unless someone reach him with the message that alone can save him. Man is pouring down the broad road to where? To destruction, unless he can be reached and saved. Man is on the highway to hell, unless someone persuades him to alter his course. What shall we thunder at him? “Hearken unto this, O man.” Unto what? Unto the gospel of salvation, the gospel of “not of works, lest any man should boast,” the gospel Job needed and every man needs. O man, “Stand still.” Stop your insensate rush that daily carries you farther from God, closer to death, judgment, and hell. Hearken unto this. Stand still. And consider “the wondrous works of God.” God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. God demanding the full judgment of sin on the cruel Cross of Calvary. God waiting three days to allow the beasts to go back to their places, and return to their lair. God raising Christ from the dead to announce the glad tidings of a day of grace for man. And God for ever active in every generation to get men to take “the noise of His voice” to the ends of the earth, that He might illumine the darkness with His bright flash of mercy at every opportunity. Surely to those who have eyes to see, these are the wondrous works of God. Can anything in all creation outdo the power of the gospel unto salvation? This, cries Paul, is the power of God. Does not the jailer hearing Paul and Silas singing the praises of God, call for a light, and tremble? “At this also my

heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place.” At what? At the noise of the voice. What song do these voices sing? O Lord, how great Thou art!

Elihu added a chapter. His conclusions were all reached in chapter 36, yet he added a chapter, “Behold,” in chapter 36, “God is great.” It is good to so behold. But if that is as far as we go, then Elihu has spoken in vain. You see, God has not only done – past tense – the wondrous works of God. God doeth – present tense – His wondrous works still. And let us remember that if God has done, and God doeth, that God will do – future tense – His wondrous works again. But we do not live in the past, nor can we yet live in the future. We can only live in the present, and the word for the present is ‘doeth.’ What are we going to do about all this? What are we doing – today – about it? Are we doing the will of God in our present circumstances? Are we active or passive in the fight to win the world, to save man for his Creator? The book of Job should be only 40 chapters long, but it is 42 chapters long. The last chapter of the book is added to show what Job did, and what God did. And Elihu adds this 37th chapter to show there is something we are meant to do too. If we only hear, or only read, or only study – yet never do – what will that profit souls on the brink of destruction? The present is given us to ‘do’ in. “Work while it is yet day. The night cometh, when no man can work,” said our Lord. But when to start? Tomorrow? Tomorrow is the future, don’t you see? Only now is the accepted time. Only today can we be sure that the day of grace is not over. If we do not make some effort this day, however feeble, then we have wasted the present, which tomorrow will become the wasted past, another day added to the years that the locust hath eaten. But today we have still the opportunity to experience God, to hear His voice, to walk with God, to ‘do’ with God, to consider anew His wondrous works. It is not self-righteousness but discipleship. It is not Job’s “having whereof to boast,” but having the joy of seeing God in action, God in us, God using us to perform “the wondrous works of God.”

Chapter 38

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said...” The great debate is over, the conclusions are all in, Elihu has been allowed to add his final chapter, and the picture has been painted for us. It is all over. But God, the Author and the Finisher, who has been patiently waiting in the wings off-stage, as it were, now moves to center-stage. No one can fail to profit from reading what God answered Job. The mere listening to the Voice out of the whirlwind tells us more about God in a few brief chapters than we can gather from many books of scripture all put together. In a wonderful series of questions God, without revealing Himself, causes us to stop and think. We take each morning so much for granted. But what nation on earth could devise and create an object so vast, so fearsome, so untouchable, yet so delightful, and health-giving, as the morning sun? And having created it, could then hang it in space for endless centuries where it would never falter or fail, never lose its orbit, never lose its heat, never approach too close, need no attention, yet be more regular than the clock in the hall? An object, moreover, that would give light to all the earth yet allow us time to sleep; that would waken the little birds and give welcome heat to every nation; that would cause flowers to bloom and fruit to ripen yet shine impartially as God Himself on the just and the unjust alike? Could any man, or any series of men, or any one nation of men, or even a united world of men, accomplish such a feat as to

create something at once terrible yet beneficent, majestic yet humble, breathing fire yet doing good? Yet the morning sun is only one of the many many wonders of God, and man chooses to ignore it and despise the wonder, and think himself greater than God.

Now Christ is our morning sun, the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, the One who wakens the birds and causes the fruit to ripen, the terrible yet beneficent, the majestic yet humble. Christ is the wonder of heaven, yet man ignores and despises Him today. Christ is the one-word answer to most of the questions in the 38th chapter of Job. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” He was in the bosom of the Father, before the world was. “Who hath laid the measures thereof?” By Him “are all things” that exist. “Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?” They are fastened to the Cross which was before the foundation of the earth. The things of God on earth are copied from the pattern shown on the mount. The Cross of Christ on earth has its original in heaven, and the whole earth hangs – or falls – by the eternal security of the eternal Cross. Yet man ignores the Cross of Christ in his ignorance and pride, not knowing that the very ground he walks upon is dependent thereon. “Who laid the corner stone thereof?” Christ. Yes, He knew that man would sin and He would have to pay the penalty, but He loved us “before the world was” enough to lay the cornerstone of earth, and He died for us that He might be the cornerstone of the new heaven and the new earth wherein will dwell only righteousness. “Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.” It is spoken to Job, but it is spoken to each one of us. Do we know the answer to God’s great questions? Christ is the answer. But if we continue to ignore Christ, what answer shall we give when God at last moves to center-stage and demands an answer from us? And if we knew the answer, yet do nothing about it ourselves, will God overlook it in the day of His wrath? Christ is the answer. Therefore we must accept Christ, and turn to God in repentance, and confess that Christ is our only answer. And God will be pleased to accept our answer, for it is the right answer, and Christ is to be glorified.

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” If all we have is a multitude of words without knowledge, then the little light God has permitted us to keep will sooner or later become darkness again. Earth is full of voices, each voice pouring out a torrent of words daily, yet without the knowledge of God that Elihu calls ‘perfect knowledge’ – that is, knowledge learned by experience. So even church councils are darkened, and worldly counsel is without light, because the real knowledge of God is lost more and more. God speaks from the whirlwind, from the pillar of cloud and fire, from the dire thing without substance which cannot be trapped or tamed or destroyed or fought or subdued, but which is itself capable of immense devastation. What man or what nation, by what means, can capture the whirlwind and reduce it to ashes? Shall weapons of war threaten it, or will it respond to the pleadings of peace? As it whirls threateningly in the face of Job and his friends, they must cover their faces and hide themselves, cowering in their shelters, while God speaks from that impregnable position of power, demanding an answer to His powerful questions. It is a terrifying sight, that whirlwind, revealing the power of the Almighty, concealing all but the voice of God. But as God strides to center-stage, clothed in power and might, it is the Voice like a sharp, two-edged sword which cuts away the veneer of righteousness from man and leaves him quaking in his shoes. “Who is this...?” asks the Voice. Does the greatest of all the men of the east jump to his feet to answer? “Who is

this that darkeneth counsel...?” asks the Voice. Does the most perfect man on earth make any attempt to reply? “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” asks the Voice. Does the one man who knew God best in his generation stand up to be counted? Not a hope of that. Yet proud man, ignorant, rebellious, God-hating, Christ-rejecting, plans someday to stand before God, and give an account of himself before the Throne.

We cannot go down these chapters verse by verse as we would wish to do, but please, please read for yourself, not once but many times in your lifetime, what God answered Job. We consider it a wonder that Elijah is fed by the ravens, but answer this, “Who provideth for the raven his food?” “Wherefore,” said the Lord Jesus Christ, “if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe ye, O ye of little faith?” But our only answer is to hide our head, for we have never experienced God like that, and our knowledge is not ‘perfect’ in that respect. We can see the force of the question. We can see, in theory, what the answer should be. But we have only “words without knowledge,” for to the question, “Shall He not...?” we can only mumble, “Who knows? We have never experienced it.” But if our knowledge of God is so imperfect, how shall we stand before Him if He comes our way demanding answers? But if we live by faith, then at least at the judgment seat of Christ we will have the answer, for we will see there that we are indeed clothed with the righteousness of Christ. There our knowledge will be perfect, for we will have the experience to prove it. “Who provideth for the raven his food?” God alone, the Creator and upholder of the universe. “When his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.” The ox knoweth his master, and the ass his master’s crib, says scripture. Every animal, wild or tame, knows who provides for him his daily food. But man, proud man, clothed in his own brief authority, is the only living part of creation that professes not to know or to care. The young raven croaks as he flies abroad in his search for meat, but his cry is directed Godward, not manward. Only man looks to man for his sustenance. But did not our Lord assure us Himself that if we would seek the kingdom of heaven – look up, not around you – and his righteousness, all these things would be added unto us? Who believes it? Only they who experience it. We have to experience God to know God; we have to know God by experiencing Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

“Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?” To whom must we come for knowledge of God then? To our fellowman? Of course not! To Jesus Christ the Son of God, the only Man who had perfect knowledge of God. “No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him,” He said. It is Christ in us who is made wisdom to us. It is Christ who, by His Spirit in us, gives understanding to the heart. Christ is, in fact, the only answer provided by God to every question God might propound to us. “Whence hath this Man this wisdom?” they asked in awe of the Lord Jesus. “This wisdom cometh from above,” He taught His disciples. Those who come to the Risen Christ find it so in their own experience. Suddenly they have ‘perfect knowledge,’ not painfully acquired from outside and beaten into them by schoolmasters or tutors, but ‘wisdom in the inward parts’ such as they had never dreamed of. Suddenly they have understanding, not thrust upon them by a system of colleges, but understanding in the heart that thrusts from within out into their everyday living. “Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?” Christ is the answer. Indeed, if we were to take each and every question separately that God propounds in this chapter, we could prove conclusively that Christ

is not only the answer, but the only answer. Is it wise then to ignore Christ? Should we continue to seek for answers apart from Christ? The wisest man on earth, crying, "There is no God," is a fool at heart, according to scripture. The most foolish person alive, who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, has wisdom in the inward parts and understanding in the heart. Can we see that? It will help us grasp reality at least, if we can. The true wisdom, the real understanding cannot come from outside. It must be planted within us by our Creator, and allowed to root in us, and grow till it becomes visible even to our neighbors and friends.

"Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?" God demands of Job. No. The flesh-eaters hunt at night, crouched, waiting to spring. And the prey, sensing their presence, flees by another route. Only on one dark night, when the Lamb walked openly into the midst, and asked, "Whom seek ye?" And the bloodthirsty, instead of springing, fell backward! Who provided the Lamb for the prey? God did. Who led the Lamb to the slaughter? God did. Yet man thought it was man who caught and slew the Lamb of God by his own cunning. Men still think like that. Only those with wisdom in the inward parts, and understanding in the heart, see and know that it was not possible for man to provide for such a 'kill.' Abraham got it right when he told his son, "God shall provide Himself a Lamb." It is God who provides. Job cannot provide for himself. We cannot provide for ourselves. God has made provision both for Job and for us. God is not asking Job questions; scripture says, "God answered Job." The 'prey' had been provided before Job was born. The Lamb was prior to Abraham. The bloodthirsty had gone supperless in many generations, till the one night Judas Iscariot led the pack. There is no question involved. It is simply God's answer to Job, and God's answer to us. If we accept the answer, we will be able someday to stand before God without fear, and acknowledge that we found the answer and it was right. Will God in turn accept our answer? God has accepted the answer already, and confirmed His acceptance of it by raising Christ from the dead and exalting Him to highest glory, and crowning Him Lord of all. The questions to us are rhetorical, for the inward wisdom of God assures us of the answer, but our question to you is, "Do you know the answer?" Christ is the answer. Do you then know Him? In your own experience?

Chapter 39

In chapter 39 God continues with His questions to Job, but here they concern only the animal kingdom, and follow on as it were in sequence from verse 39 of the previous chapter. "Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions, When they couch in their dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait? Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat." You can see, if you look carefully, that chapter 38 is concerning creation, the earth and her planets, whereas the verses quoted belong to the animal kingdom, and are part of chapter 39. This is only important when we are looking at the pictures of Christ in scripture, to see where the one series ends and another begins. "Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?" begins, as we said, when the Lamb of God stepped forward to ask, Whom seek ye? "Who provideth for the raven his food?" shows Christ separated from the disciples at that point. Then in verse one of chapter 39, "Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?" As the Lord begins His final journey, that will take Him by way of Calvary, the Tomb, and the Resurrection back to

God – referred to as His passion – God demands of Job if Job is acquainted with these things. “Knowest thou the time...?” Job is baffled. What time, Lord? The time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth. The time of labor, the time of travail, the time of pain, the time of anguish, the time of sorrow, the outcome of the passion. The time to bring forth in the likeness of. The time of increase. The time for the little flock to multiply. The time of newness of life. The time for those whose house is in the rock to be born in liberty. The time for the meek to beget meekness. The time for the secret thing to be revealed. Well, Job, what do you know of all this?

“Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing.” We can comprehend that God is pointing to the things the multitude never sees, that city folk take no account of. As they gathered in Jerusalem to the temple to hear Jesus speak so the veil was upon their hearts that they might not understand. But it is on the hill outside the city that God points out to Job the secret things of God. These things do not represent Christ, but represent aspects of His passion. These are the things the multitude never sees, the things known only to God and to the solitary observers. “Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?” That is the question. “Who hath sent out the wild ass free?” That is the question. And the answers are all found in Christ, as we said earlier. So He is ‘the prey’ of the bloodthirsty, and ‘food’ for the vultures, at Golgotha. But back of all that the multitude can see, there are other aspects of His passion to which God would draw our attention. There is the ‘wild goat’ aspect. It is hidden from the multitude, but the pain and the travail are necessary to the increase of the flock in a newness of life and freedom never known under the law in Jerusalem, in the temple, the flock that will make their home in the rock. There is the ‘wild ass’ aspect. It is hidden from the multitude, but the solitariness of the One who is so apart from all others is to lead to freedom and liberty and mountaintop experiences and greener pastures far removed from the things of men. God’s answer to slavery is found in Philemon, a liberty wherein both slave and master may share equally, the freedom of the meek of all the earth, in pastures hidden from the eyes of the cruel, where the wild asses roam the range of the mountains in perfect safety under the eye of God, and none can ever take their freedom from them.

God goes on, “Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow?” The unicorn is the great beast with the one horn. The Lamb of God has no horns. Christ Crucified seems powerless to save Himself because He has no authority from God to do so. He is taken without a struggle and He is slaughtered without defense. But His trust is in God, in the single power of the One God. The multitude sees only His helplessness, His so apparent inability to come down from the Cross. They never see the one horn, the source of His strength and power, for it is never revealed to the scornful but only to the observers. They will never see Christ Risen. They will believe only the false rumor that His disciples stole His body whilst the guards slept. But the ‘unicorn’ represents an aspect of His passion familiar to all believers. Those with the ‘one horn’ cannot be curbed or bridled. Their strength is too great. Their source of strength and power and authority renders them immune from all that the multitude is familiar with. No earthly authority can keep them ‘tame’ or make them serve the earthly needs of man. “Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or

will he harrow the valleys after thee?" Clearly not. The unicorn is untamable, incurable, unleashable. Our tame religion today is a religion without power because it is bridled by the state, controlled by the rulers, and made to serve man's social needs. It is not the religion of the Resurrection. It is not the religion of the single authority. It is not the religion of the book of Acts. But one aspect of His passion was to make us so untamable that no authority on earth could bind the gospel, or rule over the church, or curb the strength of the one-horned, or keep us down in the valleys. They can try, of course, and they will. They tried it with our Lord. They sealed Him in a cave and set a strong watch over Him. But He burst the bands of death itself, rose from the Tomb, ascended far above all principalities and powers, and revealed the source of His strength.

Then we come to something a little puzzling. "Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks?" Man sees no beauty in Christ, especially at the Cross, during His passion. The multitude has no eye for such a thing. It is for God and the observer to behold. "Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks?" Here follows a description of the ostrich. Then scripture says, "Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding." But this too is an aspect of His passion. God has chosen the folly of the Cross to save the world by wisdom. And God has chosen the foolishness of preaching to save the lost from hell. And God has deliberately picked out the foolish of this world to set at nought the wisdom of men. It is an aspect we should not overlook. Christianity is not an intellectual exercise for great minds, but a revelation of strength to the 'feeble-minded,' if we may use the term. The ostrich is displayed here as feeble-minded, among the creatures. Yet scripture adds, "What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider." The horse and rider is a picture of the combination of brain and brawn, or brute strength guided by intelligent anticipation. That is man's world exactly. But the foolishness of God is pictured here as something greater than anything in man's world. "What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider." The ostrich portrays foolishness, and the female ostrich portrays extreme foolishness combined with weakness, the weaker vessel. But the foolishness of God in such weak vessels as we are, is shown to scorn all man's might and intellect. The lifting up is the secret. "And I, if I be lifted up..." And we likewise are taught to lift up our heads and look. The lifting up brings us nearer to God. "What time she lifteth up herself on high..." So let us fly to God. Let us seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth. It is God who raised up our Lord Jesus. It is God who can raise us up, both in life and in the resurrection.

Now follows a description of the horse. "Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet (that is, time to retreat). He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting." This too is an aspect of His passion little understood. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," He said, "and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." It is the only hint in the whole book of Christ's impatience, if we may reverently call it that. "He smelleth the battle afar off..." There was so much He wanted to do, and His

disciples so little understood Him, that He was 'straitened' in that way. The 'rider' is not pictured here. Our Lord is guided by a wisdom far too great to show, a wisdom from above, that no picture can convey to us. But let us look long and hard at this picture of the warhorse. If this is an aspect of His passion then the picture can be reproduced in us. Do we look like this? Are we impatient to finish the book and get into the thick of the fight? Are we determined to sell our lives dearly in the battle of good against evil? Are we 'pawing at the ground' to take up our cross and so follow Him? Have we on the whole armor of God? Are we guided from above? Will we pay no heed to the calls to retreat? Will we say among the trumpets, Ha, ha, and lift our noses out of our book to smell the battle afar? Are we excited by the possibility of doing great things for God, guided by God? Is there no holding us back? Are we rarin' to go? Or are we yet afraid?

Finally, "Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she." We have come full circle, back to the prey, but this time it is different 'prey.' The hawk for speed, the eagle for strength, shown abiding in the rock. This is an aspect of His passion. "Her eyes behold afar off." It is that long-sightedness we all need. We should, as our Lord did, see past the sufferings of the present to the time when we shall soar above this life and eat our fill of all God has provided for us. The poet said of the eagle, that, "he clasps the crag with crooked hands, close to the sun in lonely lands, ringed with the azure world, he stands." God uses the female in His picture, but are we clasping our Rock with toil-worn hands, and are we close to the Wonder of Heaven in our loneliness, and are we ringed with the azure of heaven? Do we look with binocular vision at the feast awaiting us? Christ in His passion is looking beyond, looking at what the multitude cannot see, looking across the abyss of death. He is weak – "Her eyes behold afar off" – but He is abiding on the rock, for He is waiting upon God in the sure knowledge that after this is over He will mount up with wings like an eagle and seek His home on high once again. Without vision the people perish. He is waiting now to impart to us that vision of far-off things. That land unseen by the multitude, that nest on high. But soon He must return to earth again, dropping with the speed exemplified by the hawk into the affairs of this world, when this time the wicked will be the prey on whom He will fall, and his children shall spoil the slain. Have we caught the vision yet? Are we with Him in all this? Then let us mount up to where He sits.

Chapter 40

"Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it." As we come to chapter 40 of the book of Job, we are made aware that indeed God is very great. The only word that sums up our feeling is the word 'Almighty.' There is something about the One Eternal God, whose name is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, the God of Wonder, the Almighty, that boggles the mind. Did we think Job had a point or two in his argument against God? Who can contend with the Almighty? Is a man wise to pit his limited understanding against the eternal wisdom of God? Can man be more right than God? Of course not! Our feeble comprehension is so disappointingly limited, so futile, so finite

that the Lord says simply, “Trust Me” and everyone who has ever done that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, has eventually seen that God was right all along. We are not talking about a limited God who makes mistakes and then corrects them as He goes along. No. We are talking about the Almighty, omnipotent, marvelous in wisdom and understanding, before whose presence feeble man is compelled to bow, as one bows to superior power, superior wisdom, superior authority. “Then Job answered the Lord,” verse three, “and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.” That is the only answer of a man said to perfect, and upright, and that feared God and eschewed evil, the greatest of all the men of the east. Shall lesser mortals succeed where Job failed? Shall the arguments of the imperfect, the sinful, the godless and the evil stand? Will lesser men from the west take Job’s place? Not so. The very greatness of our God is a warning in itself to lean not unto our own understanding. If we accept, childlike, everything God has ever said, we are ‘plugged into’ infinite wisdom.

“Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.” It is as we see ourselves in the light of the revelation of God, we begin to grasp that “in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” Proud man has to put away all his own self-righteousness and acknowledge before Christ that only God is good, but man is vile. It is Christ who reveals God to us. Jesus Christ the Righteous alone is acceptable before God. This Son, the well-beloved, alone can answer God on terms of equality and intimacy, but we are accepted only “in the beloved,” not by our own merits. According to Job, once there was an answer to God, in the perfect keeping of the law, but that answer no longer stands – “Once have I spoken, but I will not answer” – for not even Job can do anything about the all-too-obvious corruption he sees in his own flesh. The perfect keeping of the law, in outward adornment, does nothing about inward corruption, but only makes a man a Pharisee, clean on the outside but still full of filth on the inside. Again, Job tells us that there were actually two answers, for even if a man did not keep all the law of God perfectly (e.g. Abraham, David, Jonah, etc) they could still be on terms of intimacy with God – “yea, twice; but I will proceed no further” – as men raised up for a special purpose. But even this answer is found insufficient, for Peter tells us in Acts, “David is not ascended into heaven.” So neither the perfect keeping of the law, nor finding grace in the eyes of the Lord, could ever bring us into the presence of the Almighty. Only One Man is risen from the dead and seated today in the heavenlies, Jesus Christ. He is Jesus Christ the Righteous, for He kept all the law perfectly. He is Jesus Christ the Accepted, for He found grace in the eyes of the Lord. But He is far more than these two answers. He is Jesus Christ the Son, the express image of His person. He is Jesus Christ the Saviour, the very Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He is God incarnate.

This is the only answer God will acknowledge. Verse six begins again, “Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me...” This is how chapter 38 began, if you recall. It is as if God were beginning all over again to show Job, and us, that Christ is the only answer. Whenever God repeats anything in scripture it is not mere reiteration, but is so done because of the importance of the matter. We dare not read the book of Job and come to any other conclusion than this, that Christ is the answer God has provided for man, and His blood is the answer to man’s sin, and His Sacrifice is the eternal answer to the demands of the eternal God. Man’s reply

is given us by Job (the perfect). "Behold, I am vile." Except we see that, we cannot see the need for inward cleansing. No matter how clean we may try outwardly to make ourselves fit for the presence of God, if we have never had the experience of inward cleansing we have never found the answer. If we think any otherwise, we find ourselves in dispute with God, who goes on to ask, "Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" The Pharisees heard God say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," yet they disannulled His judgment. They condemned Christ in order to keep their self-righteousness. In verse nine God asks, "Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" Only God has power on earth to forgive sins. Only one Voice should be heard from one end of heaven to the other, that is, the gospel of salvation. God speaks in the still small Voice, whispers in our ear, in order that we may shout in triumph the good news to all the earth. Christ's lightest whisper is meant to be heard in the ends of the earth, being magnified a thousand times in us. His words can never pass away. We are the echoes of His voice in the world of men. We do not 'speak of ourselves,' for we have His great example to follow. He brought to earth the Voice of God. He still speaks through us.

Enough of questions for the moment. "Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath: and behold every one that is proud, and abase him." Come then, little man, and show the Almighty what you can do. Put on all the authority you can muster, and go around the world, and every time you come to a proud man, be he rich, or powerful, or a mighty ruler among men, or a great king, abase him, make him eat dust! What? You cannot do a simple, easy thing like that? How great then are you! Who can do such a thing? Only Christ can. Yes, Christ our King, in majesty and excellency, can abase him that is proud, and Christ our High Priest, in His garments of glory and beauty, can make every other sacrifice look small in comparison with His eternal Sacrifice. And so that none may boast before God, God has decreed that the proudest must come to Christ to be decked out in majesty and excellency, and God has decreed that the most spiritually perfect must come to Christ to be clothed in glory and beauty, so that our radiance should not be our own but His who loved us. If we cannot do a simple, easy thing, how can we call ourselves great? Naaman the Syrian was a proud man. He was asked to do a simple, easy thing. He proved his greatness by doing it. The first proud person you will meet is yourself. Can you humble yourself therefore, under the mighty hand of God, long enough to kneel at the foot of the Cross, that He may lift you up and exalt you in due course! Try it. It is the way to greatness. Christ humbled Himself, and became obedient, in order that we might be able to say, O Lord, how great Thou art! "Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee." Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and Christ must one day humble those who refuse to humble themselves.

"Behold now behemoth." Job is great, among all the men of the east. But God draws his attention to something far greater. "Behold now behemoth." There was something on earth once far greater than anything known today, something immensely strong, immensely powerful, immensely self-sufficient. Listen to the full description. "He eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones

are like bars of iron. He is the chief of the ways of God: (only) he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him. Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.” That is a description of brute strength above our comprehension, a creature so vast, so unassailable, that it could lie down openly at noon under shady trees and sleep without fear of assault. “Behold now behemoth.” What net could snare him, what sword approach him, what creature molest him? And, Job, God is saying, such is Christ. Christ is a Man among men, but a Man of a different caliber indeed. Christ is inviolate. Christ is unassailable. Christ is unconquerable. Christ is the “chief of the ways of God.” He shall lie down, and none shall make Him afraid, scripture tells us. Herod cannot send for Him. Pilate cannot have power over Him. The rulers of the Jews cannot take Him. “Behold now behemoth.” And that, Job, is greatness. Not a creature that can be smitten with boils, so that all he wants to do is to die. That is not greatness, that is mortality, corruption, weakness. “Behold now behemoth.”

“Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox.” In other words, he looked and acted like every other creature. “Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly.” Christ has no earthly father. He has life in Himself, to give to whomsoever He will. He is the second Adam, the Head of a new race. “He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together.” His strength is in what came after, that is, Resurrection and Life. “His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron.” Thus not a bone of Him can be broken. “He is the chief of the ways of God: (only) he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him.” In other words, only His Creator can break Him, for none other would dare. “Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play.” This is a peculiar picture, as though Calvary were child’s play to Him. “He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens.” Again, it is a peculiar picture, as though the Cross at noon was only a place of refuge, and the reed at the edge of death merely a pleasure. “The shady trees cover him with their shadow;” there it is again, “the willows of the brook compass him about.” The weeping willows need not weep – He will arise in due course. “Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.” It is not so much that He will taste of death, but that He will drink the Jordan dry for us. “He taketh it with his eyes.” It is that binocular vision we saw earlier where all is plain in His sight. “His nose pierceth through snares.” He heads out of the tomb again as though the stone, the seal, and the guard never existed. It is a picture worth consideration. God gave it first to Job, but God gives it now to you. Study it. Can you see what constitutes true greatness? “Behold now behemoth,” says God.

Chapter 41

“Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook?” God asks Job. God is deliberately drawing attention to things slightly outside of our knowledge and comprehension, to greatness little understood because no longer seen on earth. That Job clearly understood what God was talking

about there can be little doubt, for the last chapter proves it. In Job's day earth held creatures now no longer seen, as the unicorn, behemoth, leviathan, etc. Thus Job has a far higher standard of comparison in the universe around him of true greatness, in creatures unconquerable, with which man may only live in a state of uneasy coexistence, for the law of the universe which said all should fear man was then in its infancy. Man then stood far more in awe of his Creator than he does now, for the evidence of God's greatness was far more obvious then, in the things which He had made. But this truth applies equally to us. We cannot see, as the apostles could, the greatness of Christ, but may only infer and deduce, from the evidence remaining to us, what they observed with their eyes. We can only 'behold now behemoth' by the spiritual eyes of faith. We can only contemplate 'Leviathan' from the standpoint of those who stand on the far side of the sea, and attempt to make out those details better observed firsthand in close proximity. Indeed, were it not for the book of Job our standard of comparison of greatness would be far lower, because only here are the details given, the picture painted for those with eyes to see. We are indebted to Job more than we ever thought possible. And a slightly better translation would in fact enable us to perceive the details of each picture in clearer perspective.

"Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord (line) which thou lettest down? Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn (pierce)?" God is pointing out the king of the fish here, or the 'behemoth' of the seas. As on land there was a creature unassailable, unconquerable, untamable, so in the water was found an equivalent. The fish in scripture represents life, as in Noah's day every creature outside the ark is destroyed by the flood except the fish. So this picture is given us, to see that Christ in Himself had life, and there was none powerful enough to take that life away from Him, but rather He laid it down of Himself. Consider in the gospels the various 'hooks' and 'lines' used to attempt to draw Him out and expose some point of vulnerability. His strength was in His mouth, His tongue, His jaw. When He set His jaw to go up to Jerusalem, who could dissuade Him? Or when He used His tongue in the temple, did not those sent to take Him withdraw? Or when He opened His mouth in the synagogue, were they not compelled to wonder? (They wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth.) But the prophet says, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so openeth He not His mouth." This is essential if He is to allow Himself to be taken. He had to humble Himself in order to die for us, for if He had only allowed His greatness to be revealed who could have taken Him? He was great. He has to put away His greatness to allow Himself to be 'caught,' to be taken. God points out to Job the impossibility – the natural impossibility – of anyone or any group of persons taking Him. But if He does not "fall into the ground and die," He must abide alone. He endured the Cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before Him. What joy? The joy of being in heaven? No, no! Heaven was His home. For the joy of having us with Him. For the joy of having His church, the Bride of Christ. For the joy of calling us 'friends.'

There follows in Job chapter 41 a full description of 'Leviathan.' But verse eight says, "Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more." Recall, if you will, how it was He eventually succumbed. Remember, if you will, the 'battle' fought at Calvary, the battle in which He fought, not to save His life, but to give up His life so that we might have life. Lay thine hand upon Him – reach out by faith and touch the Christ of God. Except He had laid down His life for us, the 'battle' was hopeless from the first. "Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be

cast down even at the sight of him? None is so fierce that dare stir him up:” – did the man in the tombs ‘exceeding fierce’ disturb Him? – “who then is able to stand before me?” God is pointing out to Job by way of analogy that behemoth and leviathan, mere works of creation, are totally beyond the power of man. What then, asks God, of their Creator? Does not the power of the Creator far exceed the power He has invested in the things which He has created? Obviously it must be so, for who could control creation if it were not so? “Behold now behemoth – only he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him.” In other words, only the Creator of behemoth has power to slay him. So with Christ, as He Himself told Pilate, “Thou couldst have no power over Me except it were given thee from above.” Only God is great enough to cause Jesus Christ to be taken and slain. And as Christ is the Creator also, we see that it is Christ Jesus who allows Himself to be taken and slain. Can you see that? Look again at behemoth. Look again at leviathan. Can you see the picture God painted for you in the life of Job? Now look at Christ. “Who then is able to stand before me? Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.” Christ in a manger is “Christ the Lord.” Christ in a boat on the sea of Galilee is “Christ the Lord of Creation.” Christ on the Cross is “Christ the Lord of Glory.” And Christ risen is “Christ the Lord of lords.”

But the last picture in the book of Job is perhaps in a way the most peculiar picture found in scripture. God wants us to estimate correctly the meaning of true greatness. If we can see in chapter 40 the picture of behemoth we catch a glimpse of might and strength and power hitherto unknown to us, a might that laughs at man and Satan and death – yea, at the Cross itself. And if we study leviathan in chapter 41 we see again that might and strength and power which simply cannot be snared by any subtlety of man or any other creature under heaven. Yes, “the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me,” He said. But if true greatness were in might and strength and power alone, then Christ need never have died, for His life on earth exhibited all three, and He could simply have allowed Himself to be ‘taken by force’ and made king in Jerusalem. But His true greatness lies in His laying down His life for us. And His true greatness lies in His taking our sins in His own body on the Tree. Therefore the last picture we have of greatness in the book of Job is a picture of the dragon. It begins in verse 12 of chapter 41 and runs to the end of the chapter. “I will not conceal,” says God, “his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion.” It is not a picture of the old dragon, Satan, nor yet a picture of antichrist. It is a picture of One who took our sins in His own body on the Tree, till He, the sinless, spotless, unblemished and holy Lamb of God “became sin” for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And God, who knows all and understands all, says that is ‘true’ greatness. Not the false greatness of earth, but the true greatness of heaven. Not the greatness of Satan in pride and power, but the true greatness of humility and obedience to God and love to man and meekness unto the death. That, God says, is true greatness. And that, God points out, can only be seen in the last picture in the book of Job. And be warned, God cautions us – do not get it wrong. This is Christ.

“ I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle? Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth are terrible round about. His scales are his pride, shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. By his neesings a light doth shine, and

his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone. When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves. The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee: slingstones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear. Sharp stones are under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep to be hoary. Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear. He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.” There it is in full, the complete description of the One who was made sin for you, painted like a picture, one you cannot overlook or pass by. It should be studied by all who wish to know what true greatness really is in the eyes of God. Indeed, it could be studied profitably by all, for when Job saw it he said, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

What is true greatness? Is it not in being strong and mighty and powerful? Yes, but with this difference. It is in being strong enough to bear the burden of another. Christ bore the burden of the whole world. It is in being mighty enough to be able to save, and not destroy. It is in being powerful enough, so that when the burden has been borne and the helpless saved, power is yet available to help. Christ is made sin for us, He who knew no sin. His strength was used to carry our burden of sin. As the sin-offering He shines in a new and terrible light to those with eyes to see. Christ is mighty to save all who come unto God by Him. The helpless, the defenseless, the weak find in Him at Calvary a wonderful authority and might to free them from the shackles of sin that enslaved them. None dare oppose Him as He stoops to save. And Christ is powerful enough today to give power to the feeble and courage to the faint. The great picture of Job 41 is of One powerful enough to go into the depths and yet come up with the fire of God in His nostrils still burning: of One immune to every hurtful thing who yet bore all hurt and left a glorious pathway in the trackless sea of life: of One strong enough to have destroyed every enemy, yet seen no more on earth because He allowed Himself once to be destroyed of man. This is true greatness. To become sin for us. Could any other do that? Great deeds abound of men of God who did the wondrous works of God, men who sacrificed, men who even laid down their lives. But when all comparisons are in, and every other picture put aside, this picture will remain, of One who was Himself sinless yet became sin for us. Could any other do that? It is the last unrivaled feat. All God’s greatest men point to Him, and bow, and confess, “Thou alone art worthy, for Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.”

Chapter 42

“Then Job answered the Lord, and said, I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee.” As we come finally to the end of the book of Job, the book that has taught us so much about God, we too should answer the Lord. “I know that thou

canst do every thing.” This is our conclusion also. The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth. Hallelujah! “And that no thought can be withholden from thee.” And, Thou God seest me! It is with those two things we are to finish up. The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and Thou, God, seest me. On the one hand the greatness of the Lord, and on the other hand the littleness of man. We are nothing in His sight. All the nations of earth are as the fine dust in the scales, weighed against the consummate greatness of our Lord and our God. The most perfect man on earth scarcely shows up compared with the immaculate perfection in strength and power and might and beauty of Him who is now King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Lord God Omnipotent. That is the conclusion the disciples came to, also. That is the conclusion of all who have seen the Risen Christ. If you can rise from the dead then I know you can do anything. But alas! All the things I thought previously were wrong, and I know that no thought can be hidden from you. What will you think of me? “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?” That’s me, Lord. But Lord, forgive me, for you know that I little understood, for the things of God were too wonderful for me. Job says, “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.” yet in spite of all our lack of wisdom, our lack of knowledge, our lack of understanding, the debate was not unfruitful, for we have reached the conclusion, The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth.

“Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.” When our lack of wisdom, knowledge and understanding at last become obvious to us, what should we do? We should repent, and turn to God. That is what Job did. “Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak” (in prayer). Let him that lacks wisdom ask of God, who gives liberally and upbraids not. And, by the same token, our understanding can be enlarged if we come to God in faith and importunity. “I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.” Job’s words are practically indistinguishable from God’s words at this point, for anyone moving into the will of God soon finds himself using God’s words in place of his own words. The word of God should be in us to such an extent that when we speak the hearer should have some difficulty distinguishing between what God says and what we say. Indeed, in an epistle, Paul tells us that the word is from him, not from the Lord, but to the eye of faith there is no difference. Why? Because he has the mind of the Lord. So, with God in us, our words should be God’s words; as our Lord Jesus was able to say, “The word that I speak is not Mine but the Father’s.” And our prayers will then have more weight with God, for He will hear – not us, but the word of the Lord in us, uttered in the power of the Spirit. The discrepancies, the errors, the fleshly mind, will tend to fade a little, and be replaced gradually by the word of God in us, so that our prayers will be pleasing to God. Our praise should sound very like a psalm of David. Our supplications should all be scriptural, beginning from, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and going on to “Even so, come Lord Jesus.” The Hallelujah and the Amen are the word of God in us. Job goes on to say, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.” The thunder of the Voice has been followed by the flash of illumination. And the conclusion? “Wherefore.” Is it a right conclusion? “Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” Job got it right! Did we?

“And it was so,” – this is the end of the story – “that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job

hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.” If we are in Christ we are accepted in the Beloved. Our words should therefore please God. We want to hear His, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” False conclusions are unacceptable, and only the Sacrifice can cleanse us and make us right with God. Job suffered “for Christ’s sake.” Job modeled for us in the great picture of Christ found in this book. And if any still doubt it, let them note that the sacrifice, the burnt offering, in chapter 42, has to be brought to Job – “Go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering” – as though Job were to them in the stead of God. “And my servant Job shall pray for you.” What would he pray? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” “For,” says God, “Him will I accept.” They were accepted in Job, you see. “So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job.” From Abel onwards, all the prophets were accepted, all those who spoke of Christ, all who spoke the thing that was right. We see then that Job is counted in with the prophets. “Of the east” speaks of that which is toward God, or Godward. All the godly are toward God, Godward. Now Job was said to be in his day the greatest of all the men of the east. If then Job represented Christ to us in the book of Job, of Christ alone can it be said, “And He was the greatest of all the men of the east.” O Lord, how great Thou art!

“And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old and full of days.” It is a great ending to a great book, “So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.” Beloved, let us look ahead. Let us look beyond the trials and sufferings of this present time, and see and know that better things are ahead. There will be no more pain. Sighing and sorrow will flee away. Those who are accepted will also be blessed. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has not only won for us the victory but the final triumph over death and the grave. He has not left us – only gone before to prepare a place for us. He is coming again, in the splendor of His glory, to receive us unto Himself. So shall we ever be with the Lord. Then our shouts of acclamation will ring from one end of heaven to the other, as the whole message and meaning of scripture becomes plain to us, The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth. Then the song of our hearts will be the very word of the Lord, God is great – great things doeth He!

Job has again seven sons and three daughters, this time spelled out for us. Jemima, meaning “marvelous are all his works,” is first in sight. Then Kezia, meaning “this is the true

blessing of God,” is seen second. Then Kerenhappuch, meaning “I have found the answer,” or “this is my conclusion.” As we read the book of Job from beginning to end, we are impressed first by this thought, “Marvelous are all His works.” Then as we see Christ in the picture modeled for us by Job we see, “This is the true blessing of God.” But yet we are incomplete until we can say, “I have found the answer,” until we can reach a conclusion pleasing to God. Chapter 42 is a ‘doing’ chapter. Job repented; his companions offered the sacrifice; his brethren gathered around; God blessed them. Our conclusion should be therefore action of some sort. Having read, what are we going to do about it? Which group are we in? Do we need to repent? Do we need to be united in brotherly affection in a greater measure? Let us act, that the blessing of God may be poured out upon us all. If we have been illumined by the flash of God’s greatness and mercy to us, we will see that these are the fairest of all the daughters. “Marvelous are all His works.” How beautiful is the gospel of salvation, redemption, mercy, faith, hope, love, in the eyes of the enlightened. And as we look again our eyes behold the Cross of Christ and our hearts cry out, “This is the true blessing of God,” and we see nothing fairer in all the land. But let us look a third time to see the conclusion of the matter, when the trump of God shall thunder and the Son of Man come as the lightning, for of all others this is the fairest. This is the answer finally. This is the conclusion all must seek to arrive at, so that we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming again. Let us act now, that the day of the Lord find us prepared.

“Then came to him his brethren...and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him.” As we gather here below with our golden earrings of faith around the Lord’s table, let us simply remember Him. Let us remember all the suffering that He was made to endure for us. Let us remember every sorrow, and how our folly only added to His afflictions. And with hearts contrite, and in true obedience to the word of the Lord, let us comfort Him as brethren of His, gathered together in His presence. And then we will see the conclusion of the matter, how God has blessed Him above His fellows, and made His name great, and restored His soul, and exalted him above all principalities and powers, seating Him at the right hand of God till He makes His foes His footstool. What a beautiful sight! This is the answer of God. This is the conclusion of all His sufferings. This is the blessing, the double portion that was His due. How right it is that God should so endow Him! How good it is to know that the reward far exceeds the sufferings! And if it be true of Him, beloved, it will be no less true of us in turn, for if we endure here we shall gain exceedingly in the life to come. No other conclusion is possible. No other answer need be forthcoming. This is undoubtedly the fairest in all the land. The whole book of Job would be a mere waste of time if it were not for chapter 42, because we need to see and be reminded that the present sufferings are only for a moment, and cannot compare with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour has not only won for us salvation, reconciling us to God and redeeming us by His precious blood. He has bought for us an inheritance great and glorious in which we shall share with Him all the blessings into which God has blessed Him. How great He is! How much He has done for us! How He has suffered! Because He loved us so. O Lord, how great Thou art!