

Things Too Wonderful for Me

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"—Job 38:4

JOB'S life was a righteous life, suddenly visited with overwhelming and unexplained adversity, yet we read this simple testimony of him—

"In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly."

One thing above all we can observe in the life of Job, and that is that it brings to the front the truth of the words we so often hear—

"That through much tribulation shall we enter the Kingdom of God."

As it was in Job's case so let it be in ours—

and "That the trial of our faith worketh patience, and patience experience and experience hope, hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."

Peter says (1 Pet. 4:12)—

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

Yes, the wonderful truth ever revolving on its axis—trial, faith, and reward.

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JOB was the best and greatest of God's servants in his day (Job 1:8), yet he had lessons to learn, that he might be a greater servant still—his Faith made more strong, his Hope more dear, his Love more deep. Like the perfectly well-pleasing Master, he must—

"Learn obedience by the things he suffered."

Job was a patient man. His name today has become synonymous with that wonderful virtue which we call patience. And the great and glorious hope that hung in Job's heaven and which we can hang in ours, is recorded in his writings (Job 19:25)—

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

"I KNOW!"

There was no "may be" or "perhaps," but a ring of assurance come what trials or afflictions, joys or sorrows, that may and can fetter us to the ground—

"I KNOW that my Redeemer liveth and shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

Such was the motivating power in Job's life which kept him looking upward and onward in a life of trial and adversity.

It may seem rather strange perhaps that the words of chap. 19:25, should be found about half way through the record of Job's trials. Yes, a light to urge him on to reach his goal—the brow of the hill in his afflictions, and that lamp behind him to steer him gently downward to those green pastures, and besides the still waters of God's redeeming grace.

Job KNEW that his Redeemer liveth, and thus neither height nor depth, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come would cause him to swerve from that hope and from the path he had chosen to tread.

As we read chapter after chapter of Job speaking his mind, we cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that as far as he was concerned there was only one great issue in life, and that lay between God and himself. All other matters were quite unimportant. It was his own individual responsibility to his Creator which to the patriarch Job was paramount.

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BRETHREN and sisters, let us be forever thankful that this story of Job's trials and the perfecting of his faith is included in all the Scriptures that we are blessed with, for guidance and instruction and comfort and inspiration.

For here is a man blessed with all the good things of life, wanting for nothing in a material way. He is styled—

"The greatest of all men of the East."

As such he wielded a great influence and authority, as we read in Job. 29:7-10—

"When I went out to the gate, the young men saw me and hid themselves, the aged arose and stood up, the princes refrained from talking, the nobles held their peace."

"Unto me men gave ear, and waited my counsel" (v. 21).

"Blessing those ready to perish, eyes to the blind, father to the poor, and seeking counsel for what he knew not" (vs. 13-16).

Then comes the sorrowful story of his destruction. His property all swept away, and then the heavy blow of having his whole family destroyed at a single stroke.

Our minds reel at the contemplation of such a catalogue of calamities. Here he is, deprived at a single blow of every worldly possession, but nevertheless, without hesitation, falling down and worshipping God and saying—

"Blessed be the Name of the Lord!"

What a great lesson this is for us when calamity and disaster seem to come upon us. In the spirit of Job let us be constrained to say—

"Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him."

He must have been deeply affected by these great and overwhelming disasters, yet his sorrow had nothing of bitterness or revolt, but was tempered with faith almost unparalleled in history.

Yet worse was yet to follow. He was deprived of bodily health and strength with which he could have set to work to restore his lost possessions. Words almost fail us in adequately speaking of Job, yet the lessons are great in the riches they afford in giving us spiritual strength in the trials we have to bear. Although advised by his own wife to "Curse God and die," he rather confided in God, beautifully and humbly recognizing God's right to give or take away.

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WHEN Job's friends came to comfort him they did not know him. The Job that they had known was reduced to a state of a mass of corruption, life only evident in the fact he could still breathe and talk.

The shock to them was so great they wept, and Job's grief was so great they could not speak. When they were able to say something comforting to Job their conclusions were of Job that he was wicked. Eliphaz asks (Job 4:7)—

"Who ever perished, being innocent?"

Bildad said (2:11)—

"Can the rush grow up without mire?"

And Zophar adds his "miserable comfort" (11:6)—

"Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth."

How often does man conclude in his own thoughts that the wicked shall only receive evil, while the righteous must always be materially blessed in his ways! How wrong is this conclusion, as witnessed in the life of the greatest man who ever trod this vale of tears! He said (Matt. 8:20)—

"The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

The taunts were hurled at him:

"Physician, heal thyself."

Truly the righteous shall come into great affliction, as witness both Job and the Lord Jesus. Yet the Lord saved them out of it. Let us then, in the quietness of our souls, be encouraged by the lives of these great men. Job was blessed at last, after he had endured all in patience and faith.

His life affords us a great lesson. In the anguish of his heart and soul he said (14:13)—

"O that Thou wouldst hide me in the grave!"

Yet he asks the question,

"If a man die, shall he live again?"

And he answers with assurance:

"All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come."

Where was he to wait? In heaven? No, in Job 17:13 he said—

"If I wait, the grave is mine house."

Let us take comfort and cheer then from the life of Job. Though his friends attributed his calamity to wickedness, yet God told those same men to go to His servant Job that he may offer prayers on their behalf.

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WE may ask WHY this faithful man was tried. Job also asked this question more than once.

God, in His gracious answer, gently directed Job's attention to the infinite marvels and beauties of Creation which are so overwhelmingly great that God's dealing with His children should be above question. As God said to Job—

"Who provideth for the raven his food? Even his young ones cry unto God; they wander for lack of meat."

What a challenge to every one of us in our study and search to find God! Is not Creation sufficient to show the great arm of God as the seasons come and go? Creation should be our answer to God's greatness and His goodness. Yes—

"He sends the snow in winter
And the pleasant summer sun,

The ripe fruit in the garden—
He made them every one."

This is Paul's unanswerable argument in Rom. 1. To all not blinded by the pride and evil of the flesh, or perverted by "education," the evidence of God in Creation is inescapable, and so, Paul says—

"They are WITHOUT EXCUSE" (Rom. 1:20).

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AS we turn to the closing chapter, we find Job acknowledging God's greatness in a flood of thankful, worshipping humility—

"I know that Thou canst do EVERYTHING, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee."

Job had wrestled through the darkness of the night, and had overcome. He was humbler and wiser, and deeper in his love and comprehension of God's infinite wisdom and goodness.

Truly, brethren and sisters, as we look at the life of Job we can take comfort. We can, in the spirit of Job, also say—

"I know that Thou canst do everything!"

It is no secret what God can do. What He did for Job, He can and will do for us.

God gives and God takes away; blessed be God, our Father! God is able to bless us in this life and in the life that is to come. May it be ours to gain approval of God, as did Job, that when Christ who is our life shall appear, we may also appear with him in glory. —W.J.P.
