Job - Commentaries by Charles Stanley

Pamphlets, Job's Conversion; Or, God the Justifier

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The testimony of the inspired word respecting this man of ancient days, Job, is, that he was a genuine man of God, “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). His substance was very great, for God had blessed him with earthly blessings in earthly places. It is important to notice this, before Job is put in the furnace. The genuineness of his character is a settled question, on the testimony of God.

The testimony of the word is also quite as clear respecting every child of God in this dispensation, however tried and buffeted he may be. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). We are not blessed in earthly places, with a substance that may be destroyed; but blessed in the heavenlies in Christ. But note the certainty — hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5). Thus the blessing of the believer, in these two chapters, Ephesians 1 and 1 Peter 1, is in very bright contrast with even the “greatest man of the East (see Job 1:3). Job’s inheritance might fade away — not so the believer’s.

Before entering, then, on this scene of fierce conflict, let the believer be well grounded, on the testimony of God, in what is absolutely certain to him It is most clear by the Word of God that HE HATH redemption through the precious blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. His inheritance in the heavenlies could not be made more secure to him For the Lord Jesus, who died for his sin, has been raised from the dead, and has gone up on high, to take and hold the possession of the heavenly places for him. Is it not then as sure to the believer as if he were there? That is, could he hold it more securely than Christ in glory holds it for him? Ah! it is a settled question; reserved for him in heaven. But it may be said, Though a child of God, may he not fall, so as to lose it after all? No, that is settled too, for those “who are kept by the power of God” (1 Peter 1:5). Thus, trembling believer, does the testimony of God’s word make all clear and certain to thee. God’s testimony of Job was, that he was “perfect and upright.” He fears God and hates evil. And again as to the standing of the believer now, how clear the testimony: “For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). “And ye are complete in Him” (Col. 2:10). And is not love to God, love of holiness, and hatred of evil, the characteristic of every one born of God (1 John 3:6-10)? Thus did the testimony of God settle, at first, the blessing and character of Job, and thus now does the testimony of the word settle the blessing and character of every child of God.

The veil of the invisible world, so to speak, is now drawn aside. Satan comes amongst the sons of God. He comes from going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. This is that great adversary of whom Peter tells us, he walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The Lord, in order to let us see what an adversary we have, puts a question to Satan: “Hast thou considered My servant Job?” etc. (Job 1:8). And Satan had considered the case of Job. Ah! often when we little suspect, Satan may be watching us and considering, with all the experience of ages, what temptations may be most suited to our particular case. Your door may be shut and you may forget, but there may be watching you, with the deepest malignity, that real person, that real adversary, Satan. He would be no more real if we saw him God hath blessed Job, and that is quite enough to fill the heart of Satan with hatred. And now begins the permitted trial of Job. There was a needs be. And never are we permitted to be sifted by Satan, but there is a needs be. With the real child of God, Satan is sure to outwit himself. God will make all work for the believer’s good.

Who would have thought it possible that Satan could have such power, if God had not thus revealed it to us in this book. Job’s sons and daughters are eating, and drinking wine, like the world in this day, little thinking of the sudden destruction that awaits them. The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them — everything going on its usual way. Happy-looking world! there might be no tempting devil in thee. How quick and how well did Satan do his work. The Sabeans fell upon the servants and slew them with the sword. One servant alone escaped to tell Job. We hear of a dreaded invasion, and men talk about the emperor, and the press, and the people; but how few remember the great adversary Satan, the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2), “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4), the great mover in the last scenes of human wickedness. (Rev. 13:4). It was Satan who brought the Sabeans to invade Job. He is a murderer from the beginning. And while the servant was telling him, there came another and said, “The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:16). Strange as it may appear, Satan will again use this very same power. “And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men” (Rev. 13:13). “And while he was yet speaking, another servant came and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped to tell thee” (Job 1:17). Fearful as all this was, yet still more fearful tidings were at hand. “While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house; and there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee” (Job 1:18-19). Thus, as it were, the battle began with a running discharge of musketry. Oh, what a pang it is to a parent’s heart when tidings come of the death of one child; but sad as it was to Job, and fearful as was this first part of the conflict, Satan’s heavy artillery was not yet brought up. So far Job held his ground. “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21). Again, Satan, the accuser of the brethren, is seen amongst the sons of God, accusing Job. He has failed in his attack, but he has not given up considering Job, or seeking his overthrow.

God’s testimony is repeated. And, ah, it is well if we go over again the blessed testimony of the word, between each onslaught of the deadly foe. It is in the very epistle, Ephesians, which shows us our glorious, secure standing in the risen Christ, that we are exhorted to take the

whole armor of God; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, must not be forgotten. “Put on the whole armor of God: that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). It is not with Sabeans, Chaldeans, fire and wind, but with wicked spirits in heavenly places, that we wrestle. “And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; only save his life” (Job 2:6). Very blessed is it to know this: our life is hid with Christ in God. Satan may be permitted to burn our bodies at the stake, but he cannot touch the eternal life — this can never die. It is only to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. “So went Satan forth, from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown” (Job 2:7). Now, as Job’s blessings were earthly, in contrast to ours, which are heavenly; so his afflictions were bodily, in contrast with ours, which are spiritual. So, as Satan was permitted to act on the bodily flesh of Job, and thus plunge him in the deepest affliction and sorrow — poor man, what a picture! he scraped himself, and sat down in the ashes -in like manner, Satan may be permitted to act upon our old carnal nature, so that, spiritually, we find, from the crown to the sole of the foot there is no soundness in us, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. Ah, it is then that Satan brings up his heavy artillery. The first heavy blow that the adversary now aims at Job, is through the words of his astonished and irritated wife. She said, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). How very striking is Job’s reply. He, no doubt, saw the distress of his wife at his own affliction; and, taking the brightest side, he gave her credit for meaning better than her words implied — and so he said unto her, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh” (Job 2:10). He does not say, What a fool thou art. But, speakest as one. “What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job 2:10). Really, was not Job a beautiful character? Surely, one of the fairest specimens of all the sons of fallen humanity. The Lord had said of him, “There is none like him in all the earth (Job 1:8). It is remarkable, that when the three friends of Job come, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, we hear no more of Satan. And what better weapons can Satan use, than the words of mistaken friends? To be misjudged and misunderstood by those we love; surely this is bitterness. In this respect even, what did our blessed Jesus endure, when He came to His own, and His own received him not?

But to return to Job. We may form some idea of the bitterness of his anguish, by its effect on his three friends. “They sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word to him; for they saw that his grief was very great” (Job 2:13). Such was the grief of Job; and such do I take to be a picture of the deep anguish of heart of many a true child of God, who, like Job, knowing redemption, but not knowing the living, loving, and all-powerful priesthood of Christ, and finding, it may be, after years of happy enjoyment of Christ, so far as known, that the flesh is still so fearfully corrupt, beholds, it may be in one moment, every fond hope of a mended self blighted and destroyed. Job could not put a finger on a spot that was not a running sore. And the believer, sooner or later, must find that there is not a spot in his old self in which he can rest. Ah, it is one thing to talk, it is another thing to find, that all that I am of the first Adam is withered and dead before God. Very blessed, when this is learned, to learn also the bright resurrection-side of sorrowing Job.

Job Chapter 3. Job at last opens his mouth, and oh! what grief and wormwood, ending with these words, “For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me; I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet, yet trouble came” (Job 3:25-26). It may have been just so with my reader. The true believer dreads nothing so much as sin, and yet that which he most feared, yes, sin — to find sin, sin, sin, and to hate it, to fear it, to try hard to be entirely without it, and sometimes hope it is all gone, and still to find it turn up again, and to find oneself no better, it seems to take away all safety — no rest, no quiet, but, as it was with Job, trouble comes. I know that, until Job’s lesson is learned, it is so with every child of God. Yes, and just in proportion to your love of God, and hatred of sin, is the bitterness of your sorrow. Has not sin, since conversion, felt so loathsome? Has it not weighed down your soul until, like as Job wished he had never been born, so have not you wished almost, that you never had been converted? Ah, you might have to sit longer than seven days with your dearest friends before you could open your heart. You little expected to find that you were as bad as you find you are.

And now Satan renews the attack through friend Eliphaz. Poisoned arrows are shot through his lips, in Job 4:3-8. “Thou hast instructed many” (Job 4:3). It is terrible when Satan can thus fix a poor believer’s thoughts on himself. “What!” says he, “is this you? You, that profess so much — you that instruct others — you that are looked up to? Pretty dishonor you will bring upon the name of Christ, if all that you are comes out before the world. Your sin is fearful, from the very profession you make.” Yes and sometimes he would fain persuade the trembling soul, that its sin is so aggravated, by being so great a professor, that now it cannot be pardoned; and then, if that will not do, quick as thought, he gives the thrust he gave to Job, “Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same” (Job 4:8). “By the blast of God they perish” (Job 4:9).

This is the thin end of Satan’s great wedge. It is the first insinuation that Job is a hypocrite. We shall find this wedge driven, blow after blow, as we go on in the book.

Let the believer beware of Satan’s wedge. He may insinuate, “Yes, it is all quite true for all those that are the Lord’s people. Certainly they have redemption through the blood of Christ. I do not want you to doubt that. But may I not ask,” continues Satan, “would you be so bad if you were a child of God: are you not a hypocrite, think you?” Ah! this is a piece of ground over which, when the Christian goes, he gets a sore buffeting. But it is quite true that they that sow iniquity reap the same. And it will yet be true. By the blast of God they perish. But then this was misapplied to Job. It would have been misapplied to Peter, though he denied his Lord. It would have been right, applied to Judas. He sowed iniquity. He sought opportunity to betray his Master. Not so Peter. Though in the presence of temptation, he found himself utterly without strength. This is just the difference between a believer and a hypocrite. Sin is not the believer’s object: he does not seek opportunities to betray Christ, though, like Peter in the presence of temptation, he may find himself as weak as water.

Now, it was this misapplication of truth that Satan so used in the speeches of Job’s friends. Job 6 shows that this gave Job a terrible shaking. “He said, Oh, that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now would it be heavier than the sand of the sea” (Job 6:1-3). “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 6:4). This was a great mistake. They were the arrows of Satan. God was not against Job. If Job had but known it, God was for him.

How great is the distress of soul when Satan can thus insinuate that God is against the believer! How he will magnify every trial, every affliction! “There,” says he, “does not that show you are a hypocrite, and that God is against you? There now; He will deal with you as your sins deserve.” Yes: and how ready the unbelieving heart is to say, “It must be so. Surely no one felt such despairing feelings as I feel. The terrors of God set themselves in array against me. I thought I was such a good Christian, but now I find my sins deserve the lowest hell.” Ah! so deep was the anguish of Job under this temptation, that he desired God to destroy him Whether asleep or awake, he finds no comfort. He finds none that understand his case. And thus he sinks in his bitterness, deeper and deeper. And when the believer is really passing through these deep waters, how few there are that thoroughly understand his case! I only know of one such; I am going to tell about him presently.

Job Chapter 8. Now, friend Bildad takes his stroke at the wedge, to drive it a little farther home. “Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water? while it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God. And the hypocrite’s hope shall perish,” etc. (Job 8:11-22). This is all true of the stony-ground hearers; but not true of Job — and not true of the soul that sincerely trusts in Christ. The water that is in him is a well of water, springing up into everlasting life. “The hypocrite’s hope shall perish”; but the feeblest sheep of Christ shall never perish. But if he looks at his own fancied greenness — at his own boasted goodness, this will fade away; and thus Satan gets the advantage. There may be much freshness of soul at conversion — like the green flag: but beware of trusting in this; for very often the reaction is in proportion to the exuberance of joy, when the real character of the flesh is found out. Then showers of darts are sent — such as “Have I deceived myself?” “I do not feel as I did.” “Perhaps I have no root in Christ.” “The hypocrite’s hope shall perish.” Then, oh, what darkness of soul — what perplexity! The eye is off Christ: the heart is listening to Satan. The very first question, even that of justification, is found to be unsettled. It was just so with Job at the close of Bildad’s speech. Beware, then, of Bildad’s stroke on the wedge!

Job Chapter 9. This chapter brings out the state of Job’s mind. He says, “I know it is so of a truth. But how should man be just with God?” (Job 9:2). He gets before God as Judge; and his perplexity is very great. He cannot answer God one in a thousand. “I am afraid of all my sorrows. I know that Thou wilt not hold me innocent” (Job 9:28). Poor Job! He does not know now which way to turn. And is not this the case with every believer the moment he gets before God as Judge? How can he or you be just before God? Would not one sin of a thousand utterly condemn you? Yet this is the desperate struggle of Job, and every human heart to be just before God. “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me” (Job 9:20). How does God know that you are innocent? Very far from that. But at conversion you hoped you would then be innocent. Has it been so? Can you look up in the face of God as Judge, and say you have been innocent since your conversion? Impossible. Then, does not the thought of standing before God as Judge make you afraid? Certainly. Job felt it was utterly impossible to stand before God as Judge and be found just! and hence he felt his deep sense of a mediator or daysman. “For (God) is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman between us that might lay his hand upon us both. Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear terrify me” (Job 9:32-34).

Job Chapter 10. The thought of God as Judge fills Job with confusion. He gets to feel as if God were against him like a fierce lion. There is also breaking and humbling before God. But all is still darkness — the very shadow of death. Whatever was the cause of all this? And much more, may I ask, whatever is the cause that many a dear child of God should be in this same darkness and uncertainty? Let us peruse the book, and we shall yet find out the cause.

Job Chapter 11. Job’s friend, Zophar, now speaks. He brings out the majesty of God; but it is only to crush Job. He sees that Job is wrong in seeking to be clean in his own eyes; and in his zeal he says, “Oh, that God would speak, and open His lips against thee!” (Job 11:5). But it is not with him to show Job how he can possibly be a sinner, and yet be justified. He can tell that if Job were not a sinner, then it would be most blessed with him; and that is all that Zophar, or mere human light, can do. This is human religion. I must try not to be a sinner, and then I shall be happy, and God will not be against me. Vain endeavor still, you find it, do you not? You are a sinner. How then can you stand before a holy Judge? There is the difficulty.

Job again makes his reply. He, too, can discourse well on the majesty of God in all his ways. But this cannot settle the question, How can a man that is a sinner be just before God? A man may be able to discourse well about the stars and the stones — he may be learned in all the learning of this world — and yet not be able to tell clearly how the sinner is justified before God. The dreadful thought still harassed Job, that God was against him. Oh! what can be so overwhelming as this fearful thought? To whom can you go if God be against you? The sun may shine; but, ah! it is not for you. You may try to flee from sin, but Satan pursues you, pressing it harder upon you. Job said to God, “Let not Thy dread make me afraid” (Job 13:21). This opens the way for Eliphaz to renew the attack.

Job Chapter 15. Eliphaz says, “Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God” (Job 15:4). This is still a sore temptation of Satan. When the soul is passing through darkness, it often seems as if it could not pray — so different from what it was. “There now,” says Satan, “is not that a proof that you are nothing but a wicked person. Surely you must be a hypocrite.” “For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery” (Job 15:34). “The wicked man travaileth with pain all his days” (Job 15:20). “Dear me,” says the believer, “that is just as it is with me. I do not enjoy prayer as I once did. I am filled with pain.” “Miserable comforters,” says Job, “are ye all” (Job 16:1). And then he becomes still more desperate. The thought comes again, God is against me! Why, he hath delivered me up. “I was at ease, but He hath broken me asunder: He hath also taken me by the neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for His mark” (Job 16:12). “Oh!” says the believer, “how is it that God allows me to be thus — how is it?” And then Satan pours in a volley of infidel thoughts, not to be put on paper.

Again the longing cry for the priesthood of Christ goes up from the heart of Job (Job 16:21). “O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man for his friend!” “Lay down now; put me in a surety with thee. Who is he that will strike hands with me?” (Job 17:3).

Job Chapter 18. Bildad again takes his place in the contest. He means well, but his words are poisoned arrows. “The light of the wicked shall be put out” (Job 18:5). Yes, every word is perfectly true of the wicked; but how crushing to Job! Circumstances seemed to favor the charge. “How long,” says Job, “will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?” (Job 19:2). “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me” (Job 19:21)! Is it not astonishing that he should pass through so much, and yet have such clear light on some things? He says, (Job 19:25), “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. 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” (Job 19:25-27). This is truly a bright beam of light in the midst of so much darkness and confusion. And there may often be much knowledge of redemption and future glory, and much blessed, occasional comfort of the Holy Spirit, and still the question of justification not clearly settled. And note, this does not hinder Zophar again, in his turn, redoubling the attack.

Job Chapter 20. “The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment” (Job 20:5). This was a hard thrust after a moment’s relief. Job is somewhat stirred up, and gives a sharp rebut, by showing that sometimes the wicked prosper in this world.

Job Chapter 22. Eliphaz returns to the attack with fury. He says, “Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquities infinite?” (Job 22:5). And now he strikes Job in the most tender place. He brings false accusations against him. “Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for naught, and stripped the naked of their clothing. Thou has not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.

Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken" (Job 22:6-9). This makes the complaint of Job very bitter. He says, "My stroke is heavier than my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" (Job 22:2, 3). Again Bildad repeats the great difficulty:

Job Chapter 25. "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 25:5). This is no comfort, no help, for Job.

Job now gives his last speech — his greatest effort to justify himself. Yes, this was the needs be of all his trial and sorrow. His words are very touching. "Oh that I were as in the months past, as I was in the days of my youth," etc. (see Job 29:2-25). It is not, Oh that it were with me, but, Oh that I was. How like the mistaken longings of the soul, that is being driven from self to Christ. There is a peculiar delusive pleasure in being satisfied with oneself. Very often after conversion the thought is how much better I am now than I once was -how I do now walk in the ways of God. Some few are even so far deceived as to think the old nature is entirely changed, and that there is not a root of sin left in them. But, alas, when the time of temptation comes, all this is leveled to the dust. Now, just read Job 29-31 and you will say, if any man could have justified himself by good works, Job was the man. There is not a man in all your town that can say as much as Job said, and say it truly. As to his kindness to the poor, he was the very opposite of the lying charges brought against him Thus he lets memory recount every good act of his life, but all fails to give rest to his troubled spirit. I, I, I, I did this, I did not do that. But it is all of no use. "Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended" (Job 31:40). Not so Job, you will speak again, and though your words may be few, they will be full of meaning. Now, if Job could not be just before God, how can you? Let memory glance back along the track of life. What sins before God? — are your words ended? — are you dead beaten? — do you say, I cannot tell what to make of it? Then let ELIHU speak.

This Elihu is a wonderful person — the very one that Job had desired — the daysman — type of our Great High Priest. The false charges had brought out the self-righteousness of Job; and against him was the wrath of Elihu kindled. Why? "Because he justified himself rather than God" (Job 32:2). You will find the last desperate effort to justify himself occupies six chapters. And how many chapters of many a Christian's life are also spent in the vain endeavor to justify himself, instead of owning himself a lost sinner, and justifying God, in justifying him, though a sinner, consistently with His own holiness and glory. This is the grand mistake — the cause of all the believer's darkness and confusion. Let me put it plainly before you, my reader. Have you not been occupied with the thought how you could be just before God? Has not the discovery of the impossibility of this being done, seeing that you are still a sinner, filled you with confusion and doubt? Sometimes you may have forgotten yourself and been happy in the love of God, when thinking of the work of your Redeemer, as Job did for a moment. But then, the thought has come, with a pang, I am not what I ought to be, and how am Ito be? I am not fit to stand before God, the Holy Judge. I am not just! It is all in vain to look over six chapters of your past experience, even if it were as good as Job's. And you have tried so often, and been no better for trying that you have lost all heart and all hope of being really what you ought to be — of being just before God.

Now what is all this but your best endeavor to justify yourself? God says that you are a sinner. You are doing your utmost to prove it is not so; and the discovery that you are a real sinner fills you with confusion. It is most certain you cannot stand before God as a Holy Judge, and be even innocent, much more just. Of all the millions that have trod this earth, only ONE could stand before God the Judge; that One was the blessed Lord Jesus. The fire of God's holiness might search Him through, and there was no sin found in Him. This only One, this Holy One, did stand before God the Judge, as the substitute of His people. The divine judgment of the Holy God has been passed upon Him for our sins. And now God, in divine righteousness, is calling poor sinners, NOT TO STAND BEFORE HIM AS THE JUDGE, BUT AS THE JUSTIFIER. Oh, blessed, Holy, Holy, Holy God, this makes all the difference! I cannot stand before Thee and justify myself, but Thou canst, Thou hast justified me, through the precious blood of Jesus. Oh, what a home is Thy presence now for me.

We shall find this the burthen of Elihu's message. It is remarkable, that the moment Elihu spake, Satan is silenced in Job's three friends. "They were amazed; they answered no more; they left off speaking" (Job 32:15). Oh, that the tried and buffeted believer would also remember the words that are written for his comfort. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1). Now, if these three men were amazed, that Elihu should stand up the advocate for Job, how amazed must Satan be when, after long tempting the child of God, he succeeds, in some unwatchful moment, to entangle him in sin. Straight he goes to accuse him before God. Yes, how amazed he must be to find in the high court of heaven that unworthy Christian has for his advocate the Righteous One, who pleads His own blood. They opened not their mouths; and the very mention of the blood of Jesus stops the mouth of "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10). "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11). Believer, do think of this. Your utmost efforts to justify yourself can never stop the mouth of the accuser — it can only be stopped by the blood of the Lamb.

Elihu was for Job; but he was not for his self-righteousness. Against this was he wroth. When the blessed Jesus walked this earth, against nothing was He so wroth as against self-righteous Pharisaism. At this He was filled with indignation. You may have been deeply grieved that you could not be self-righteous, so as to justify yourself. The very attempt has grieved Him more. But though Elihu was so grieved at Job's great mistake, yet, oh! how his heart yearned over him. He says, "Behold my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles. I will speak, that I may be refreshed" (Job 32:19-20). Fellow-believer, high above yonder thrones and dominions, in that bright glory, there is a man whose tender human heart yearns for thee and me. Oh, brightness of the Father's Glory! didst Thou not take my nature for the very purpose of being a merciful, faithful, tender, loving High Priest? Thou art in the presence of God for us! Thine heart is refreshed in speaking for poor, unworthy me. Thy love is never, no never, weary of me. Oh wondrous, sweet, divine love. Lord, let it fill the heart of the writer and reader!

And now Elihu opens his mouth to address Job. He says, "My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart," etc. (Job 33:3). What a delightful change, when, wearied out with trying to find righteousness in myself, the Spirit of God sets before me the Lord my righteousness in heaven.

The object of the deep-felt need of Job was found in Elihu. "The Spirit of God hath made me... Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee" (Job 33:4-7). What a striking illustration this is of the real humanity of our blessed substitute, the Lord of Glory. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, yet born of a woman The Mediator or daysman between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. Is it not most blessed that God has thus been manifested to us in the flesh? His terror does not now make us afraid. Look at Him in the midst of poor, guilty sinners, — the woman of Samaria, the sinner of the city, the dying thief. Oh! may we not come with confidence to such an one?

Elihu rebukes Job for his desperate attempt at self- righteousness: and, then, for the dreadful thought that God was against him: and then says, “Behold this, thou art not just: I will answer thee, that God is greater than man; why dost thou strive against Him?” (Job 33:12-13).

How simple the question of the believer’s conflict is when this light is thrown upon it. Thou art not just — thou art guilty — is the fact, the sentence of God’s word. There is no difference, for all have sinned. As a sinner, thou art judged in the death of Jesus; and as a judged, condemned, dead sinner, by that death reckoned dead, and set aside forever. Thou, as a son of Adam, never canst be just, and thus every attempt to set up old self, old guilty self, in any way, is simply striving against God. God is not against thee, but God is against this attempt to justify thyself. And I will answer thee, God is too strong for thee. All must be in confusion while thou strivest against God. I have just been told an anecdote, that shows this very strikingly. A dear old Christian, living here, was sorely tried before his death. All the past sins of his life were set before him in such distinctness, and the sense of guilt and shame was so overwhelming, that he almost sunk in despair. At last, Job’s lesson was learned. He said, “I see now; if I had only been a little better man, it would have proved my damnation. If there had been anything in which I could have rested for my salvation, I should have done so, and perished in my delusion. But now it is only the blood of Christ.” Such, with every child of God, is the desperate striving of the human heart against God. Job’s lesson must be learned. Man’s purpose is to justify himself in some way. It may be by keeping the law, or it may be his mixing up the righteousness of Christ with his own, in meeting the claims of law, and so making out his case just before God. No matter how, every attempt to justify myself before God is striving against God. It is trying to set up my old Adam-nature, which God has put down, and buried forever. “When God opens the ears of men, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man” (see Job 33:16-17),” then must he pass through this sore pain and affliction. It may be through some fall that all self-trust is blighted. Perhaps no believer ever really learns Philippians 3 without some fall. Ah, it is no easy matter to count all the things of my religious self loss and dung — to have no confidence in the flesh — to be found only in Christ.

God’s purpose is shown, by Elihu, to be Job’s full deliverance. And this is his purpose in permitting all the buffeting and conflict through which the believer ever passes. Yes, when he comes to the last sinking point, then, “If there be a messenger with Him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show unto man His uprightness, then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver Him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom (or an atonement)” (Job 33:23-24). What a mercy it is that we have a true Messenger from heaven, a true Interpreter from God, to show His uprightness. The Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven, is the wonderful interpreter of God’s purpose in the cross of Christ. In the good news He has brought is the righteousness of God revealed. Yes, it is His blessed work to show the uprightness of God — the righteousness of God in justifying the sinner — that God is, as has been said by another, “consistent with Himself, with His holiness,” in being gracious to the poor, guilty sinner. How can God say, “Deliver Him from going down to the pit?” Is he just? Oh, no! Is he innocent? Oh, no! Does he not deserve to go down to the pit? Oh, yes! Then how can God be just in sparing him? “I HAVE FOUND A RANSOM”; or, as the margin reads, “atonement.” Man is guilty. He has no righteousness. But God has found a ransom. This alters everything, and interprets everything, — I am no longer a trembling sinner before God as my Judge, but before God as my Justifier. God has found a ransom, a propitiation, in the blood of Jesus, for the very purpose of setting forth His righteousness, in freely justifying me by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Four times is this shown to be the very righteousness of God, in Romans 3:21-26. Note, it is not that I, as a son of Adam, am just or righteous. That never can be.

Romans 5; 6, 7 show that I am dead, through the death of Christ, and buried. And my justified state is entirely in the risen Christ. Christ did not die for the just, but for the unjust, to bring them to God.

Now, my reader, whereabouts are you? Striving against God, trying to be just in yourself before Him, as your Judge? If so, is there any wonder that your soul should be sorely vexed with confusion and darkness? Or are you resting entirely on the value of that atoning blood, that ransom-price, which makes God just in being your Justifier? Ah! whenever your soul is cast down with a single doubt, depend upon it, you may say, “There, I am trying again to justify myself, instead of rejoicing in God my Justifier.” If God is your Judge, you cannot be saved. If God is your Justifier, you cannot be lost. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:33). It is not you who found the ransom; God found it. Satan may tell Him of all your sins, and especially of your deep ingratitude and failure since you were a child of God. God’s reply is, “I have found a ransom.” Surely, then, this must give perfect deliverance — God my Justifier — Jesus my Advocate. Oh! what freshness of soul this gives. “His flesh shall be fresher than a child’s; he shall return to the days of his youth” (Job 33:25). It is no longer now, “Oh! that I was as in months past” (Job 29:2). I is now done with. It is no longer I, but Christ in me; no more wretched striving to justify I — old me. Ah, no! but my soul filled with freshness in contemplating God’s ransom, and God’s perfection in justifying me by that ransom. How sweet is prayer now with God. “He shall pray unto God, and He will be favorable unto him; and He shall see his face with joy; for He shall render unto man His righteousness” (Job 33:26). Very wonderful! Man, who has no righteousness of his own, has now the righteousness of God rendered unto him. It is “upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22). What a blessing — Christ is made righteousness to believers — they are the righteousness of God in Him; and, above all, as it were, our justification in the risen Christ is the very righteousness of God. And nothing stays the full outflow of all this blessing and enjoyment, but the striving to be righteous in self. Only confess the real truth, for “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light” (Job 33:27-28). “How very simple this verse is,” some one of my readers may say. “I begin to see plainly that I never was a Christian at all. My religion has been nothing else but trusting in self.” Well, note those words, “If any say, I have sinned.” Is this the language of your heart now? Can you cast yourself at the feet of Christ a confessed sinner? You may take that place without any fear of being a hypocrite. In owning what you are, as a sinner, before God, there is no fear of deceiving yourself, much more of deceiving God. If this is your confessed state, God shall deliver your soul from going into the pit, and you shall be enlightened with the light of the living. Rest not satisfied until you are assured God has justified you freely “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). It is indeed a great thing for God to say in this passage; yet it must be true, it is the Word of God. Not one, then, shall ever be found in the pit who has been brought to God as a lost sinner. “He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.” How important, then, is the question, Have you been thus brought in real confession before God? It is not, If any have served me, or If any have not sinned. It is, If any have sinned. “If any say, I have sinned.” Now, my reader, God notes your thoughts at this moment. What say you to God? Can you say, I have sinned?

Elihu says, “If thou hast anything to say, answer me; speak, for I desire to justify thee” (Job 33:32). Now, surely it is a wondrous fact, that God’s very object, His desire, His purpose, in sending His beloved Son into this world, was to justify ungodly sinners. Let, then, the anxious, awakened sinner know this, that, in coming to Him, He is most ready, yea, desires to justify. Yea, the moment you believe on Him who raised up Jesus from the dead for our justification, that moment you are justified from all things. (See Acts 13:38; Rom. 4:24-5:1.)

Elihu now speaks to them that have an ear to hear. He shows in what Job had so grievously erred. First, in saying, “I am righteous” (Job 34:5); and then for saying it was no use serving God. Thus self-righteousness is shown to lead to infidelity and the deepest spiritual wickedness. God is then shown to be just in all His ways. Whether man perceives it or not, there is needs be for every act of God and every permission of God, both in His dealings with a nation or with a man. “For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves” (Job 34:21-22). Whatever, then, may be God’s providence with the world, or discipline with His own children, be it chastisement or even removal by death (1 Cor. 11:30, 31), all His ways are in righteousness and truth.

Job Chapter 35. Elihu applies all this to Job himself; and then proceeds to justify God. “To speak on God’s behalf, to ascribe righteousness to Him” (see Job 36:2, 3). Yes, it is very striking how the work of Elihu is to justify God. This reminds us of the words of Jesus: “O, righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee” (John 17:25)! The great business of Jesus, the Son, was, by His death, to glorify the Father in justifying the ungodly. It is all- important for the soul really to understand this: that God is perfectly righteous in justifying the ungodly by the blood of Jesus. And that, being thus justified, they are looked at as righteous in the risen Christ. He never takes His eyes off them in Christ. “He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous; but with kings are they on the throne; yea, He doth establish them forever, and they are exalted” (Job 36:7). Certainly, it must be so. If when God once sees the poor, guilty sinner righteous in Christ, and He never takes His eyes off him thus in Christ, then he must be established forever; for Christ is established forever. If Christ is exalted forever, then the believer in Him is exalted forever. I may get my eye off Christ, my living righteousness before God, and get looking at what I am. God will never do this. My fellow-believer, does not this make your heart leap for joy — at this moment GOD SEES YOU RIGHTEOUS IN CHRIST — ESTABLISHED Forever. You say, “It is very strange, then, that I should pass through so much sorrow and affliction — so bound in fetters and held in cords.” Ah! Job’s lesson is not yet learned.

The next few verses bring out God’s purpose in discipline. “And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then He showeth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity, If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures: but if they obey not, they shall pass away, and they shall die without knowledge” (see Job 36:8-12). It is most important not to confound the believer’s standing and salvation in Christ, with his walk and discipline at the hands of his Father. As to his standing in Christ, as we have seen, it is established forever. To make that depend, in the least, on his works would be to deny the grace of God. But how much does depend on his walk with God. Not earthly prosperity — not worldly pleasures. The nearer we walk with God, the less we shall have of these. Witness the Apostle Paul, and all who will live godly in this present evil world.

But who can tell how much our spiritual prosperity -how much the enjoyment of heavenly pleasures — depends on a close walk with God. Certainly the question is put very strongly here; but it is God’s word. His blessed purpose in all our afflictions — in all His discipline and chastening, is, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Oh! think what he has made us in Christ, and then say, “Though I have been afflicted, was there not a cause?” Ah! there was a tampering with some iniquity. And if God had not come in by chastening, might we not have gone on until He must have removed us by death. “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” (Heb. 12:5-9). Oh! who can tell, my fellow-believer, the blessed results of an entire surrender to God? What a shame for the believer to serve the world, the flesh, or the devil. Oh! the power of that word, “And that He died for all, that they that live should not HENCEFORTH live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14-15). May that word henceforth go to your very heart! What is to be the henceforth of your life and mine? Oh! think of the love and claims of Christ. Would you have days of spiritual prosperity, and years of heavenly pleasures? Then let go everything inconsistent with a world-rejected, but heaven-glorified, Christ. Seek whole-hearted, obedient service to Him, in simple dependence on the Holy Spirit, having no confidence in the flesh: I am persuaded it is of vast importance that you should at once seek real nearness of walk with God. You have sinned, and the fetters and cords made you cry out. And remember, the believer cannot touch sin without great bitterness of soul. Well, God uses that very bitterness in restoring the soul of the failing saint. “But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when He bindeth them: they die in youth, and their life is among the unclean” (Job 36:13).

You say, “If I were a child of God, surely I should not have all this trouble and bitterness.” This word shows you, if you were not a real child of God, but an hypocrite in heart, you would not have all this bitterness, but you would go on in sin until you perished forever.

The remaining part of Elihu’s speech is to bring out the majesty of God, and to show man’s entire dependence on Him. Then Jehovah, the Lord Himself, speaks to Job. Thus we have the order of the book: — Job — God’s testimony of him — Satan accusing and opposing, through Job’s friends — then Elihu the daysman — then God Himself. Thus we have the man of God — Satan against him — Christ the High Priest for him — then God.

Now note the effect of Job’s being thus before the Lord Himself. Astonished that he finds himself contending with the Almighty, he then “answered the Lord and said, Behold I am vile: what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth” (Job 40:3-4). He had said His words were ended, and now he says he will proceed no further. Oh yes, Job will proceed a little further yet. There is in this confession the owning of what he is -vile. But in the second confession he will go much further than this.

What a solemn word to Job was this, “Wilt Thou also disannul my judgments? Wilt thou condemn Me, that Thou mayest be righteous? (Job 40:8). I will illustrate this. Suppose an iron-founder, employing a number of hands, has in his yard two heaps of metal; the one is utterly bad, good for nothing, and every attempt to use it is a waste of time, for no perfect article can be made of it; the other heap is exactly suited for the casting required. Now the master has a perfect knowledge of both these two heaps, and he tells the men the worthlessness of the one and the suitability of the other. They will not believe him, but go on trying to get a sound casting from the bad heap. Would not this be contending against the master? Or take another: A large farmer tells his men, who are about to sow his fields, that such a heap of seed is thoroughly bad, that there is not a germ of life in it, but that the seed in the other garner is sure to bring forth a good crop. Well, they will not believe him. They sow the bad seed, and when the summer comes there is nothing but weeds. Well, say they, we must till the land better; we must try again. Try again! would not this be striving against the farmer? After this manner God has told us, most plainly, that man is a lost, guilty, heap of sin, and that on the principle of keeping the law he never can be just; and on the other hand, that the blood of Jesus does justify every ungodly sinner that believeth on Him. (See Rom. 3:19, 25; Gal. 2:21; 3:10.)

Now, suppose a man does not believe God about this, but tries to justify himself by keeping the law, or preaches justification to others by trying to keep the law; does not God say to that man, “Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous?” (Job 40:8). Oh! it is a terrible

thing to fight against God. If this should meet the eye of a law preacher for salvation, I tell thee, Thou art a fighter against God — a persecutor of Christ. I saw a letter yesterday, from one vested in human authority, threatening to excommunicate, from what he called the church, a person, because she had been converted from the law-keeping religion of the old man, to the perfect and everlasting salvation in Christ. Just think of a threatening letter from a professed pastor, because a poor sinner had found settled peace in Christ. May God, who revealed Jesus to the mad persecuting Saul, reveal Christ to this poor, deceived striver against God.

But it is not only the ministers of Satan who are trying to keep souls from Christ, and telling men that there is yet something in the old, bad heap of humanity — that it may yet be molded and cast perfect — but God's testimony as to man's utter ruin in Adam, and the only redemption in Christ Jesus for lost sinners is so little understood even by the real children of God, that they spend most of their lives in trying to make the bad seed grow; that is, to find righteousness in themselves — that they are constantly finding, instead of fruit, nothing but weeds. Surely it must be so, so long as we try to be righteous in that which God has pronounced guilty. God grant that we may try no longer to be righteous in self; but, rejoicing in the righteousness of God, may we now walk in the power of the new life. God now shows to Job, under the figure of leviathan, that the power of Satan is too great for him. What a terrible one this king over all the children of pride is. This world has rejected the King of Righteousness and preferred the horrible slavery of Satan. But what could be God's object in thus describing the power of the adversary? Surely it was to lead Job into entire dependence on Himself. "I know," says Job, "that Thou canst do everything" (Job 42:2). Now what a relief this is. The believer looked at in himself has no power to overcome Satan. Man failed before him when innocent; much less then, now he is fallen, is he able to stand. It was independence of God that opened the door for Satan at first; and it is simple dependence on God alone can shut it. May God give us a deep sense of dependence on Himself. It is very gracious of God telling us what the power of the enemy is, that we may know that our only resource is in a firm trust in Himself. "I can do all things," says Paul "through Christ." (Phil. 4:13) "My grace," says Jesus, "is sufficient for Thee" (2 Cor. 12:9).

And now Job's lesson is learned. He goes a little further—he says, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6). What was Job's repentance? Was it a change of mind from paths of drunkenness and uncleanness? Was he deeply sorry for a life of open sin and immorality? Oh, no! this was not Job's case at all. He was a true man of God; and had spent one of the most moral and upright lives on record. Like Paul, as touching his life among men, he had a blameless life, such as not one in ten thousand can speak of. Then of what did he repent? He repented of this — his striving to establish his own righteousness. God was now revealed to him, and he abhorred himself — himself! Does my reader abhor himself? — all that exalts himself, all the religion that tries to make himself just before God as judge? I say, Do you abhor all that would setup man, as a son of Adam? And especially, do you hate this, because it would rob Christ of His excellency? Have you learned that all this is striving against God, and, therefore, most hateful? The apostle had learned this — yes, he had learned Job's lesson, and felt deeply Job's repentance. He could look back at his whole religious life, at his zeal, and his blameless life as a Jew -a Pharisee, and whatever exalted Paul, he could trample under foot. He says, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection," etc. (Phil. 3:1-11). What a complete conversion this is from the religion of self, to the righteousness of God. Has my reader thus done with self? Do you see such excellency in Christ, that you can say with Job, "Now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself?" I say, have you really been turned from the religious strivings of the old man against God?

What a change was this for Job, when the lesson was learned, that there was nothing in himself but vileness. "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" (Job 42:10). If he had lost seven thousand sheep, now he has fourteen thousand; and so of the camels, and oxen, and asses. And surely the believer has got twice as much by Christ, in resurrection, as he lost by Adam in death. Human: innocence is lost through sin. Divine righteousness is won in Christ through grace. An earthly garden of delight is lost. Heaven's eternal joy is found. In a word, I is lost; Christ is found. I am dead; Christ lives. I am buried; Christ is risen. I could never be just before God; Christ is my righteousness, and God my justifier. What a calm, after such a storm. What divine comfort, after such bitter sorrow. Ah, what settled peace this gives to the soul — to give up all strivings and pretensions to be just in myself, and to know I have perfect justification and righteousness in Christ risen from the dead. Shall I not justify God in the glorious redemption He hath wrought? The more I am occupied with God's wondrous plan of justifying me, a poor sinner, the more will my soul be filled with joy in God. Beware, then, of every effort to set up man in the flesh — Death is written upon it all. Henceforth may we know the joy and power of our resurrection-standing, so entirely in Christ. For while in Adam man is utterly lost in sin, and has no power for righteousness; and while the law only brought out transgressions, and pronounced a curse on man; yet now the believer is not only in the risen Christ, entirely without sin and condemnation, but, being risen with Christ, and having the Spirit of God, he has now power, even the power of resurrection, and of the Spirit of God, against all sin.

Thus, if Job lost his sons and his daughters in death, he now receives them, as it were, in resurrection. Their very names are full of meaning. He called the name of the first, Jemima; which means; handsome as the day. The name of the second was Kezia; which is, Cassia — one of the sweet perfumes of the sanctuary. And the name of the third, Karen-happuch, means, child of beauty. "And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job" (Job 42:15). Sin has indeed marred all that was so beautiful, so fair, in that old creation, of which Adam was the head. But, oh! how shall I speak of the risen Christ, Head of the new creation? Fairest of ten thousand thou! Thy beauty, Lord, and glory! ah, how spotless, fair! How holy, precious, divinely sweet! The perfume of thy name is as ointment poured forth! And have I so long vainly sought to find perfection in the Adam-flesh? Oh, let death pass upon it all; yea, have it all — all that I am, with sin so foul! I gaze upon thee, Lord of resurrection, and abhor myself! And is all that thou art, mine? Thy beauty and Thy glory — the perfume of thy holy person, all mine? Is all this the portion of every sinner saved by thee? Ah, this is conversion! To let go all I am in death, and now to stand forever in the everlasting bloom, the freshness, the sweetness, the fair beauty of thee, my risen Lord!

May God bless the henceforth of your life, my reader, as He blessed the latter end of Job! Abhorring all that is of self, with your eye fixed on Jesus, may your soul repose in God your justifier; and thus your peace shall flow like a river. Gazing in the face of the adorable Jesus, may your path be brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

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