

“Mine Eye Seeth Thee”

“Job answered the LORD, and said, . . .

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.”

—Job 42:1,5

JAMES WROTE, “TAKE, MY brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience

of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” (James 5:10,11) We understand from these words of the apostle that God considered Job to be one of his holy prophets, and in his experiences there is encouragement for all the Lord’s people as, like Job, they find themselves passing through fiery trials.

We do not know very much about the historical background of Job. From Genesis 46:13, it appears that he was possibly a grandson of Jacob, and among the seventy souls who went to Egypt to be near Joseph and to be assured of a plentiful supply of food. If the Job of Genesis 46:13 is indeed the same one whom James identifies as a prophet, it

means that his ministry was performed prior to the giving of the Law, and that he was a descendant of Abraham. On the other hand, there are those who hold that Job was in reality a Gentile, although most all agree that he lived long before the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt.

However, the important things concerning Job are not his exact identity or the time he lived, but the manner in which the Lord dealt with him, and how he reacted to the providences of God in his experiences. The first verse of the book which bears his name, reads, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil.”—Job 1:1, *Revised Standard Version*

Job had a large family—seven sons and three daughters. He was wealthy, having “seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.”—vss. 2-5

This bit of information concerning Job’s children, and his great concern that they would continue to enjoy the blessings of God, are a clear indication of

his own reverence for the Lord and desire to please him. He was indeed a man of God. Eventually, the time came when Satan set his heart upon destroying Job's faith and integrity. There was a meeting of the angelic "sons of God," and "Satan came also among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."—vss. 6,7

Then the Lord asked Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" Satan replied, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."—vss. 8-11

The faith and loyalty of many of God's professed people throughout the centuries have been based upon the material good things with which the Lord blessed them. Many lack faith, and thus depend upon the things which can be seen and felt as evidences that God is blessing them with his love and care. Satan, with his corrupt heart, could not conceive of anyone serving God unless he was being well-rewarded for it by material advantages of one sort or another, and so he made this bold statement in an attempt to undermine the faith of Job.

However, God could read Job's heart, and he knew that he would maintain his integrity regardless of

any material blessings which he possessed, so he said to Satan, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD." (vs. 12) With the Lord's restraining hand now removed, Satan worked quickly against Job, bringing evil upon him to the extremity of what God would permit.

The account of this reads: "There was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: And there came a messenger to Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also 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. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 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, behold, 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."—vss. 13-19

JOB REMAINED FAITHFUL

Seldom, if ever, has such a series of calamities come into the life of one individual. These events came without warning, yet Job was not turned away from the Lord because of the reports given to him. He was shocked and saddened, but instead of blaming God and bemoaning his lot, he said, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”—vs. 21

Satan was not satisfied, however, and he told God that if he would permit him to inflict personal harm upon Job, “he will curse thee to thy face.” God granted this permission, but with the stipulation that Job’s life would be spared. Again Satan acted quickly, and he “smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.”—Job 2:4-8

Then, almost unbelievably, a further severe trial came to Job. His wife lost her confidence in him, and said, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.” Job replied to his wife, “Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” The account says that “In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”—vss. 9,10

Three of Job’s friends, hearing about his trying experiences, arranged to visit and comfort him. The account states, “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. And when they lifted up their eyes from afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.”—Job 2:11-13

JOB’S COMFORTERS IN ERROR

The fact that these “comforters” said nothing at all to Job during the first seven days of their visit must have, of itself, been a trying experience for Job under the circumstances. In addition, however, when they finally began speaking with him, they revealed a general viewpoint which was not true. God was so displeased with what they had said, he finally told them, saying 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.”—Job 42:7

The concept these comforters had, and which they communicated to Job, was wrong. They insisted his sufferings were due to sin he had committed, and which he had not confessed to God nor to his fellows. In other words, they as much as accused Job of being a hypocrite, which added to him even greater sorrow. In this respect, Job’s experiences were somewhat like those endured by Jesus. While born as the Son of God, for the purpose of eventually being a king, these great realities concerning him were contradicted, and he was

finally put to death as a result of this “contradiction of sinners.”—Heb. 12:3

Not everything that Job’s comforters spoke concerning him was untrue. Eliphaz said to him, “Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands. Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees. But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.”—Job 4:3-5

This statement by Eliphaz indicates that Job was rather an important man in the land of Uz, a religious teacher and comforter to others. However, human weakness is much the same wherever we find it, and is present to one degree or another in all of us. It is true that while we do what we can to comfort others in their trials, when troubles come upon ourselves we may lose sight of the viewpoint we expressed to them. As a result, we wonder perhaps as to why the Lord is permitting us to experience so much suffering.

THE WICKED FLOURISH

In pressing the accusation that Job was suffering because of some gross but secret sin, Eliphaz said, “Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.”—vss. 7-9

Job was not disturbed by this accusation, because he knew that it was not true. He understood that often the most wicked of the earth flourish. Malachi stated the matter correctly, saying, “Now we call

the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.” (Mal. 3:15) This was true in Job’s day. It is still a fact today, and will continue to be true until Satan is bound and the “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” are functioning. (II Pet. 3:13) Job’s way of stating this condition of the present evil world was, “The tabernacles of the robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure.”—Job 12:6

Pressing the charge of hypocrisy still further against Job, Eliphaz said, “Acquaint now thyself with him [God], and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.” (Job 22:21) This is a well-known text, but its setting in the Book of Job is usually overlooked. Here Job’s comforter is saying to Job that the reason he is not enjoying peace is because he is alienated from God through his sin, and he urges Job to go to the Lord and correct the situation.

It is not true that all who are acquainted with God are assured of continuously enjoying peace. Many, in their severe times of trial, are often troubled of soul. They do not lose faith in God, necessarily, even as Job did not lose faith. However, they are unsure at times as to why the Lord permits such bitter experiences to come to them, and in their perplexity they are unsettled and disturbed, even if for only a short time.

Following up this argument, Eliphaz continues: “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, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver. 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, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways. When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up; and he shall save the humble person. He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.”—vss. 22-30

JOB’S REPLY

Job knew he could not “return to the Almighty,” for he had never left him, nor turned away from his fidelity to his God. He realized that, although the words of his comforter may have sounded on the surface to be reasonable, he did not have the right viewpoint. He knew he had not lost his wealth because he had departed from God. Job’s difficulty, however, was in understanding why God had permitted such severe calamities to come upon him. He felt that, although he had not departed from God, he had lost a measure of communion with him, and cried out, “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!”—Job 23:3

Job explained how desperately he was trying to find the Lord. He said, “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.” (vss. 8,9) Here Job is using figurative language. How well he pictures the experiences of many of the Lord’s people. In our deep trials and sorrows we often seek to know the meaning of God’s providences in our lives. In doing so we properly reflect on our own attitudes, and carefully examine our motives to discern if we may have erred.

In his perplexity, however, Job did not lose his faith, for in the next verse we find him saying, “He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” (vs. 10) Although Job sought a greater understanding of God’s providences, he knew the Lord was watching over him. He also realized that his bitter experiences were not evidences of the Lord’s displeasure, but merely that he was being tried. Job was confident also that in due time the trial would be over, and that by God’s grace he would triumph in it, and would “come forth as gold”—that is, he would stand the test.

GOD SPEAKS TO JOB

There was much discussion between Job and his comforters, and finally a fourth person joined them—namely, Elihu. He did not condemn Job as directly as did the others, nevertheless, he was of no special help to him. Then God spoke to Job directly: “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon

it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof?"—Job 38:2-6

God's questions to Job continue almost uninterruptedly throughout chapters thirty-eight through forty-one. Then Job answered the Lord and said, "I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee." (Job 42:2) This was the lesson which God was teaching Job by means of the many questions which he propounded to him. Job knew he had not committed gross sin which would justify the suffering that had come upon him. However, he had failed to sufficiently understand the greatness, power, and wisdom of the Creator in his attempt to discover the meaning of his experiences. Now Job realized that a God so wise and so great could, and did, have reasons for allowing certain experiences, and that these reasons would at times be far beyond his ability to understand. He understood that he should accept this fact, and upon the basis of faith, continue to serve the Lord and to rejoice in him.

How wonderfully Job learned this lesson! He said, as stated in our opening text, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." (vs. 5) Earlier in his experience, after lamenting the fact that his friends, his wife, and the servants in his household despised him, Job could say with confidence, "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) He

had also prayed to God, "O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, . . . that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!"—Job 14:13

In these statements of Job, he expressed his hope in the resurrection, and the belief that when he is restored to life in the flesh, he will then "see God." This, however, will not be literal sight, but an understanding of God such as he expressed as having come to him even before he died, when he said, "now mine eye seeth thee." What a wonderful experience that must have been for Job, and how he must have rejoiced that he had again found the Lord, could see him in his experiences, and more fully understand the meaning of his providences.

It will be in this sense that all mankind, during the thousand-year reign of Christ, will come to "see" the Lord. In Isaiah 25:6-9, where the Messianic kingdom is symbolized as a mountain, we are informed that in this mountain God will "destroy . . . the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations."

Job said that the Redeemer would "stand at the latter day upon the earth," and this is true. Christ Jesus is the great king and mediator who will rule and bless the people. In one of the symbols applying to him he is referred to as the "arm of the LORD," and concerning him we read, "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."—Isa. 52:10; 53:1

Then, all mankind, having passed through the long nighttime experience of suffering and of death, mostly without benefit of any clear knowledge of God, will be able to see him in the rich experiences

of blessing which will come to all flesh at that time. Just as Job finally saw and appreciated God more clearly than ever before, this will also be the lot of all mankind—all those who accept the provisions of God's grace through the Redeemer, and who obey the righteous laws of the kingdom. ■