

# CHAPTER 2

We left Job honourably acquitted upon a fair trial between God and Satan concerning him. Satan had leave to touch, to touch and take, all he had, and was confident that he would then curse God to his face; but, on the contrary, he blessed him, and so he was proved an honest man and Satan a false accuser. Now, one would have thought, this would be conclusive, and that Job would never have his reputation called in question again; but Job is known to be armour of proof, and therefore is here set up for a mark, and brought upon his trial, a second time.

- I.** Satan moves for another trial, which should touch his bone and his flesh (v. 1-5).
- II.** God, for holy ends, permits it (v. 6).
- III.** Satan smites him with a very painful and loathsome disease (v. 7, 8).
- IV.** His wife tempts him to curse God, but he resists the temptation (v. 9, 10).
- V.** His friends come to condole with him and to comfort him (v. 11-13). And in this that good man is set forth for an example of suffering affliction and of patience.

## ~~801~~ JOB 2:1-6

### SATAN AGAIN PERMITTED TO AFFLICT JOB

Satan, that sworn enemy to God and all good men, is here pushing forward his malicious prosecution of Job, whom he hated because God loved him, and did all he could to separate between him and his God, to sow discord and make mischief between them, urging God to afflict him and then urging him to blaspheme God. One would have thought that he had enough of his former attempt upon Job, in which he was so shamefully baffled and disappointed; but malice is restless: the devil and his instruments are so. Those that calumniate good people, and accuse them falsely, will have their saying, though the evidence to the contrary be ever so plain and full and they have been cast in the issue which they

themselves have put it upon. Satan will have Job's cause called over again. The malicious, unreasonable, importunity of that great persecutor of the saints is represented (~~620~~ Revelation 12:10) by his accusing them before our God day and night, still repeating and urging that against them which has been many a time answered: so did Satan here accuse Job day after day. Here is,

**I.** The court set, and the prosecutor, or accuser, making his appearance (v. 1, 2), as before, ~~800~~ Job 1:6, 7. The angels attended God's throne and Satan among them. One would have expected him to come and confess his malice against Job and his mistake concerning him, to cry, *Pecavi — I have done wrong*, for belying one whom God spoke well of, and to beg pardon; but, instead of that, he comes with a further design against Job. He is asked the same question as before, *Whence comest thou?* and answers as before, *From going to and fro in the earth*; as if he had been doing no harm, though he had been abusing that good man.

**II.** The judge himself of counsel for the accused, and pleading for him (v. 3): "*Hast thou considered my servant Job better than thou didst, and art thou now at length convinced that he is a faithful servant of mine, a perfect and an upright man; for thou seest he still holds fast his integrity?*" This is now added to his character, as a further achievement; instead of letting go his religion, and cursing God, he holds it faster than ever, as that which he has now more than ordinary occasion for. He is the same in adversity that he was in prosperity, and rather better, and more hearty and lively in blessing God than ever he was, and takes root the faster for being thus shaken. See,

**1.** How Satan is condemned for his allegations against Job: "*Thou movedst me against him, as an accuser, to destroy him without cause.*" Or, "*Thou in vain movedst me to destroy him, for I will never do that.*" Good men, when they are *cast down*, are *not destroyed*, ~~400~~ 2 Corinthians 4:9. How well is it for us that neither men nor devils are to be our judges, for perhaps they would destroy us, right or wrong; but our judgment proceeds from the Lord, whose judgment never errs nor is biased.

**2.** How Job is commended for his constancy notwithstanding the attacks made upon him: "*Still he holds fast his integrity, as his weapon, and thou canst not disarm him — as his treasure, and thou canst not rob him of that; nay, thy endeavours to do it make him hold it the faster; instead of losing*

ground by the temptation, he gets ground.” God speaks of it with wonder, and pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of his own grace; *Still he holds fast his integrity*. Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his *praise and honour*, <sup><401></sup>1 Peter 1:7. Constancy crowns integrity.

**III.** The accusation further prosecuted, v. 4. What excuse can Satan make for the failure of his former attempt? What can he say to palliate it, when he had been so very confident that he should gain his point? Why, truly, he has this to say, *Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for his life*. Something of truth there is in this, that self-love and self-preservation are very powerful commanding principles in the hearts of men. Men love themselves better than their nearest relations, even their children, that are parts of themselves, will not only venture, but give, their estates to save their lives. All account life sweet and precious, and, while they are themselves in health and at ease, they can keep trouble from their hearts, whatever they lose. We ought to make a good use of this consideration, and, while God continues to us our life and health and the use of our limbs and senses, we should the more patiently bear the loss of other comforts. See <sup><402></sup>Matthew 6:25. But Satan grounds upon this an accusation of Job, slyly representing him,

**1.** As unnatural to those about him, and one that laid not to heart the death of his children and servants, nor cared how many of them had their skins (as I may say) stripped over their ears, so long as he slept in a whole skin himself; as if he that was so tender of his children's souls could be careless of their bodies, and, like the ostrich, hardened against his young ones, as though they were not his.

**2.** As wholly selfish, and minding nothing but his own ease and safety; as if his religion made him sour, and morose, and ill-natured. Thus are the ways and people of God often misrepresented by the devil and his agents.

**IV.** A challenge given to make a further trial of Job's integrity (v. 5): “*Put forth thy hand now* (for I find my hand too short to reach him, and too weak to hurt him) *and touch his bone and his flesh* (that is with him the only tender part, *make him sick with smiting him*, <sup><303></sup>Micah 6:13), and then, I dare say, *he will curse thee to thy face*, and let go his integrity.” Satan knew it, and we find it by experience, that nothing is more likely to ruffle the thoughts and put the mind into disorder than acute pain and distemper of body. There is no disputing against sense. St. Paul himself

had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have borne it without special grace from Christ, <sup><471E></sup>2 Corinthians 12:7, 9.

**V.** A permission granted to Satan to make this trial, v. 6. Satan would have had God put forth his hand and do it; but he *afflicts not willingly*, nor takes any pleasure in *grieving the children of men*, much less his own children (<sup><203B></sup>Lamentations 3:33), and therefore, if it must be done, let Satan do it, who delights in such work: “*He is in thy hand*, do thy worst with him; but with a proviso and limitation, *only save his life*, or his soul. Afflict him, but not to death.” Satan hunted for the precious life, would have taken that if he might, in hopes that dying agonies would force Job to curse his God; but God had mercy in store for Job after this trial, and therefore he must survive it, and, however he is afflicted, must have his life given him for a prey. If God did not chain up the roaring lion, how soon would he devour us! As far as he permits the wrath of Satan and wicked men to proceed against his people he will make it turn to his praise and theirs, and *the remainder thereof he will restrain*, <sup><973D></sup>Psalms 76:10. “Save his soul,” that is, “his reason” (so some), “preserve to him the use of that, for otherwise it will be no fair trial; if, in his delirium, he should curse God, that will be no disproof of his integrity. It would be the language not of his heart, but of his distemper.” Job, in being thus maligned by Satan, was a type of Christ, the first prophecy of whom was that Satan should *bruise his heel* (<sup><085></sup>Genesis 3:15), and so he was foiled, as in Job's case. Satan tempted him to let go his integrity, his adoption (<sup><406></sup>Matthew 4:6): *If thou be the Son of God*. He entered into the heart of Judas who betrayed Christ, and (some think) with his terrors put Christ into his agony in the garden. He had permission to touch his bone and his flesh without exception of his life, because by dying he was to do that which Job could not do — *destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*.

## <sup><82E></sup>JOB 2:7-10

### THE AFFLICTION OF JOB

The devil, having got leave to tear and worry poor Job, presently fell to work with him, as a tormentor first and then as a tempter. His own children he tempts first, and draws them to sin, and afterwards torments,

when thereby he has brought them to ruin; but this child of God he tormented with an affliction, and then tempted to make a bad use of his affliction. That which he aimed at was to make Job curse God; now here we are told what course he took both to move him to it and move it to him, both to give him the provocation, else he would not have thought of it: thus artfully in the temptation managed with all the subtlety of the old serpent, who is here playing the same game against Job that he played against our first parents (Genesis 3), aiming to seduce him from his allegiance to his God and to rob him of his integrity.

**I.** He provokes him to curse God by smiting him with sore boils, and so making him a burden to himself, v. 7, 8. The former attack was extremely violent, but Job kept his ground, bravely made good the pass and carried the day. Yet he is still but girding on the harness; there is worse behind. The clouds return after the rain. Satan, by the divine permission, follows his blow, and now *deep calls unto deep*.

**1.** The disease with which Job was seized was very grievous: Satan *smote him with boils, sore boils*, all over him, from head to foot, with *an evil inflammation* (so some render it), an erysipelas, perhaps, in a higher degree. One boil, when it is gathering, is torment enough, and gives a man abundance of pain and uneasiness. What a condition was Job then in, that had boils all over him, and no part free, and those as of raging a heat as the devil could make them, and, as it were, *set on fire of hell!* The small-pox is a very grievous and painful disease, and would be much more terrible than it is but that we know the extremity of it ordinarily lasts but a few days; how grievous then was the disease of Job, who was smitten all over with sore boils or grievous ulcers, which made him sick at heart, put him to exquisite torture, and so spread themselves over him that he could lie down no way for any ease. If at any time we be exercised with sore and grievous distempers, let us not think ourselves dealt with any otherwise than as God has sometimes dealt with the best of his saints and servants. We know not how much Satan may have a hand (by divine permission) in the diseases with which the children of men, and especially the children of God, are afflicted, what infections that prince of the air may spread, what inflammations may come from that fiery serpent. We read of one whom Satan had bound many years, ~~13:16~~ Luke 13:16. Should God suffer that roaring lion to have his will against any of us, how miserable would he soon make us!

2. His management of himself, in this distemper, was very strange, v. 8.

(1.) Instead of healing salves, *he took a potsherd*, a piece of a broken pitcher, *to scrape himself withal*. A very sad pass this poor man had come to. When a man is sick and sore he may bear it the better if he be well tended and carefully looked after. Many rich people have with a soft and tender hand charitably ministered to the poor in such a condition as this; even Lazarus had some ease from the tongues of the dogs that came and *licked his sores*; but poor Job has no help afforded him.

[1.] Nothing is done to his sore but what he does himself, with his own hands. His children and servants are all dead, his wife unkind, ~~Job~~ Job 19:17. He has not wherewithal to fee a physician or surgeon; and, which is most sad of all, none of those he had formerly been kind to had so much sense of honour and gratitude as to minister to him in his distress, and lend him a hand to dress or wipe his running sores, either because the disease was loathsome and noisome or because they apprehended it to be infectious. Thus it was in the former days, as it will be in the last days, men were *lovers of their own selves, unthankful, and without natural affection*.

[2.] All that he does to his sores is to *scrape them*; they are not bound up with soft rags, not mollified with ointment, not washed or kept clean, no healing plasters laid on them, no opiates, no anodynes, ministered to the poor patient, to alleviate the pain and compose him to rest, nor any cordials to support his spirits; all the operation is the scraping of the ulcers, which, when they had come to a head and began to die, made his body all over like a scurf, as is usual in the end of the small-pox. It would have been an endless thing to dress his boils one by one; he therefore resolves thus to do it by wholesale — a remedy which one would think as bad as the disease.

[3.] He has nothing to do this with but a *potsherd*, no surgeon's instrument proper for the purpose, but that which would rather rake into his wounds, and add to his pain, than give him any ease. People that are sick and sore have need to be under the discipline and direction of others, for they are often but bad managers of themselves.

(2.) Instead of reposing in a soft and warm bed, he *sat down among the ashes*. Probably he had a bed left him (for, though his fields were stripped, we do not find that his house was burnt or plundered), but he chose to sit

in the ashes, either because he was weary of his bed or because he would put himself into the place and posture of a penitent, who, in token of his self-abhorrence, lay in dust and ashes, <sup><RB></sup>Job 42:6; <sup><RB></sup>Isaiah 58:5; <sup><RB></sup>Jonah 3:6. Thus did he humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and bring his mind to the meanness and poverty of his condition. He complains (<sup><RB></sup>Job 7:5) that his flesh was *clothed with worms* and *clods of dust*; and therefore *dust to dust, ashes to ashes*. If God lay him among the ashes, there he will contentedly sit down. A low spirit becomes low circumstances, and will help to reconcile us to them. The Septuagint reads it, He sat *down upon a dunghill without the city* (which is commonly said, in mentioning this story); but the original says no more than that he sat *in the midst of the ashes*, which he might do in his own house.

**II.** He urges him, by the persuasions of his own wife, to curse God, v. 9. The Jews (who covet much to be wise above what is written) say that Job's wife was Dinah, Jacob's daughter: so the Chaldee paraphrase. It is not likely that she was; but, whoever it was, she was to him like Michal to David, a scoffer at his piety. She was spared to him, when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose, to be a troubler and tempter to him. If Satan leaves any thing that he has permission to take away, it is with a design of mischief. It is his policy to send his temptations by the hand of those that are dear to us, as he tempted Adam by Eve and Christ by Peter. We must therefore carefully watch that we be not drawn to say or do a wrong thing by the influence, interest, or entreaty, of any, no, not those for whose opinion and favour we have ever so great a value. Observe how strong this temptation was.

**1.** She banters Job for his constancy in his religion: "*Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Art thou so very obstinate in thy religion that nothing will cure thee of it? so tame and sheepish as thus to truckle to a God who is so far from rewarding thy services with marks of his favour that he seems to take a pleasure in making thee miserable, strips thee, and scourges thee, without any provocation given? Is this a God to be still loved, and blessed, and served?*"

*Dost thou not see that thy devotion's vain?  
What have thy prayers procured but woe and pain?  
Hast thou not yet thy int'rest understood?  
Perversely righteous, and absurdly good?*

*Those painful sores, and all thy losses, show  
How Heaven regards the foolish saint below.  
Incorrigibly pious! Can't thy God  
Reform thy stupid virtue with his rod?  
— Sir R. Blackmore*

Thus Satan still endeavours to draw men from God, as he did our first parents, by suggesting hard thoughts of him, as one that envies the happiness and delights in the misery of his creatures, than which nothing is more false. Another artifice he uses is to drive men from their religion by loading them with scoffs and reproaches for their adherence to it. We have reason to expect it, but we are fools if we heed it. Our Master himself has undergone it, we shall be abundantly recompensed for it, and with much more reason may we retort it upon the scoffers, “Are you such fools as still to retain your impiety, when you might *bless God and live?*”

**2.** She urges him to renounce his religion, to blaspheme God, set him at defiance, and dare him to do his worst: “*Curse God and die; live no longer in dependence upon God, wait not for relief from him, but be thy own deliverer by being thy own executioner; end thy troubles by ending thy life; better die once than be always dying thus; thou mayest now despair of having any help from thy God, even curse him, and hang thyself.*” These are two of the blackest and most horrid of all Satan's temptations, and yet such as good men have sometimes been violently assaulted with. Nothing is more contrary to natural conscience than blaspheming God, nor to natural sense than self-murder; therefore the suggestion of either of these may well be suspected to come immediately from Satan. Lord, *lead us not into temptation, not into such, not into any temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

**III.** He bravely resists and overcomes the temptation, v. 10. He soon gave her an answer (for Satan spared him the use of his tongue, in hopes he would curse God with it), which showed his constant resolution to cleave to God, to keep his good thoughts of him, and not to let go his integrity. See,

**1.** How he resented the temptation. He was very indignant at having such a thing mentioned to him: “What! Curse God? I abhor the thought of it. *Get thee behind me, Satan.*” In other cases Job reasoned with his wife with a great deal of mildness, even when she was unkind to him (~~387~~ Job 19:17): *I entreated her for the children's sake of my own body.* But, when she



persuaded him to curse God, he was much displeased: *Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh*. He does not call her *a fool* and *an atheist*, nor does he break out into any indecent expressions of his displeasure, as those who are sick and sore are apt to do, and think they may be excused; but he shows her the evil of what she said, and she spoke the language of the infidels and idolaters, who, when they are *hardly bestead, fret themselves, and curse their king and their God*, <sup><2082></sup>Isaiah 8:21. We have reason to suppose that in such a pious household as Job had his wife was one that had been well affected to religion, but that now, when all their estate and comfort were gone, she could not bear the loss with that temper of mind that Job had; but that she should go about to infect his mind with her wretched distemper was a great provocation to him, and he could not forbear thus showing his resentment. Note,

(1.) Those are angry and sin not who are angry only at sin and take a temptation as the greatest affront, who *cannot bear those that are evil*, <sup><6102></sup>Revelation 2:2. When Peter was a Satan to Christ he told him plainly, *Thou art an offence to me*.

(2.) If those whom we think wise and good at any time speak that which is foolish and bad, we ought to reprove them faithfully for it and show them the evil of what they say, that we suffer not sin upon them.

(3.) Temptations to curse God ought to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence, and not so much as to be parleyed with. Whoever persuades us to that must be looked upon as our enemy, to whom if we yield it is at our peril Job did not curse God and then think to come off with Adam's excuse: "*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me persuaded me to do it*" (<sup><1082></sup>Genesis 3:12), which had in it a tacit reflection on God, his ordinance and providence. No; if thou scornest, if thou cursest, thou alone shalt bear it.

2. How he reasoned against the temptation: *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?* Those whom we reprove we must endeavour to convince; and it is no hard matter to give a reason why we should still hold fast our integrity even when we are stripped of every thing else. He considers that, though good and evil are contraries, yet they do not come from contrary causes, but both from the hand of God (<sup><2802></sup>Isaiah 45:7, <sup><2882></sup>Lamentations 3:38), and therefore that in both we must have our eye up unto him, with thankfulness for the good he sends and without fretfulness at the evil. Observe the force of his argument.

**(1.)** What he argues for, not only the bearing, but the receiving of evil: *Shall we not receive evil*, that is,

[1.] “Shall we not expect to receive it? If God give us so many good things, shall we be surprised, or think it strange, if he sometimes afflict us, when he has told us that prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other?” <sup><3042></sup>1 Peter 4:12.

[2.] “Shall we not set ourselves to receive it aright?” The word signifies to receive as a gift, and denotes a pious affection and disposition of soul under our afflictions, neither despising them nor fainting under them, accounting them gifts (<sup><3043></sup>Philippians 1:29), accepting them as punishments of our iniquity (<sup><3044></sup>Leviticus 26:41), acquiescing in the will of God in them (“Let him do with me as seemeth him good”), and accommodating ourselves to them, as those that know how to want as well as how to abound, <sup><3045></sup>Philippians 4:12. When the heart is humbled and weaned, by humbling weaning providence, then we *receive correction* (<sup><3046></sup>Zephaniah 3:2) and take up our cross.

**(2.)** What he argues from: “Shall we receive so much good as has come to us from the hand of God during all those years of peace and prosperity that we have lived, and shall we not now receive evil, when God thinks fit to lay it on us?” Note, The consideration of the mercies we receive from God, both past and present, should make us receive our afflictions with a suitable disposition of spirit. If we receive our share of the common good in the seven years of plenty, shall we not receive our share of the common evil in the years of famine? *Qui sentit commodum, sentire debet et onus* — *he who feels the privilege, should prepare for the privation*. If we have so much that pleases us, why should we not be content with that which pleases God? If we receive so many comforts, shall we not receive some afflictions, which will serve as foils to our comforts, to make them the more valuable (we are taught the worth of mercies by being made to want them sometimes), and as allays to our comforts, to make them the less dangerous, to keep the balance even, and to prevent our being *lifted up above measure*? <sup><3047></sup>2 Corinthians 12:7. If we receive so much good for the body, shall we not receive some good for the soul; that is, some afflictions, by which we partake of God's holiness (<sup><3048></sup>Hebrews 12:10), something which, by saddening the countenance, makes the heart better? Let murmuring therefore, as well as boasting, be for ever excluded.

**IV.** Thus, in a good measure, Job still held fast his integrity, and Satan's design against him was defeated: *In all this did not Job sin with his lips*; he not only said this well, but all he said at this time was under the government of religion and right reason. In the midst of all these grievances he did not speak a word amiss; and we have no reason to think but that he also preserved a good temper of mind, so that, though there might be some stirrings and risings of corruption in his heart, yet grace got the upper hand and he took care that the root of bitterness might not spring up to trouble him, <sup><KJB></sup>Hebrews 12:15. The *abundance of his heart* was for God, produced good things, and suppressed the evil that was there, which was out-voted by the better side. If he did think any evil, yet he *laid his hand upon his mouth* (<sup><KJB></sup>Proverbs 30:32), stifled the evil thought and let it go no further, by which it appeared, not only that he had true grace, but that it was strong and victorious: in short, that he had not forfeited the character of a *perfect and upright man*; for so *he* appears to be who, in the midst of such temptations, *offends not in word*, <sup><KJB></sup>James 3:2; <sup><KJB></sup>Psalm 17:3.

## <sup><KJB></sup>JOB 2:11-13

### **JOB VISITED BY HIS FRIENDS**

We have here an account of the kind visit which Job's three friends paid him in his affliction. The news of his extraordinary troubles spread into all parts, he being an eminent man both for greatness and goodness, and the circumstances of his troubles being very uncommon. Some, who were his enemies, triumphed in his calamities, <sup><KJB></sup>Job 16:10; 19:18; 30:1, etc. Perhaps they made ballads on him. But his friends concerned themselves for him, and endeavoured to comfort him. *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* Three of them are here named (v. 11), Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We shall afterwards meet with a fourth, who it should seem was present at the whole conference, namely, Elihu. Whether he came as a friend of Job or only as an auditor does not appear. These three are said to be his *friends*, his intimate acquaintance, as David and Solomon had each of them one in their court that was called *the king's friend*. These three were eminently wise and good men, as appears by their discourses. They were old men, very old, had a great reputation for knowledge, and much deference was paid to their judgment, <sup><KJB></sup>Job 32:6.

It is probable that they were men of figure in their country — princes, or heads of houses. Now observe,

**I.** That Job, in his prosperity, had contracted a friendship with them. If they were his equals, yet he had not that jealousy of them — if his inferiors, yet he had not that disdain of them, which was any hindrance to an intimate converse and correspondence with them. to have such friends added more to his happiness in the day of his prosperity than all the head of cattle he was master of. Much of the comfort of this life lies in acquaintance and friendship with those that are prudent and virtuous; and he that has a few such friends ought to value them highly. Job's three friends are supposed to have been all of them of the posterity of Abraham, which, for some descents, even in the families that were shut out from the covenant of peculiarity, retained some good fruits of that pious education which the father of the faithful gave to those under his charge. Eliphaz descended from Teman, the grandson of Esau (<sup><031></sup>Genesis 36:11), Bildad (it is probable) from Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah, <sup><032></sup>Genesis 25:2. Zophar is thought by some to be the same with Zepho, a descendant from Esau, <sup><033></sup>Genesis 26:11. The preserving of so much wisdom and piety among those that were strangers to the covenants of promise was a happy presage of God's grace to the Gentiles, when the partition-wall should in the latter days be taken down. Esau was rejected; yet many that came from him inherited some of the best blessings.

**II.** That they continued their friendship with Job in his adversity, when most of his friends had forsaken him, <sup><034></sup>Job 19:14. In two ways they showed their friendship: —

**1.** By the kind visit they paid him in his affliction, to mourn with him and to comfort him, v. 11. Probably they had been wont to visit him in his prosperity, not to hunt or hawk with him, not to dance or play at cards with him, but to entertain and edify themselves with his learned and pious converse; and now that he was in adversity they come to share with him in his griefs, as formerly they had come to share with him in his comforts. These were wise men, whose *heart was in the house of mourning*, <sup><035></sup>Ecclesiastes 7:4. Visiting the afflicted, sick or sore, fatherless or childless, in their sorrow, is made a branch of *pure religion and undefiled* (<sup><036></sup>James 1:27), and, if done from a good principle, will be abundantly recompensed shortly, <sup><037></sup>Matthew 25:36.

(1.) By visiting the sons and daughters of affliction we may contribute to the improvement,

[1.] Of our own graces; for many a good lesson is to be learned from the troubles of others; we may look upon them and receive instruction, and be made wise and serious.

[2.] Of their comforts. By putting a respect upon them we encourage them, and some good word may be spoken to them which may help to make them easy. Job's friends came, not to satisfy their curiosity with an account of his troubles and the strangeness of the circumstances of them, much less, as David's false friends, to make invidious remarks upon him (<sup>-R16</sup>Psalm 41:6-8), but to mourn with him, to mingle their tears with his, and so to comfort him. It is much more pleasant to visit those in affliction to whom comfort belongs than those to whom we must first speak conviction.

(2.) Concerning these visitants observe,

[1.] That they were not sent for, but came of their own accord (<sup>-R12</sup>Job 6:22), whence Mr. Caryl observes that *it is good manners to be an unbidden guest at the house of mourning*, and, in comforting our friends, to anticipate their invitations.

[2.] That they made an appointment to come. Note, Good people should make appointments among themselves for doing good, so exciting and binding one another to it, and assisting and encouraging one another in it. For the carrying on of any pious design let hand join in hand.

[3.] That they came with a design (and we have reason to think it was a sincere design) to comfort him, and yet proved miserable comforters, through their unskilful management of his case. Many that aim well do, by mistake, come short of their aim.

2. By their tender sympathy with him and concern for him in his affliction. When they saw him at some distance he was so disfigured and deformed with his sores that *they knew him not*, v. 12. His face was *foul with weeping* (<sup>-R16</sup>Job 16:16), like Jerusalem's Nazarites, which had been *ruddy as the rubies*, but were now *blacker than a coal*, (<sup>-R17</sup>Lamentations 4:7, 8. What a change will a sore disease, or, without that, oppressing care and grief, make in the countenance, in a little time! *Is this Naomi?* <sup>-R19</sup>Ruth 1:19. So, *Is this Job?* How hast thou fallen! How is thy glory stained and

sullied, and all thy honour laid in the dust! God fits us for such changes! Observing him thus miserably altered, they did not leave him, in a fright or loathing, but expressed so much the more tenderness towards him.

(1.) Coming to mourn with him, they vented their undissembled grief in all the then usual expressions of that passion. *They wept* aloud; the sight of them (as is usual) revived Job's grief, and set him a weeping afresh, which fetched floods of tears from their eyes. *They rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads*, as men that would strip themselves, and abase themselves, with their friend that was stripped and abased.

(2.) Coming to comfort him, *they sat down with him upon the ground*, for so he received visits; and they, not in compliment to him, but in true compassion, put themselves into the same humble and uneasy place and posture. They had many a time, it is likely, sat with him on his couches and at his table, in his prosperity, and were therefore willing to share with him in his grief and poverty because they had shared with him in his joy and plenty. It was not a modish short visit that they made him, just to look upon him and be gone; but, as those that could have had no enjoyment of themselves if they had returned to their place while their friend was in so much misery, they resolved to stay with him till they saw him mend or end, and therefore took lodgings near him, though he was not now able to entertain them as he had done, and they must therefore bear their own charges. Every day, for seven days together, at the house in which he admitted company, they came and sat with him, as his companions in tribulation, and exceptions from that rule, *Nullus ad amissas ibit amicus opes* — *Those who have lost their wealth are not to expect the visits of their friends*. They sat with him, but *none spoke a word* to him, only they all attended to the particular narratives he gave of his troubles. They were silent, as men astonished and amazed. *Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent* — *Our lighter griefs have a voice; those which are more oppressive are mute*.

*So long a time they held their peace, to show  
A reverence due to such prodigious woe.  
— Sir R. Blackmore*

They spoke not a word to him, whatever they said one to another, by way of instruction, for the improvement of the present providence. They said nothing to that purport to which afterwards they said much — nothing to grieve him (<sup>ROM</sup>Job 4:2), because they saw his grief was very great already,

and they were loth at first to add affliction to the afflicted. There is a *time to keep silence*, when either *the wicked is before us*, and by speaking we may harden them (~~1801~~ Psalm 39:1), or when by speaking we may *offend the generation of God's children*, ~~1775~~ Psalm 73:15. Their not entering upon the following solemn discourses till the seventh day may perhaps intimate that it was the sabbath day, which doubtless was observed in the patriarchal age, and to that day they adjourned the intended conference, because probably then company resorted, as usual, to Job's house, to join with him in his devotions, who might be edified by the discourse. Or, rather, by their silence so long they would intimate that what they afterwards said was well considered and digested and the result of many thoughts. *The heart of the wise studies to answer*. We should think twice before we speak once, especially in such a case as this, think long, and we shall be the better able to speak short and to the purpose.