

CHAPTER 1

The history of Job begins here with an account,

- I.** Of his great piety in general (v. 1), and in a particular instance (v. 5).
- II.** Of his great prosperity (v. 2-4).
- III.** Of the malice of Satan against him, and the permission he obtained to try his constancy (v. 6-12).
- IV.** Of the surprising troubles that befel him, the ruin of his estate (v. 13-17), and the death of his children (v. 18, 19).
- V.** Of his exemplary patience and piety under these troubles (v. 20-22). In all this he is set forth for an example of suffering affliction, from which no prosperity can secure us, but through which integrity and uprightness will preserve us.

◀81▶ JOB 1:1-3

JOB'S CHARACTER AND POSSESSIONS

Concerning Job we are here told,

- I.** That he was a man; therefore subject to like passions as we are. He was *Ish*, a worthy man, a man of note and eminency, a magistrate, a man in authority. The country he lived in was the land of Uz, in the eastern part of Arabia, which lay towards Chaldea, near Euphrates, probably not far from Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abraham was called. When God called one good man out of that country, yet he *left not himself without witness*, but raised up another in it to be a *preacher of righteousness*. God has his remnant in all places, sealed ones out of every nation, as well as out of every tribe of Israel, ▶819▶ Revelation 7:9. It was the privilege of the land of Uz to have so good a man as Job in it; now it was *Arabia the Happy* indeed: and it was the praise of Job that he was eminently good in so bad a place; the worse others were round about him the better he was. His name *Job*, or *Jjob*, some say, signifies *one hated* and counted as an enemy. Others make it to signify one that grieves or groans; thus the sorrow he

carried in his name might be a check to his joy in his prosperity. Dr. Cave derives it from *Jaab* — *to love*, or *desire*, intimating how welcome his birth was to his parents, and how much he was *the desire of their eyes*; and yet there was a time when he cursed the day of his birth. Who can tell what the day may prove which yet begins with a bright morning?

II. That he was a very good man, eminently pious, and better than his neighbours: *He was perfect and upright*. This is intended to show us, not only what reputation he had among men (that he was generally taken for an honest man), but what was really his character; for it is the judgment of God concerning him, and we are sure that is according to truth.

- 1.** Job was a religious man, *one that feared God*, that is, worshipped him according to his will, and governed himself by the rules of the divine law in every thing.
- 2.** He was sincere in his religion: He was *perfect*; not sinless, as he himself owns (^{<800>}Job 9:20): *If I say I am perfect, I shall be proved perverse*. But, having a respect to all God's commandments, aiming at perfection, he was really as good as he seemed to be, and did not dissemble in his profession of piety; his heart was sound and his eye single. Sincerity is gospel perfection. I know no religion without it.
- 3.** He was upright in his dealings both with God and man, was faithful to his promises, steady in his counsels, true to every trust reposed in him, and made conscience of all he said and did. See ^{<805>}Isaiah 33:15. Though he was not *of Israel*, he was indeed an *Israelite without guile*.
- 4.** The fear of God reigning in his heart was the principle that governed his whole conversation. This made him perfect and upright, inward and entire for God, universal and uniform in religion; this kept him close and constant to his duty. He *feared God*, had a reverence for his majesty, a regard to his authority, and a dread of his wrath.
- 5.** He dreaded the thought of doing what was wrong; with the utmost abhorrence and detestation, and with a constant care and watchfulness, he *eschewed evil*, avoided all appearances of sin and approaches to it, and this *because of the fear of God*, ^{<805>}Nehemiah 5:15. *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil* (^{<803>}Proverbs 8:13) and then *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil*, ^{<806>}Proverbs 16:6.

III. That he was a man who prospered greatly in this world, and made a considerable figure in his country. He was prosperous and yet pious. Though it is hard and rare, it is not impossible, for *a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*. With God even this is possible, and by his grace the temptations of worldly wealth are not insuperable. He was pious, and his piety was a friend to his prosperity; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. He was prosperous, and his prosperity put a lustre upon his piety, and gave him who was so good so much greater opportunity of doing good. The acts of his piety were grateful returns to God for the instances of his prosperity; and, in the abundance of the good things God gave him, he served God the more cheerfully.

1. He had a numerous family. He was eminent for religion, and yet not a hermit, not a recluse, but the father and master of a family. It was an instance of his prosperity that his house was filled with children, which are a *heritage of the Lord*, and his reward, ^{<BCTB>}Psalm 127:3. he had *seven sons and three daughters*, v. 2. Some of each sex, and more of the more noble sex, in which the family is built up. Children must be looked upon as blessings, for so they are, especially to good people, that will give them good instructions, and set them good examples, and put up good prayers for them. Job had many children, and yet he was neither oppressive nor uncharitable, but very liberal to the poor, ^{<SNL7>}Job 31:17, etc. Those that have great families to provide for ought to consider that what is prudently given in alms is set out to the best interest and put into the best fund for their children's benefit.

2. He had a good estate for the support of his family; his *substance* was considerable, v. 3. Riches are called *substance*, in conformity to the common form of speaking; otherwise, to the soul and another world, they are but shadows, *things that are not*, ^{<APB>}Proverbs 23:5. It is only in heavenly wisdom that we *inherit substance*, ^{<AKB>}Proverbs 8:21. In those days, when the earth was not fully peopled, it was as now in some of the plantations, men might have land enough upon easy terms if they had but wherewithal to stock it; and therefore Job's substance is described, not by the acres of land he was lord of, but,

(1.) By his cattle — *sheep and camels, oxen and asses*. The numbers of each are here set down, probably not the exact number, but thereabout, a very few under or over. The sheep are put first, because of most use in the family, as Solomon observes (^{<APB>}Proverbs 27:23, 26, 27): *Lambs for thy*

clothing, and milk for the food of thy household. Job, it is likely, had silver and gold as well as Abraham (^{<010>}Genesis 13:2); but then men valued their own and their neighbours' estates by that which was for service and present use more than by that which was for show and state, and fit only to be hoarded. As soon as God had made man, and provided for his maintenance by the herbs and fruits, he made him rich and great by giving him *dominion over the creatures*, ^{<003>}Genesis 1:28. That therefore being still continued to man, notwithstanding his defection (^{<002>}Genesis 9:2), is still to be reckoned one of the most considerable instances of men's wealth, honour, and power, ^{<006>}Psalm 8:6.

(2.) By his servants. He had a very good household or husbandry, many that were employed for him and maintained by him; and thus he both had honour and did good; yet thus he was involved in a great deal of care and put to a great deal of charge. See the vanity of this world; as goods are increased those must be increased that tend them and occupy them, and *those will be increased that eat them; and what good has the owner thereof save the beholding of them with his eyes?* ^{<051>}Ecclesiastes 5:11. In a word, *Job was the greatest of all the men of the east*; and they were the richest in the world: those were rich indeed who were *replenished more than the east*, ^{<006>}Isaiah 2:6. Margin. Job's wealth, with his wisdom, entitled him to the honour and power he had in his country, which he describes (Job 29), and made him sit chief. Job was upright and honest, and yet grew rich, nay, *therefore* grew rich; for honesty is the best policy, and piety and charity are ordinarily the surest ways of thriving. He had a great household and much business, and yet kept up the fear and worship of God; and he and his house served the Lord. The account of Job's piety and prosperity comes before the history of his great afflictions, to show that neither will secure us from the common, no, nor from the uncommon calamities of human life. Piety will not secure us, as Job's mistaken friends thought, for *all things come alike to all*; prosperity will not, as a careless world thinks, ^{<008>}Isaiah 47:8. I sit *as a queen* and therefore shall *see no sorrow*.

◀800▶ JOB 1:4-5

JOB'S SOLICITUDE BEFORE HIS CHILDREN

We have here a further account of Job's prosperity and his piety.

I. His great comfort in his children is taken notice of as an instance of his prosperity; for our temporal comforts are borrowed, depend upon others, and are as those about us are. Job himself mentions it as one of the greatest joys of his prosperous estate that his *children were about him*, ▶895◀ Job 29:5. They kept a circular feast at some certain times (v. 4); they *went and feasted in their houses*. It was a comfort to this good man,

- 1.** To see his children grown up and settled in the world. All his sons were in houses of their own, probably married, and to each of them he had given a competent portion to set up with. Those that had been olive-plants round his table were removed to tables of their own.
- 2.** To see them thrive in their affairs, and able to feast one another, as well as to feed themselves. Good parents desire, promote, and rejoice in, their children's wealth and prosperity as their own.
- 3.** To see them in health, no sickness in their houses, for that would have spoiled their feasting and turned it into mourning.
- 4.** Especially to see them live in love, and unity, and mutual good affection, no jars or quarrels among them, no strangeness, no shyness one of another, no strait-handedness, but, though every one knew his own, they lived with as much freedom as if they had had all in common. It is comfortable to the hearts of parents, and comely in the eyes of all, to see brethren thus knit together. *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is!* ▶891◀ Psalm 133:1.
- 5.** It added to his comfort to see the brothers so kind to their sisters, that they sent for them to feast with them; for they were so modest that they would not have gone if they had not been sent for. Those brothers that slight their sisters, care not for their company, and have no concern for their comfort, are ill-bred, ill-natured, and very unlike Job's sons. It seems their feast was so sober and decent that their sisters were good company for them at it.

6. They feasted in their own houses, not in public houses, where they would be more exposed to temptations, and which were not so creditable. We do not find that Job himself feasted with them. Doubtless they invited him, and he would have been the most welcome guest at any of their tables; nor was it from any sourness or moroseness of temper, or for want of natural affection, that he kept away, but he was old and dead to these things, like Barzillai (⁽¹⁹⁵⁾2 Samuel 19:35), and considered that the young people would be more free and pleasant if there were none but themselves. Yet he would not restrain his children from that diversion which he denied himself. Young people may be allowed a youthful liberty, provided they flee youthful lusts.

II. His great care about his children is taken notice of as an instance of his piety: for that we are really which we are relatively. Those that are good will be good to their children, and especially do what they can for the good of their souls. Observe (v. 5) Job's pious concern for the spiritual welfare of his children,

1. He was jealous over them with a godly jealousy; and so we ought to be over ourselves and those that are dearest to us, as far as is necessary to our care and endeavour for their good. Job had given his children a good education, had comfort in them and good hope concerning them; and yet he said, "*It may be, my sons have sinned* in the days of their feasting more than at other times, have been too merry, have taken too great a liberty in eating and drinking, and have *cursed God in their hearts,*" that is, "have entertained atheistical or profane thoughts in their minds, unworthy notions of God and his providence, and the exercises of religion." When they were *full* they were ready to *deny God, and to say, Who is the Lord?* (⁽²¹⁰⁾Proverbs 30:9), ready to *forget* God and to say, *The power of our hand has gotten us this wealth,* (⁽²¹²⁾Deuteronomy 8:12, etc. Nothing alienates the mind more from God than the indulgence of the flesh.

2. As soon as the days of their feasting were over he called them to the solemn exercises of religion. Not while their feasting lasted (let them take their time for that; there is a time for all things), but when it was over, their good father reminded them that they must know when to desist, and not think to fare sumptuously every day; though they had their days of feasting the *week* round, they must not think to have them the *year* round; they had something else to do. Note, Those that are merry must find a time to be serious.

3. He sent to them to prepare for solemn ordinances, *sent and sanctified them*, ordered them to examine their own consciences and repent of what they had done amiss in their feasting, to lay aside their vanity and compose themselves for religious exercises. Thus he kept his authority over them for their good, and they submitted to it, though they had got into houses of their own. Still he was the priest of the family, and at his altar they all attended, valuing their share in his prayers more than their share in his estate. Parents cannot give grace to their children (it is God that sanctifies), but they ought by seasonable admonitions and counsels to further their sanctification. In their baptism they were sanctified to God; let it be our desire and endeavour that they may be sanctified for him.

4. He offered sacrifice for them, both to atone for the sins he feared they had been guilty of in the days of their feasting and to implore for them mercy to pardon and grace to prevent the debauching of their minds and corrupting of their manners by the liberty they had taken, and to preserve their piety and purity.

*For he with mournful eyes had often spied,
Scattered on Pleasure's smooth but treacherous tide,
The spoils of virtue overpowered by sense,
And floating wrecks of ruined innocence.*
— Sir R. Blackmore.

Job, like Abraham, had an altar for his family, on which, it is likely, he offered sacrifice daily; but, on this extraordinary occasion, he offered more sacrifices than usual, and with more solemnity, *according to the number of them all*, one for each child. Parents should be particular in their addresses to God for the several branches of their family. “For this child I prayed, according to its particular temper, genius, and condition,” to which the prayers, as well as the endeavours, must be accommodated. When these sacrifices were to be offered,

(1.) He rose early, as one in care that his children might not lie long under guilt and as one whose heart was upon his work and his desire towards it.

(2.) He required his children to attend the sacrifice, that they might join with him in the prayers he offered with the sacrifice, that the sight of the killing of the sacrifice might humble them much for their sins, for which they deserved to die, and the sight of the offering of it up might lead them to a Mediator. This serious work would help to make them serious again after the days of their gaiety.

5. Thus he did *continually*, and not merely whenever an occasion of this kind recurred; for *he that is washed needs to wash his feet*, ^{<813>}John 13:10. The acts of repentance and faith must be often renewed, because we often repeat our transgressions. All days, every day, he offered up his sacrifices, was constant to his devotions, and did not omit them any day. The occasional exercises of religion will not excuse us from those that are stated. He that serves God uprightly will serve him continually.

^{<816>}JOB 1:6-12

SATAN BEFORE GOD

Job was not only so rich and great, but withal so wise and good, and had such an interest both in heaven and earth, that one would think the mountain of his prosperity stood so strong that it could not be moved; but here we have a thick cloud gathering over his head, pregnant with a horrible tempest. We must never think ourselves secure from storms while we are in this lower region. Before we are told how his troubles surprised and seized him here in this visible world, we are here told how they were concerted in the world of spirits, that the devil, having a great enmity to Job for his eminent piety, begged and obtained leave to torment him. It does not at all derogate from the credibility of Job's story in general to allow that this discourse between God and Satan, in these verses, is parabolical, like that of Micaiah (^{<129>}1 Kings 22:19, etc.), and an allegory designed to represent the malice of the devil against good men and the divine check and restraint which that malice is under; only thus much further is intimated, that the affairs of this earth are very much the subject of the counsels of the unseen world. That world is dark to us, but we lie very open to it. Now here we have,

I. Satan among the sons of God (v. 6), an *adversary* (so *Satan* signifies) to God, to men, to all good: he thrust himself into an assembly of the *sons of God* that came to *present themselves before the Lord*. This means either,

1. A meeting of the saints on earth. Professors of religion, in the patriarchal age, were called *sons of God* (^{<162>}Genesis 6:2); they had then religious assemblies and stated times for them. The King came in to see his guests; the eye of God was on all present. But there was a serpent in paradise, a Satan among the sons of God; when they come together he is

among them, to distract and disturb them, stands at their right hand to resist them. *The Lord rebuke thee, Satan!* Or,

2. A meeting of the angels in heaven. They are *the sons of God*, ^{<387>}Job 38:7. They came to give an account of their negotiations on earth and to receive new instructions. Satan was one of them originally; but *how hast thou fallen, O Lucifer!* He shall no more stand in that congregation, yet he is here represented, as coming among them, either summoned to appear as a criminal or connived at, for the present, though an intruder.

II. His examination, how he came thither (v. 7): *The Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?* He knew very well whence he came, and with what design he came thither, that as the good angels came to do good he came for a permission to do hurt; but he would, by calling him to an account, show him that he was under check and control. *Whence comest thou?* He asks this,

1. As wondering what brought him thither. *Is Saul among the prophets?* Satan among the sons of God? Yes, for he *transforms himself into an angel of light* (^{<411>}2 Corinthians 11:13, 14), and would seem one of them. Note, It is possible that a man may be a child of the devil and yet be found in the assemblies of the sons of God in this world, and *there* may pass undiscovered by men, and yet be challenged by the all-seeing God. *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* Or,

2. As enquiring what he had been doing before he came thither. The same question was perhaps put to the rest of those that presented themselves before the Lord, “Whence came you?” We are accountable to God for all our haunts and all the ways we traverse.

III. The account he gives of himself and of the tour he had made. I come (says he) *from going to and fro on the earth.*

1. He could not pretend he had been doing any good, could give no such account of himself as the sons of God could, who *presented themselves before the Lord*, who came from executing his orders, serving the interest of his kingdom, and ministering to the heirs of salvation.

2. He would not own he had been doing any hurt, that he had been drawing men from the allegiance to God, deceiving and destroying souls; no. *I have done no wickedness*, ^{<387>}Proverbs 30:20. *Thy servant went nowhere.* In saying that he had *walked to and fro through the earth*, he

intimates that he had kept himself within the bounds allotted him, and had not transgressed his bounds; for *the dragon is cast out into the earth* (⁶¹²⁹Revelation 12:9) and not yet confined to his place of torment. While we are on this earth we are within his reach, and with so much subtlety, swiftness, and industry, does he penetrate into all the corners of it, that we cannot be in any place secure from his temptations.

3. He yet seems to give some representation of his own character.

(1.) Perhaps it is spoken proudly, and with an air of haughtiness, as if he were indeed the *prince of this world*, as if *the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them* were his (⁴⁰⁴⁶Luke 4:6), and he had now been walking in circuit through his own territories.

(2.) Perhaps it is spoken fretfully, and with discontent. He had been walking to and fro, and could find no rest, but was as much a fugitive and a vagabond as Cain in the land of Nod.

(3.) Perhaps it is spoken carefully: “I have been hard at work, going to and fro,” or (as some read it) “searching about in the earth,” really in quest of an opportunity to do mischief. He walks about seeking whom he may devour. It concerns us therefore to be sober and vigilant.

IV. The question God puts to him concerning Job (v. 8): *Hast thou considered my servant Job?* As when we meet with one that has been in a distant place, where we have a friend we dearly love, we are ready to ask, “You have been in such a place; pray did you see my friend there?” Observe,

1. How honourably God speaks of Job: He is *my servant*. Good men are God’s servants, and he is pleased to reckon himself honoured in their services, and they are to him for *a name and a praise* (²⁴³¹Jeremiah 13:11) *and a crown of glory*, ²⁴³⁸Isaiah 62:3. “Yonder is *my servant Job*; there is *none like him*, none I value like him, of all the princes and potentates of the earth; one such saint as he is worth them all: *none like him* for uprightness and serious piety; many do well, but *he excelleth them all*; there is not to be found *such great faith, no, not in Israel*.” Thus Christ, long after, commended the centurion and the woman of Canaan, who were both of them, like Job, strangers to that commonwealth. The saints glory in God — *Who is like thee among the gods?* and he is pleased to glory in them — *Who is like Israel among the people?* So here, *none like Job*, none

in earth, that state of imperfection. Those in heaven do indeed far outshine him; those who are least in that kingdom are greater than he; but *on earth there is not his like*. There is none like him in that land; so some good men are the glory of their country.

2. How closely he gives to Satan this good character of Job: *Hast thou set thy heart to my servant Job?* designing hereby,

(1.) To aggravate the apostasy and misery of that wicked spirit: “How unlike him are thou!” Note, The holiness and happiness of the saints are the shame and torment of the devil and the devil's children.

(2.) To answer the devil's seeming boast of the interest he had in this earth. “I have been walking to and fro in it,” says he, “and it is all my own; all flesh have corrupted their way; they all sit still, and are at rest in their sins,” ^{<310>}Zechariah 1:10, 11. “Nay, hold,” saith God, “Job is my faithful servant.” Satan may boast, but he shall not triumph.

(3.) To anticipate his accusations, as if he had said, “Satan, I know thy errand; thou hast come to inform against Job; but *hast thou considered him?* Does not his unquestionable character give thee the lie?” Note, God knows all the malice of the devil and his instruments against his servants; and we have an advocate ready to appear for us, even before we are accused.

V. The devil's base insinuation against Job, in answer to God's encomium of him. He could not deny but that Job feared God, but suggested that he was a mercenary in his religion, and therefore a hypocrite (v. 9): *Doth Job fear God for nought?* Observe,

1. How impatient the devil was of hearing Job praised, though it was God himself that praised him. Those are like the devil who cannot endure that any body should be praised but themselves, but grudge the just share of reputation others have, as Saul (^{<085>}1 Samuel 18:5, etc.) and the Pharisees, ^{<015>}Matthew 21:15.

2. How much at a loss he was for something to object against him; he could not accuse him of any thing that was bad, and therefore charged him with by-ends in doing good. Had the one half of that been true which his angry friends, in the heat of dispute, charged him with (^{<084>}Job 15:4, 22:5), Satan would no doubt have brought against him now; but no such thing could be alleged, and therefore,

3. See how slyly he censured him as a hypocrite, not asserting that he was so, but only asking, “Is he not so?” This is the common way of slanderers, whisperers, backbiters, to suggest that by way of query which yet they have no reason to think is true. Note, It is not strange if those that are approved and accepted of God be unjustly censured by the devil and his instruments; if they are otherwise unexceptionable, it is easy to charge them with hypocrisy, as Satan charged Job, and they have no way to clear themselves, but patiently to wait for the judgment of God. As there is nothing we should dread more than being hypocrites, so there is nothing we need dread less than being called and counted so without cause.

4. How unjustly he accused him as mercenary, to prove him a hypocrite. It was a great truth that Job did not fear God for nought; he got much by it, for godliness is great gain: but it was a falsehood that he would not have feared God if he had not got this by it, as the event proved. Job's friends charged him with hypocrisy because he was greatly afflicted, Satan because he greatly prospered. It is no hard matter for those to calumniate that seek an occasion. It is not mercenary to look at the eternal recompence in our obedience; but to aim at temporal advantages in our religion, and to make it subservient to them, is spiritual idolatry, worshipping the creature more than the Creator, and is likely to end in a fatal apostasy. Men cannot long *serve God and mammon*.

VI. The complaint Satan made of Job's prosperity, v. 10. Observe,

1. What God had done for Job. He had protected him, made a hedge about him, for the defence of his person, his family, and all his possessions. Note, God's peculiar people are taken under his special protection, they and all that belong to them; divine grace makes a hedge about their spiritual life, and divine providence about their natural life, so they are safe and easy. He had prospered him, not in idleness or injustice (the devil could not accuse him of them), but in the way of honest diligence: *Thou hast blessed the work of his hands*. Without that blessing, be the hands ever so strong, ever so skilful, the work will not prosper; but, with that, *his substance has wonderfully increased in the land*. The blessing of the Lord makes rich: Satan himself owns it.

2. What notice the devil took of it, and how he improved it against him. The devil speaks of it with vexation. “I see thou hast *made a hedge about him, round about;*” as if he had walked it round, to see if he could spy a

single gap in it, for him to enter in at, to do him a mischief; but he was disappointed: it was a complete hedge. *The wicked one saw it and was grieved*, and argued against Job that the only reason why he served God was because God prospered him. “No thanks to him to be true to the government that prefers him, and to serve a Master that pays him so well.”

VII. The proof Satan undertakes to give of the hypocrisy and mercenariness of Job's religion, if he might but have leave to strip him of his wealth. “Let it be put to this issue,” says he (v. 11); “make him poor, frown upon him, turn thy hand against him, and then see where his religion will be; touch what he has and it will appear what he is. *If he curse thee not to thy face*, let me never be believed, but posted for a liar and false accuser. Let me perish if he curse thee not;” so some supply the imprecation, which the devil himself modestly concealed, but the profane swearers of our age impudently and daringly speak out. Observe,

1. How slightly he speaks of the affliction he desired that Job might be tried with: “Do but touch all that he has, do but begin with him, do but threaten to make him poor; a little cross will change his tone.”

2. How spitefully he speaks of the impression it would make upon Job: “He will not only let fall his devotion, but turn it into an open defiance — not only think hardly of thee, but *even curse thee to thy face*.” The word translated curse is *barac*, the same that ordinarily, and originally, signifies to *bless*; but cursing God is so impious a thing that the holy language would not admit the name: but that where the sense requires it it must be so understood is plain form ^{<1211>}1 Kings 21:10-13, where the word is used concerning the crime charged on Naboth, that he did blaspheme God and the king. Now,

(1.) It is likely that Satan did think that Job, if impoverished, would renounce his religion and so disprove his profession, and if so (as a learned gentleman has observed in his *Mount of Spirits*) Satan would have made out his own universal empire among the children of men. God declared Job the best man then living: now, if Satan can prove him a hypocrite, it will follow that God had not one faithful servant among men and that there was no such thing as true and sincere piety in the world, but religion was all a sham, and Satan was king *de facto* — *in fact*, over all mankind. But it appeared that *the Lord knows those that are his* and is not deceived in any.

(2.) However, if Job should retain his religion, Satan would have the satisfaction to see him sorely afflicted. He hates good men, and delights in their griefs, as God has *pleasure in their prosperity*.

VIII. The permission God gave to Satan to afflict Job for the trial of his sincerity. Satan desired God to do it: *Put forth thy hand now*. God allowed him to do it (v. 12): “*All that he has is in thy hand; make the trial as sharp as thou canst; do thy worst at him.*” Now,

1. It is a matter of wonder that God should give Satan such a permission as this, should *deliver the soul of his turtle-dove* into the hand of the adversary, such a lamb to such a lion; but he did it for his own glory, the honour of Job, the explanation of Providence, and the encouragement of his afflicted people in all ages, to make a case which, being adjudged, might be a useful precedent. He suffered Job to be tried, as he suffered Peter to be sifted, but took care that *his faith should not fail* (~~423~~Luke 22:32) and then the trial of it was *found unto praise, and honour, and glory*, ~~601~~1 Peter 1:7. But,

2. It is a matter of comfort that God has the devil *in a chain*, in a great chain, ~~601~~Revelation 20:1. He could not afflict Job without leave from God first asked and obtained, and then no further than he had leave: “*Only upon himself put not forth thy hand; meddle not with his body, but only with his estate.*” It is a limited power that the devil has; he has no power to debauch men but what they give him themselves, nor power to afflict men but what is *given him from above*.

IX. Satan's departure from this meeting of the sons of God. Before they broke up, Satan went forth (as Cain, ~~0016~~Genesis 4:16) *from the presence of the Lord*; no longer detained before him (as Doeg was, ~~0217~~1 Samuel 21:7) than till he had accomplished his malicious purpose. He went forth,

1. Glad that he had gained his point, proud of the permission he had to do mischief to a good man; and,

2. Resolved to lose no time, but speedily to put his project in execution. He went forth now, not to go to and fro, rambling through the earth, but with a direct course, to fall upon poor Job, who is carefully going on in the way of his duty, and knows nothing of the matter. What passes between good and bad spirits concerning us we are not aware of.

<K13> JOB 1:13-19

THE CALAMITIES BROUGHT ON JOB

We have here a particular account of Job's troubles.

I. Satan brought them upon him on the very day that his children began their course of feasting, at their *eldest brother's house* (v. 13), where, he having (we may suppose) the double portion, the entertainment was the richest and most plentiful. The whole family, no doubt, was in perfect repose, and all were easy and under no apprehension of the trouble, now when they revived this custom; and this time Satan chose, that the trouble, coming now, might be the more grievous. *The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear,* <2304> Isaiah 21:4.

II. They all come upon him at once; while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking another came, and, before he had told his story, a third, and a fourth, followed immediately. Thus Satan, by the divine permission, ordered it,

1. That there might appear a more than ordinary displeasure of God against him in his troubles, and by that he might be exasperated against divine Providence, as if it were resolved, right or wrong, to ruin him, and not give him time to speak for himself.

2. That he might not have leisure to consider and recollect himself, and reason himself into a gracious submission, but might be overwhelmed and overpowered by a complication of calamities. If he have not room to pause a little, he will be apt to speak in haste, and then, if ever, he will curse his God. Note, The children of God are often in heaviness through manifold temptations; deep calls to deep; waves and billows come one upon the neck of another. Let one affliction therefore quicken and help us to prepare for another; for, how deep soever we have drunk of the bitter cup, as long as we are in this world we cannot be sure that we have drunk our share and that it will finally pass from us.

III. They took from him all that he had, and made a full end of his enjoyments. The detail of his losses answers to the foregoing inventory of his possessions.

1. He had 500 *yoke of oxen*, and 500 *she-asses*, and a competent number of servants to attend them; and all these he lost at once, v. 14, 15. The account he has of this lets him know,

(1.) That it was not through any carelessness of his servants; for then his resentment might have spent itself upon them: *The oxen were ploughing*, not playing, and the asses not suffered to stray and so taken up as waifs, but *feeding beside them*, under the servant's eye, each in their place; and those that passed by, we may suppose, blessed them, and said, *God speed the plough*. Note, All our prudence, care, and diligence, cannot secure us from affliction, no, not from those afflictions which are commonly owing to imprudence and negligence. *Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman*, though ever so wakeful, *wakes but in vain*. Yet it is some comfort under a trouble if it found us in the way of our duty, and not in any by-path.

(2.) That it was through the wickedness of his neighbours the Sabeans, probably a sort of robbers that lived by spoil and plunder. They carried off the oxen and asses, and slew the servants that faithfully and bravely did their best to defend them, and *one only escaped*, not in kindness to him or his master, but that Job might have the certain intelligence of it by an eye-witness before he heard it by a flying report, which would have brought it upon him gradually. We have no reason to suspect that either Job or his servants had given any provocation to the Sabeans to make this inroad, but Satan put it into their hearts to do it, to do it now, and so gained a double point, for he made both Job to suffer and them to sin. Note, When Satan has God's permission to do mischief he will not want mischievous men to be his instruments in doing it, for he is a *spirit that works in the children of disobedience*.

2. He had 7000 *sheep*, and shepherds that kept them; and all those he lost at the same time by lightning, v. 16. Job was perhaps, in his own mind, ready to reproach the Sabeans, and fly out against them for their injustice and cruelty, when the next news immediately directs him to look upwards: *The fire of God has fallen from heaven*. As thunder is his voice, so lightning is his fire: but this was such an extraordinary lightning, and levelled so directly against Job, that all his sheep and shepherds were not only killed, but consumed by it at once, and one shepherd only was left alive to carry the news to poor Job. The devil, aiming to make him curse

God and renounce his religion, managed this part of the trial very artfully, in order thereto.

(1.) His sheep, with which especially he used to honour God in sacrifice, were all taken from him, as if God were angry at his offerings and would punish him in those very things which he had employed in his service. Having misrepresented Job to God as a false servant, in pursuance of his old design to set Heaven and earth at variance, he here misrepresented God to Jacob as a hard Master, who would not protect those flocks out of which he had so many burnt-offerings. This would tempt Job to say, *It is in vain to serve God.*

(2.) The messenger called the lightning the *fire of God* (and innocently enough), but perhaps Satan thereby designed to strike into his mind this thought, that God had *turned to be his enemy and fought against him*, which was much more grievous to him than all the insults of the Sabeans. He owned (^{<3823>}Job 31:23) that *destruction from God was a terror to him*. How terrible then were the tidings of this destruction, which came immediately from the hand of God! Had the fire from heaven consumed the sheep upon the altar, he might have construed it into a token of God's favour; but, the fire consuming them in the pasture, he could not but look upon it as a token of God's displeasure. There have not been the like since Sodom was burned.

3. He had 3000 *camels*, and servants tending them; and he lost them all at the same time by the Chaldeans, who came in three bands, and drove them away, and slew the servants, v. 17. If the fire of God, which fell upon Job's honest servants, who were in the way of their duty, had fallen upon the Sabean and Chaldean robbers who were doing mischief, God's judgments therein would have been like the great mountains, evident and conspicuous; but when the way of the wicked prospers, and they carry off their booty, while just and good men are suddenly cut off, God's righteousness is like the great deep, the bottom of which we cannot find, ^{<2866>}Psalms 36:6.

4. His dearest and most valuable possessions were his ten children; and, to conclude the tragedy, news if brought him, at the same time, that they were killed and buried in the ruins of the house in which they were feasting, and all the servants that waited on them, except one that came express with the tidings of it, v. 18, 19. This was the greatest of Job's losses, and which could not but go nearest him; and therefore the devil

reserved it for the last, that, if the other provocations failed, this might make him curse God. Our children are pieces of ourselves; it is very hard to part with them, and touches a good man in as tender a part as any. But to part with them all at once, and for them to be all cut off in a moment, who had been so many years his cares and hopes, went to the quick indeed.

(1.) They all died together, and not one of them was left alive. David, though a wise and good man, was very much discomposed by the death of one son. How hard then did it bear upon poor Job who lost them all, and, in one moment, was written childless!

(2.) They died suddenly. Had they been taken away by some lingering disease, he would have had notice to expect their death, and prepare for the breach; but this came upon him without giving him any warning.

(3.) They died when they were feasting and making merry. Had they died suddenly when they were praying, he might the better have borne it. He would have hoped that death had found them in a good frame if their blood had been mingled with their feast, where he himself used to be jealous of them that they had *sinned, and cursed God in their hearts* — to have that day come upon them unawares, like a thief in the night, when perhaps their heads were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness — this could not but add much to his grief, considering what a tender concern he always had for his children's souls, and that they were now out of the reach of the sacrifices he used to offer *according to the number of them all*. See how all things come alike to all. Job's children were constantly prayed for by their father, and lived in love one with another, and yet came to this untimely end.

(4.) They died by a wind of the devil's raising, who is *the prince of the power of the air* (~~AND~~ Ephesians 2:2), but it was looked upon to be an immediate hand of God, and a token of his wrath. So Bildad construed it (~~AND~~ Job 8:4): *Thy children have sinned against him, and he has cast them away in their transgression.*

(5.) They were taken away when he had most need of them to comfort him under all his other losses. Such miserable comforters are all creatures. In God only we have a present help at all times.

~~<KID>~~ JOB 1:20-22

JOB'S SORROW AND SUBMISSION

The devil had done all he desired leave to do against Job, to provoke him to curse God. He had touched all he had, touched it with a witness; he whom the rising sun saw the richest of all the men in the east was before night poor to a proverb. If his riches had been, as Satan insinuated, the only principle of his religion now that he had lost his riches he would certainly have lost his religion; but the account we have, in these verses, of his pious deportment under his affliction, sufficiently proved the devil a liar and Job an honest man.

I. He conducted himself like a man under his afflictions, not stupid and senseless, like a stock or stone, not unnatural and unaffected at the death of his children and servants; no (v. 20), he *arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head*, which were the usual expressions of great sorrow, to show that he was sensible of the hand of the Lord that had gone out against him; yet he did not break out into any indecencies, nor discover any extravagant passion. He did not faint away, but arose, as a champion to the combat; he did not, in a heat, throw off his clothes, but very gravely, in conformity to the custom of the country, rent his mantle, his cloak, or outer garment; he did not passionately tear his hair, but deliberately shaved his head. By all this it appeared that he kept his temper, and bravely maintained the possession and repose of his own soul, in the midst of all these provocations. The time when he began to show his feelings is observable; it was not till he heard of the death of his children, and then he arose, then he rent his mantle. A worldly unbelieving heart would have said, "Now that the meat is gone it is well that the mouths are gone too; now that there are no portions it is well that there are no children:" but Job knew better, and would have been thankful if Providence had spared his children, though he had little of nothing for them, for *Jehovah-jireh — the Lord will provide*. Some expositors, remembering that it was usual with the Jews to rend their clothes when they heard blasphemy, conjecture that Job rent his clothes in a holy indignation at the blasphemous thoughts which Satan now cast into his mind, tempting him to curse God.

II. He conducted himself like a wise and good man under his affliction, like a *perfect and upright man*, and *one that feared God* and *eschewed the evil* of sin more than that of outward trouble.

1. He humbled himself under the hand of God, and accommodated himself to the providences he was under, as one that knew how to want as well as how to abound. When God called to weeping and mourning he wept and mourned, *rent his mantle and shaved his head*; and, as one that abased himself even to the dust before God, he *fell down upon the ground*, in a penitent sense of sin and a patient submission to the will of God, *accepting the punishment of his iniquity*. Hereby he showed his sincerity; for *hypocrites cry not when God binds them*, ^{<187B>}Job 36:13. Hereby he prepared himself to get good by the affliction; for how can we improve the grief which we will not feel?

2. He composed himself with quieting considerations, that he might not be disturbed and put out of the possession of his own soul by these events. He reasons from the common state of human life, which he describes with application to himself: *Naked came I* (as others do) *out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither*, into the lap of our common mother — the earth, as the child, when it is sick or weary, lays its head in its mother's bosom. *Dust we were* in our original, and *to dust we return* in our exit (^{<107B>}Genesis 3:19), *to the earth as we were* (^{<217E>}Ecclesiastes 12:7), *naked shall we return thither*, whence we were taken, namely, to the clay, ^{<836>}Job 33:6. St. Paul refers to this of Job, ^{<507E>}1 Timothy 6:7. *We brought nothing* of this world's goods *into the world*, but have them from others; and *it is certain that we can carry nothing out*, but must leave them to others. We come into the world naked, not only unarmed, but unclothed, helpless, shiftless, not so well covered and fenced as other creatures. The sin we are born in makes us naked, to our shame, in the eyes of the holy God. We go out of the world naked; the body does, though the sanctified soul goes clothed, ^{<417E>}2 Corinthians 5:3. Death strips us of all our enjoyments; clothing can neither warm nor adorn a dead body. This consideration silenced Job under all his losses.

(1.) He is but where he was at first. He looks upon himself only as naked, not maimed, not wounded; he was himself still his own man, when nothing else was his own, and therefore but reduced to his first condition. *Nemo tam pauper potest esse quam natus est* — *no one can be so poor as*

he was when born. — *Min. Felix.* If we are impoverished, we are not wronged, nor much hurt, for we are but as we were born.

(2.) He is but where he must have been at last, and is only unclothed, or unloaded rather, a little sooner than he expected. If we put off our clothes before we go to bed, it is some inconvenience, but it may be the better borne when it is near bed-time.

3. He gave glory to God, and expressed himself upon this occasion with a great veneration for the divine Providence, and a meek submission to its disposals. We may well rejoice to find Job in this good frame, because this was the very thing upon which the trial of his integrity was put, though he did not know it. The devil said that he would, under his affliction, curse God; but he blessed him, and so proved himself an honest man.

(1.) He acknowledged the hand of God both in the mercies he had formerly enjoyed and in the afflictions he was now exercised with: *The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.* We must own the divine Providence,

[1.] In all our comforts. God gave us our being, *made us, and not we ourselves*, gave us our wealth; it was not our own ingenuity or industry that enriched us, but God's blessing on our cares and endeavours. He gave us power to get wealth, not only made the creatures for us, but bestowed upon us our share.

[2.] In all our crosses. The same that gave hath taken away; and may he not do what he will with his own? See how Job looks above instruments, and keeps his eye upon the first Cause. He does not say, “The Lord gave, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans have taken away; God made me rich, and the devil has made me poor;” but, “He that gave has taken;” and for that reason he is dumb, and has nothing to say, because God did it. He that gave all may take what, and when, and how much he pleases. Seneca could argue thus, *Abstulit, sed et dedit* — *he took away, but he also gave*; and Epictetus excellently (cap. 15), “When thou art deprived of any comfort, suppose a child taken away by death, or a part of thy estate lost, say not *apolesa auto* — *I have lost it*; but *apedoka* — *I have restored it to the right owner*; but thou wilt object (says he), *kakos ho aphelomenos* — *he is a bad man that has robbed me*; to which he answers, *ti de soi melei* — *What is it to thee by what hand he that gives remands what he gave?*”

(2.) He adored God in both. When all was gone he fell down and worshipped. Note, Afflictions must not divert us from, but quicken us to, the exercises of religion. Weeping must not hinder sowing, nor hinder worshipping. He eyed not only the hand of God, but the name of God, in his afflictions, and gave glory to that: *Blessed be the name of the Lord*. He has still the same great and good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them forth to his praise; he can find in his heart to bless God even when he takes away as well as when he gives. Thus must we *sing both of mercy and judgment*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 101:1.

[1.] He blesses God for what was given, though now it was taken away. When our comforts are removed from us we must thank God that ever we had them and had them so much longer than we deserved. Nay,

[2.] He adores God even in taking away, and gives him honour by a willing submission; nay, he gives him thanks for good designed him by his afflictions, for gracious supports under his afflictions, and the believing hopes he had of a happy issue at last.

Lastly, Here is the honourable testimony which the Holy Ghost gives to Job's constancy and good conduct under his afflictions. He passed his trials with applause, v. 22. In all this Job did not act amiss, for he did not attribute folly to God, nor in the least reflect upon his wisdom in what he had done. Discontent and impatience do in effect charge God with folly. Against the workings of these therefore Job carefully watched; and so must we, acknowledging that as God has done right, but we have done wickedly, so God has done wisely, but we have done foolishly, very foolishly. Those who not only keep their temper under crosses and provocations, but keep up good thoughts of God and sweet communion with him, whether their praise be of men or no, it will be of God, as Job's here was.