

A Message to the Glad and the Sad

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that Christians who are joyful should actively comfort and uplift those who are downcast, sharing God's promises and their own experiences to spread hope and salvation.

Scripture: Job 22:29, John 3:16, Romans 10:13, Psalm 23:4, Exodus 34:29

Topics: "Christian Encouragement", "Faith and Assurance"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon exhorts Christians who are joyful in their faith to reach out and comfort those who are downcast, emphasizing the communal nature of God's grace. He highlights the importance of sharing Scripture promises and personal testimonies to uplift others. Spurgeon also encourages those who are struggling to be open to receiving comfort and to trust in God's saving power. This message serves as a timeless reminder of the Christian duty to spread hope and encouragement within the community of believers.

Transcript

"When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person." Job 22:29.

THIS is Eliphaz, the Temanite, who is speaking, and he is telling Job what he thinks would be the condition of a man who had been sincere. He says that surely, God's Presence would be with him, the light would shine upon his ways and then, when he was, himself, happy in the Light of God, when other men were cast down, he would be able to say to them, "there is lifting up." Keeping that thought in mind, I will commence my discourse, this evening, by observing that if any of us have the Light of God, it is not given to us for ourselves alone. There is nothing selfish in the gifts of God. The Jews were elected to receive the Oracles of God, but it was in order that they might keep them for the rest of us, that in the midst of Israel the lamp of the Truth of God might be trimmed and kept burning for the nations that then waited in darkness.

When God calls any man by His Grace, it is with a view to others. Your salvation has many hooks to it with which to draw on the salvation of many more. If a man is truly converted, the influence of his conversion will spread to others—it is an act of mercy from God to him with a view also to his children, his friends, his neighbors, his dependents. It is the same with the Light in the Believer's heart. When you are very merry, shut not up your mirth within your own soul, but sing Psalms that others may hear your gladness. When God makes you a feast, eat not your morsel, alone, but call in many of the poor, the lame, the halt and the

blind, that they may feast with you, for there are many such in God's family and they will be glad to come to spiritual as well as to temporal feasts. If your face is made to shine in the Light of God, it is not that you may see it, for Moses "knew not that the skin of his face shone," but it is that others may see what a Light God has put in your countenance and may rejoice in that Light.

I fear that many Christian people have lost their comfort through trying to keep it to themselves. The manna was sweet and they had gathered more than they could eat. They went, therefore, to their chest and stored it up, and expected to go on the morrow and have another feast all to themselves. But when they lifted the lid—ah, you know what happened to manna if they kept it till the morning! And our joys will also breed worms and stink (that is the plain English of it), when we keep them to ourselves! They are meant to be scattered abroad. In this respect, "There is that which scatters and yet increases and there is that which withholds more than is meet, but it tends to poverty."

Now, coming to our text, my talk will be on this wise. First, I will try to show you what the happy Christian ought to do. And, secondly, what downcast people ought to do.

I. first, then, **WHAT THE HAPPY BELIEVER OUGHT TO DO.** "When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up."

Well, he ought to do this, first—he should notice those who are cast down. We are such foolish creatures that sometimes, when the Lord trusts us with a happy experience, we begin to grow mightily proud and we look down upon His tried and afflicted people. Even among those who know the Lord, if they have a very charming experience and enter into high fellowship with God, there is a tendency to begin to think that the poor doubting and fearing ones are very much to be censured and blamed, or, at any rate, that they are to be ignored and left to themselves. "Well," says someone, "really it quite depresses me to talk with old Mrs. So-and-So, and I could not keep my joy if I were to go and try to encourage that young man who is always so cast down." Ah, my dear Friend, but if you begin to talk like that, it may not be long before you will even envy that old lady you now despise—and wish you were half as hopeful of salvation as that young man whom you just now condemned! Remember that when the fat cattle begin to push with horn and with shoulder, the Lord knows how to bring their fat down very speedily, so that they can be trusted among the lean cattle without being so domineering over them. The duty of a happy Christian is to take notice of those who are not so joyous as he is, to seek them out, to condescend to men of low estate. When you have abundant provision in your house, it is your duty to send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. Mind that you attend to this matter lest your Lord should put you on short commons, too, and make you feel a little more as you ought to towards the afflicted.

The next thing a happy Christian ought to do when he has noticed and found out the sad ones, he should go and talk to them. "When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up." I often speak upon this subject and, therefore, I cannot say anything new. But I do wish to say over again that if all joyful Believers who have attained to full assurance of faith would more often speak to troubled ones, they might do a vast amount of good. I think, dear Friends, that you miss many opportunities of serving the Lord through forgetfulness or through diffidence. I notice that when converts do not begin to speak a little for Christ very early in their Christian career, they become tongue-tied—that is how we get so many dumb members of the Church who seem as if they could not offer up a prayer to save their lives. And what is worse, they cannot talk to their personal friends about the things of God. It is a very great pity that it is so and I think I must have an operation performed on some of you children who are dumb. It is a very sad thing for the father of a family to have a number of children who never speak. There is a sweetness about

every child's voice, is there not? There is a different tone, a different form of speech with each child, and it would not content the head of the household if he could say, "I can hear the older ones speak, but the youngest is quite silent." We want them all to open their mouths, to begin their speech with childlike prattle—then we shall be glad when they can all speak plainly the language of the land in which they were born.

Dear Christian people, try to be speaking Christians! Especially when you come across any who are cast down. Remember what you, yourself, owe to some loving word spoken by a Brother or Sister in years gone by. Will you not repay it by speaking comfort to some of the sorrowing ones? Many of you owe your hope of Heaven to the preaching of the Word. It may be that you cannot preach and if you attempted it, you would be very unwise. But do try, with such ability as you have, to tell at least to one other in bondage that there is liberty to be had, that his chain may be cut and that he may escape from the taskmaster's hand. Say to him, "though you are cast down, there is lifting up." Look for the sad and sorrowful and speak to them, and so be, each one of you, according to your ability, a comforter by the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit.

The particular thing I would have you say to them is this, remind them of the promises of God. When any persons say to you, "Well, if I were to meet with a desponding person, I would not know what to do," tell them to commence by quoting a promise from the Scriptures. When that eminent German critic, Bengel, the very father of true Biblical criticism, lay sick, he was very sorely tried with doubts and fears and he, therefore, sent for a young man from the College and said to him, "Young brother, it is very dark with me I need you to say something that will cheer me." But the youth answered, "My dear Sir, you are an old man, you cannot expect me to say anything that can comfort you." "But," said Bengel, "you are a student of divinity and you will have to speak to men, like me, who are cast down, if you are to do any real service in the ministry. I hope you will have something cheering to say to me." "Then, Sir," the student replied, "I do not know that I can say anything to you except that, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Bengel, "what better thing could you have said? You have opened a window for me." When that great saint and preacher, Augustine, lay dying—and I venture to say of Augustine that among all who were born of women, there has hardly ever been a greater than he—his mind was equal to any philosophy for its depth, its length and its breadth. And as an instructor in theology he still remains, under Christ, next to the Apostle Paul, the master-teacher of the churches—yet, as he lay dying, he asked to have certain texts of Scripture printed in large capitals. Which do you suppose he chose? You may think that he selected some deep and mysterious passage about the high doctrine which he so greatly loved, but he did nothing of the kind. He chose those texts of Scripture which we commonly quote to sinking sinners—such as these—"He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." And that great saint feasted his dying eyes on the texts which we usually give to babes in Christ's faith, or those who are seeking the Savior, for they suited him just then!

I want you who are very happy, you whom the Lord has made joyous and glad so that you keep high festival from January to December, and all your days seem like Heaven upon earth—and there are some of us who have come to that blessed point—to be sure to tell others those rich and gracious words of God which abound in the Scriptures! Have them at your fingertips, so that you can find them in the Bible. Have them on the end of your tongue, so that you can quote them without turning to the Bible! Have them in the very center of your heart, so that they shall cheer and warm you, and that the heat from them shall radiate to warm others! It is a very bad stove that lets all the heat go out at the top of the chimney—we need a

grate that will throw the warmth into the room. I pray that God may make us distributors of joy among those who have little or none of it in themselves.

We ought, with those who are cast down, not only to tell them the promises, but we should tell them our own experience. A recital of our personal experience of God's goodness often helps a poor soul who is in deep trial. Just draw a chair up and sit by the sick one's bedside, and say, "I sought the Lord and He heard me." "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." If you can tell something that happened to you when you were in a condition similar to that of the person you are trying to comfort, you have hit the nail on the head. Who can cheer the widow like those of you who are widows? Who can comfort a bereaved mother like one who has been, herself, bereaved? Who can speak with a man in a great business trial like one who has been in much the same business and has been a loser, too? You feel so glad, somehow, that there is sympathy left in the world, that there is somebody whose face has been furrowed and tear-stained like your own. So, tell your own experience, dear Friends. If you haven't any, do not tell it—but if you have, spread it abroad to the honor of your great Father's name that others may be encouraged. Tell them, when they are cast down, that there is lifting up, for you were cast down and you were lifted up! Tell them that God deals thus with His children, and brings them low on purpose that they may see the power of His hand when He lifts them up!

If you do this, you may hope to be successful in cheering other people. Our text says, "When men are cast down, then you shall say, there is lifting up; and He shall save the humble person." And as the next verse puts it, very often the good man will "deliver the island of the innocent." When it is in danger, the godly man shall interpose and God will hear his prayer, and God's suffering people shall be screened from danger. To all of you who are very joyful and happy, I would say—do not go to bed until you have found somebody who is sitting in darkness, to whom you can say, "Friend, the Lord has, by His Grace, made my lamp burn very brightly, so I have brought it to you, that your lamp may be lighted, too." There is so much misery in this world that none of us ought to add to it. Some, alas, do so by their nasty speeches, their cross-grained tempers, their cutting, sarcastic observations and, sometimes, by their slanderous judgments. Let us, on the contrary, seek to increase happiness and joy wherever we can! Let us try to cheer all the disconsolate and spread throughout this weary world some of that savor of rest which the Lord smelled of old in Noah's sacrifice, and which He makes us, also, to rejoice in as we take Christ's yoke upon us and learn of Him, and so find rest unto our souls.

II. Now, secondly, I will pass on to tell you WHAT DOWNCAST PEOPLE OUGHT TO DO.

What should they do when we speak to them in the spirit I have described? Ought they not to respond to our desire to comfort them? You know, dear Friends, you cannot comfort a man against his will. You may lead a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. You may bring forward the most cheering promises, but you cannot lay them home to the heart that is weary if it refuses to receive them. What ought those who are cast down to do in order to help us in the task of cheering them?

Well, first, they should remember that they are not infallible. The most infallible people I have seen are those who are very much cast down, for they know so much better than we do who try to comfort them. "Yes, yes," they exclaim, "that is all very well for you to talk like that, but if you were in our circumstances, it would be a very different thing." Then you quote what you judge to be a suitable promise, but they say, "that does not apply to our case," and they spy out some little real or supposed difference by which they escape from the comfort you are so anxious to administer to them. Some people are wonderfully ingenious in inventing a great variety of processes of self-torture. In the black days of the Spanish

Inquisition, with their thumbscrews, and their racks, and their Virgin's embrace, and other diabolical things, they went a very long way in torturing their fellow men, but even the Spanish Inquisition had nothing like as much cleverness as the little inquisition that men and women set up in their own souls with which to torture themselves!

About a month ago, you remember that my text was concerning those fools who abhor all manner of meat [Sermon #1824, Volume 31—The History of Sundry Fools] and there are still some persons of that kind left in the world! This dish is too hot and that is too cold. This steak is too tender and that other is too tough—they do not like this drink because it is so sweet, others cry out because it is so sour—their food is never cooked so as to suit them and, "their soul abhors all manner of meat." My dear Friend, without being in the least sarcastic, but speaking to you very tenderly, I should like to hint that you do not know everything, after all. Though you may be a peer in the realm of misery, yet all wisdom does not lie with peers, in whatever house they may dwell! They sometimes make mistakes and, perhaps, you, also, are making a mistake just now. Is it not just possible that some of us know at least a little which you do not know, which might really help you in your time of trouble? There is a saying that "lookers-on see more than players," and I believe that, often, lookers-on can see the needs of a man's case better than he can see them himself! If you were not much of a seaman, and were out at sea, tossed up and down, and almost ready to perish through the fury of the waves, I think you ought not to be above taking warning from the signal of some old sailor who can tell you just what you ought to do in the hour of your distress. Should you not be willing to say, "That man is not so much troubled as I am. His brain is clearer, his heart is calmer, I should not wonder but what he might direct me rightly"?

The way for you sad souls to help us to comfort you is for us to see that you are willing to receive the message that the comforter is anxious to bring you. Then the battle is well begun and will soon end in a victory. Yet, how often, when we try to cheer the downcast, we meet with many who say, "We will never be convinced by that style of argument. It may be very good reasoning for some people, but it would never affect us." If it had so happened that the style of address had been quite different. If the earnest pleader had spoken from quite another quarter of the heavens of the Truth of God, such a hearer would have said, "That is not the way to persuade me. There may be a good deal for some minds in that style of talking, but to persons of my disposition and of my peculiar culture, there is no force about it." I have met with this gentleman numbers of times and I have heard him confute himself again and again. He has said today what he denied yesterday, and will repeat tomorrow! It has been his method to constantly say and to unsay, only he must always hinder all who would be the means of comforting him! I wish that any of us who may be in that state of mind would try to get out of it because if there is a good thing to be had, we ought not to need much persuasion to accept it—and if this good thing should be peculiarly necessary to our welfare and somebody who cannot have any motive but our good should entreat us to think of it—I fancy that it would be a sensible thing on our part to give a sober and discreet hearing to what he has to say.

Why, ordinarily, when we are unprejudiced, if we are driving along a road and somebody holds up his hands to alarm us, we pull up to know what he needs and if anybody were to shout at our door in the middle of the night, we would be anxious to enquire what was the reason for the disturbance. If there is a fire near us, we are usually ready enough to be warned, or if there is any good news to be heard, we are usually eager to be informed concerning it. And it is a strange thing that in matters which relate to our higher nature, our immortal soul which is to live forever in happiness or woe, we are so apt to refuse instruction and turn a deaf ear to those who seek our good! I beg you, dear Friends, to believe that in

these matters you are not infallible, and that some people know more than you do!

Next to that, you should be willing to believe what is reported to you by credible persons. Suppose any of us who have been troubled as you now are troubled, come to you and say, "Dear Friend, you will get out of this horrible pit and miry clay; he that is cast down, as you now are, will be lifted up again. You are feeling the burden of sin, but there is mercy and pardon even for you. You say that you have no strength, but there is One who is both able and willing to give you strength. I went to the Lord when I was just as downcast as you now are and when I rested wholly on Him, I found mercy, and if you will do the same, you will find mercy, too. Do you not think that you ought to believe my testimony? Do you imagine that I would deceive you? I know your sorrow of heart makes you feel a little bitter, yet do not say, in your haste, 'All men are liars,' for there are many who can join me in testifying to the Lord's pardoning mercy. If it is a matter touching your body, you will trust yourself with the doctor when you believe he has some ability as a physician and, in like manner, ought you not, when Christian people earnestly tell you the Truth about the Good Physician, to say to yourself, 'They would not deceive me. They are speaking in accordance with God's Word. I will believe them and I will believe God, and I will not doubt that through faith in Christ I shall have as happy an issue out of my soul-trouble as they have had'? If you will not go as far as that, you must permit me to say that I think you are acting very wrongly and that I really fear you desire to remain somewhat in the dark. I pray you, believe first, that you are not infallible and believe next, that which Christians testify to you.

Especially, dear sad Heart, believe the great Truth of my text—"When men are cast down, there is lifting up." Let me ask why you are cast down. "Oh," you cry, "I am so sad because of my sin." Then listen—"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Oh, that you would believe these testimonies of God concerning the putting away of sin and not be cast down any longer! "But," you say, "I have no righteousness and I cannot be accepted of God without a righteousness. I thought I had one, once, but I see that it is only a heap of filthy rags." Just so. I am glad you have discovered that fact, but the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth and worked out a perfect righteousness which He puts upon every believing sinner! The righteousness of Christ will be set to your account and imputed to you, if you believe in Him! And then, with His spotless vesture on, you shall be, even in the sight of the Most High, holy as the Holy One! You are cast down, but "there is lifting up."

"Yes," you say, "I know that the Lord says that there is lifting up, but I am so weak I cannot do anything." Should you be cast down about that? The Lord Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, is able to give you boundless strength. There is nothing that you will be called upon to do but what you shall be enabled to do if you will but trust the Lord. He will be your strength! He will help you to repent! He will help you to believe! He will help you to be gracious, to persevere, to resist temptation and to conquer sin if you will only trust Him! You are cast down, but you have no need to be, for "there is lifting up." I do not mind what it is about which you are cast down, dear Soul, if you will but trust. All things are possible to him that believes. Many of us have found it so ourselves, therefore we pray you to do as we have done—cease from all confidence in yourself and rest wholly in Christ—for so shall you certainly find eternal salvation.

Do not neglect to notice the second part of the text, for there is something else to be believed there—that God will save the humble. The margin has it, "He shall save him that has low eyes." The man who looks low. Now, dear Friends, are you a man who looks low? Some men are always looking up to the stars—their heads are swimming with conceit of their own excellence. God will not save such people—at

least not while they continue to be so proud. He will bring you down, if you are as high as that in your own estimation, for God will not give His Glory unto another. But if you are a man who looks low, He will save you. You have been looking to yourself, have you? You cannot see anything bright there—all is dark. I am glad it is so, for you are the sort of man God delights to save!

You have been looking down to the earth and you wondered you were not in your grave, or in Hell. That is right— you are the sort of man on whom God looks with approval! You thought that the very poorest of His people were worth ten thousand times as much as you were. You have envied the doorkeeper in the House of God. You are the sort of man God will save! We have some people about who are so big, so good, so intelligent, so wonderfully cultured and altogether such superior persons, that they cannot be content in any ordinary position. But these very superior persons, in their own opinion, are generally despised by God and by men, too! But those who think nothing of themselves, those who feel that they deserve only condemnation from God and who say that if He will but save them, it will be all of Grace, the gratitude for which they can never express—these are the people whom the text tells us that God will save!

I like to hear sinners give themselves a bad character—I mean, not in pretense, but in real earnest. There was a Brother came to me, the other night, in deep distress of soul. I let him tell me all his case. By what he said, he seemed to have been a terrible sinner, and when he had gone through the long black list, I said, as I looked at him, "You are the very man Jesus Christ came to save." And then I began to pick out the texts of Scripture that suited his case. I know he thought Jesus Christ came to save good people, but nowhere in the Bible is there anything of that kind, though we are told that, "Christ died for the ungodly." I got my poor sinful friend to see that Christ came to take the place of the guilty and that great Truth of Substitution laid hold upon him! I would that you might be led to the same point, and to say, "I am a sinner and I trust the sinners' Savior." If you are cast down on account of your sin, "there is lifting up." God will save the humble, the man or woman of low eyes. If you are as nothing in your own sight, God will save you! If you are less than nothing and yet trust Christ, He will be your All in All. I would that every downcast soul in the world would simply believe the promise of God and rest on it, trusting in Jesus and in Jesus only!

I have just two observations to make and then I have done my sermon. First, what a very little difference there is, after all, between those who are up and those who are down! You, my Brother, are full of joy and you begin to comfort a man who has no joy at all. He tells you what a sinner he is and if you feel as you ought, you say to yourself, "I was once just the same as this man now is, only perhaps he feels his sin more than I did." And when you comfort and direct him, so that he says, "My faith would touch the hem of Christ's garment," I know it brings the tears into your eyes and you say, "I will do the same. It may be that my past faith has been all a mistake, so I will begin again." I like to meet with people who are always beginning, just resting in Christ after 30 years' experience, as they did at the first, and saying, "I am nothing, but Christ is everything. I am more and more decreasing, that He may more and more increase and fill the full circle of my being to its utmost bound."

Then, do you not think it would be a good thing if those who are very happy and those who are very miserable, would alike give up walking by their feelings and would, both of them, live by faith? If there were two women in Sarepta, and one of them had a bushel of meal and a great keg of oil—and the other had only a little oil in a cruse and a handful of meal in the barrel—if they both lived by faith, it would not make any difference whether they had much or little meal and oil. Of the two, I should think that the one who had the big barrel would begin to see the meal diminish—and she might fret—while the woman who

had so little would never see her handful diminish, so she would not fret, for she lived by a miracle of faith! And I should think that the rich woman had better get down to be as poor as the other woman and live in the best possible way—by faith in God! I find that I cannot get on when I live by my feelings. They are like a barometer, sometimes they point to, "fair," sometimes to, "much rain." There is very little in our feelings that is to be depended upon! The air may have something to do with them, or they may be affected by what we wear, or what we eat, or with the last person who spoke to us—the most unreliable things in the world are our own feelings! Let us, each one, say, "Lord, I will believe You though I feel heavy and dull. Lord, I will still believe You, though I am now light and joyful. Lord, my hope is in Your Son when I cannot see any evidence of Grace in my soul—and my trust is in your Son alone when all my evidences are bright and clear."

Our poor feelings may depend on which way the wind is blowing! When a man goes to France on business three times a week, he is not very particular to ask what sort of passage he will be likely to have. It is those who play at traveling that need to have the water as smooth as glass! So, children of God who do real business with their Heavenly Father come to be almost indifferent whether they are very glad or very sad, for, after all, the safety of the man who crosses the sea does not depend upon his feelings, but on the boat in which he is sailing! So, our safety lies in the stability of the Christ to whom we have committed ourselves—not in our feelings which are as variable as the vapors that fill the sky. "Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Put down your own feelings and lift up the Cross of Christ! Cling to Him and say, with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." So shall it be well with you, both now and forever. The Lord bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOB23.

We shall read, this evening, in the Book of Job. May the good Spirit instruct us during our reading! Here we shall see Job in a very melancholy plight, grievously distressed in mind and yet, for all that, holding fast to his God. We do not want any of you to get into this gloomy condition, but if you are in such a state as that, or if you ever should be, may you behave as well as Job did! It needs a deal of Divine Grace to travel all right in the dark, to keep in the good way when you cannot see it, to cling to God when you cannot even feel that He is near you. But the Lord can give Grace even for such an emergency as that.

Verses 1, 2. Then Job answered and said, Even today is my complaint bitter: my stroke is heavier than my groaning. Job admitted that he groaned, but he claimed that he had good reason for doing so—that, indeed, the source of his grief was greater than the streams of his grief—so that he could not, even with his groans and tears, express half the anguish that he felt.

3, 4. Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him and fill my mouth with arguments. Good men are washed towards God even by the rough waves of their grief. And when their sorrows are deepest, their highest desire is not to escape from them, but to get at their God. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Job wanted to spread out his whole case before the Lord, to argue it with Him, to present his petitions to the Most High and to find out from God why He was contending with him. It is all right with you, Brothers and Sisters, if your face is towards your God in rough weather. It is all wrong with you, Brothers and Sisters, if the weather is very calm and your face is turned away from your God.

5. I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me. I am not sure that Job would know and understand all that God said. The Lord says a great deal, even to men

like Job, that they do not easily understand, and it is not for us to require that God should explain everything to us. He gives not account of any of His matters. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus?" Our wisdom will be to plead with God our suit for pardon and for mercy, and to ask Him to at least make us understand the way of salvation, that we may run in it and be at peace with Him.

6. Will He plead against me with His great power! 'If I were to go to God and urge my suit with Him, would He crush me with the might of His majesty? Would He overwhelm me with His Omnipotence?"

6. No, but He would put strength in me. Such was Job's faith in God, that he was sure He would rather help him than hinder him—"He would put strength in me."

7. 8. There the righteous might dispute with Him; so should I be delivered forever from my Judge. Behold, I go forward, but He is not there. "I look to the future, I try to forecast the days that are yet to come, but I cannot see God there."

8. And backward, but I cannot perceive Him.' 'I remembered the days of old. I turned over the pages of my diary, but I could not find Him there." There are cases in which one who is a true child of God cannot, for a while, find his Father. Do not condemn yourself because you are in the dark! On the contrary, remember then that there are many who fear the Lord, yet who walk in darkness and have no Light. Let all such trust in the name of the Lord and stay themselves upon their God—and in due season the Light of God will come to them.

9. On the left hand, where He does work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him. If this is the case with you, be thankful that you want to see your God. Let your very desires after Him, your anxiety because you miss Him and the sorrow of your spirit when you are, apparently, deserted by Him, encourage you to believe that you are one of His children! Another woman's child will not cry after you, dear mother—it is your own child that cries after you—and if you were not a child of God, you would not long and cry for the joy of His Presence. If you were not His child, that Presence would be no delight to you, it would be your dread.

10. But He knows the way that I take. Oh, what a mercy that is! "I cannot see Him, but He can see me. My grief has blinded my eyes with floods of tears, but nothing blinds His eyes. Like as a father pities his children, so does He pity me and regards me with the full observation of His gigantic mind—"He knows the way that I take."

10. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. It is grand to be able to say that while you are in the fire! It is very easy to say it about another man who is in the furnace, but when you are in there, yourself, then to say, "I shall come forth as gold," is the sublimity of faith! It is a very simple matter to say, "If I were again put into the fire, I know I should come forth as gold." But it is when the burning heat is melting you, when you seem to be shriveled up in the crucible and so little of you is left—then is the time to say, "When the Lord has finished His work upon me, when He has thoroughly assayed me, I shall come forth as gold."

11. My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined. You cannot talk like that in the time of trouble if you have not led a sincere, upright and gracious life. Those battles into which men come in the Valley of Humiliation are often brought about by their tripping when they are going down the hill. Our sins find us out at length, but if God enables us to walk uprightly, then we feel very confident—not in our own uprightness, but in God's love and Grace.

12. 13. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips. I have esteemed the Words of His mouth more than my necessary food. But He is in one mind and who can turn Him! Job looks at His grief and says concerning it, "It is according to God's mind that I should have this grief, and who can turn Him?" There may be times when God wills that His servant should be in trouble. And when God lets down the iron bar, who can lift it up? When He shuts up a soul in Doubting Castle, how shall it escape until He wills its deliverance?

13-15. And what His soul desires, even that He does, for He performs the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him. Therefore am I troubled at His Presence, when I consider if am afraid of Him. Yet he longed for Him. So, sometimes, we long for the Presence of God, yet that Presence strikes us with a solemn awe whenever we are favored with it. We ask to see our Lord, yet when we do see Him, we have to say, with John, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." Or perhaps we are like Peter who, when the Lord Jesus was in his boat, fell down before Him and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." The majesty of Christ's pure Presence was too much for poor imperfect Peter—and so it is for us.

16, 17. For God makes my head soft, and the Almighty troubles me because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither has He covered the darkness from my face. Now you see where you might be if you had Job's experience. If you are not there, be very grateful. And if you are there, say, "There is a better man than I am who has been this way before me. I can see his footprints on the sands of time and I am encouraged by his example to trust my Lord in the darkest hour." You are not the only man or woman who has been in the coal cellar—there have been better than you in the dark places of the earth before now! Therefore, still have hope and be confident in God that in His own good time He will deliver you.

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