

God's Firebrands

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon powerfully illustrates that every believer is a miraculous brand plucked from the consuming fire of sin by the sovereign grace of God.

Scripture: Zechariah 3:2, Isaiah 1:18, John 3:16, Romans 6:6, Ephesians 2:8-9, Psalm 51:10, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Hebrews 12:29

Topics: "Salvation", "Grace", "Sin and Redemption"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon vividly portrays the sinner as a combustible brand naturally destined for destruction by the fire of sin. Yet, by God's sovereign grace, believers are miraculously plucked out of this consuming fire, a rescue that is both astonishing and cause for profound gratitude. Spurgeon encourages listeners to recognize the wonder of their salvation, the power of divine mercy, and to respond with humility and joy. He also offers hope to those still trapped in sin, urging them to seek the saving grace of Christ.

Transcript

"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Zechariah 3:2.

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon on verses 1 to 5 is Sermon #611, Volume 11—ZECHARIAH'S VISION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST.]

IT may be well to explain these words, for simple as they are, a few words of exposition may be useful to open up the metaphor and enforce the thrilling Truth of God that underlies it.

There is mention of a fire. A cry of "FIRE!" has something fearful in it. When a fire begins to get the upper hand with us, it is terrible in its destructiveness. The fire here meant is more awful than any flame that makes havoc of matter, and its devastations are ten thousand times more appalling! It is the fire of sin. It blazed in the heart of an angel and he became a devil. Its sparks fell into the bosom of mother Eve and into the heart father Adam—and Paradise was burned up and the world became a wilderness. Sin is a fire which destroys the comfort of mankind, here, and all the joy of mankind hereafter. It is a flame which yields no comfortable warmth. The sinner may dance in the light of it for a moment, but in sorrow will he have to lie down in it forever! Woe unto those who have to make their bed in this fire—to dwell with these consuming flames for a term that knows no ending!

There is, further, mention of a brand. Nothing can be more suitable to burn in the fire than a brand. It is not a branch just taken from the tree, fresh and full of sap—it is a brand—dry, sere timber, fit for the burning. It is not a mass of stone or iron, but a combustible brand. And what does this indicate but man's natural heart which is so congenial to the fire of sin? Our heart is like the tinder—Satan has but to strike the spark and how readily does the spark find a nest within our bosom! As the firebrand fits the fire, so does the sinner fit in with sin. When sin and the sinner come in contact, it is, "Hail fellow, well met!" They are bosom companions. The sinner's heart is the nest well prepared—and sins are the foul birds which come to nestle there! Not to go a step without a particular application, it will be well for us all to understand that we are, ourselves, like the brands—there is a fitness between us and sin. If we burn in the fire of sin, it is no wonder! With our fallen nature, it is no greater marvel that we should be incited by sin than that the firebrand should kindle in the flame!

Beyond the distinct allusion to a fire and a brand, we read of a brand in the fire. Nor is it merely a brand lying upon the heap, to be, by-and-by, put upon the flames—it is "a brand plucked out of the fire." It has been in the fire! Does not this portray our condition—not only congenial for the fire of sin, but actually burning and blazing in it? We began very early. Disobedience to parents, angry tempers, petty lies, many sorts of childish obstinacies and wrongdoings—all these were like the first catching on fire of the brand. We have blazed away the reverse of merrily since then—some have become charred with sin till their very bodies contain the marks of that tremendous fire, while in every case the soul receives a charring and blackening from the flame. Not one of us has been able, even with godly training and Christian parentage, to escape from burning to some extent in this fire. Alas! Alas, for those who are even now in it!

There is a fair side to the picture—it is not altogether gloomy. While we have a fire, a brand and a brand in the fire, we also have, blessed be God, a brand plucked out of the fire. Sinners these, who though they have still within them the propensity to sin, are no longer in the fire of sin! They have been taken away from it. They sin through infirmity, but willful sin they do not commit. Their nature has been challenged. They have received the renewing Grace of God. The fire that once burned within them has been quenched. They recollect, to their grief and sorrow, the mischief that sin did to them, but it is not doing them the same mischief now. They are delivered from the body of sin and death!

Still, the force of the passage seems to lie in the words "plucked out off" You may sit down on the bench by the hearth in one of those good old country fireplaces where they still burn the logs and, perhaps, a brand drops out upon the hearth where it flames a little while and then goes out. This is not a picture that we can appropriate, for there never was an instance known of a man, by himself, dropping out of the fire of sin! Alas, we love it too well! "The burnt child dreads the fire," says the proverb, but we are like the silly moth that flies at the candle and singes its wings, yet still uses those wings to mount up again into the flame! And if it falls— all full of pain and torment, with burnt legs and with almost all its wing gone—it struggles, it pants, it labors to get into the fire again! Such is man. He loves this fire which is his destruction! In youth, we put our finger into the flame. We feel that it is burnt, yet again we put our hand into it. Then, in later years, we persist deliberately till that sin has consumed us from head to foot! And we lie down in our grave with our bones filled with disease—foul fruit of the sins of our youth—our very corpses in their mortality bearing witness to the corruption of our morals!

Albeit the Christian is relieved of that peril, he does not escape by his own free will. He is plucked out of it. To be plucked out, there needs a hand quick to rescue. You know that pierced hand and how it burnt itself when it was thrust into the hot coals to pluck us out like brands from the burning! It was no use waiting till we dropped out, for we would never have done so—there was no hope of that. With all the appliances of

Grace and of Judgment, the two together could not bring us out! But effectual vocation did it, when the Spirit of the living God took the firebrand in His hand and without asking it whether it would or not, by the sweet and irresistible compulsions of Divine Grace plucked the brand out of the fire! Every Believer in the Lord Jesus is a trophy of the strength as well as of the mercy of God. It took as much Omnipotence to snatch him from the fire as it needs to make a world—and every Believer may feel that he is a brand plucked from the fire.

This question, as it appears to me, will bear three renderings. First, it may be looked upon as an exclamation of wonder—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire!" Secondly, as an enquiry or hope—"Is not this a brand— particularly this one—"plucked out of the fire?" And, in the third place, it is certainly a defiance for us, assured of our safety, to throw into the face of Satan, the accuser—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

I. THE TEXT BEARS THE SENSE OF WONDERMENT—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

It was said of Joshua, the High Priest. There was such astonishment at his preservation, that with hands uplifted, the question was asked, "Is not this man just like a firebrand snatched from among the glowing coals?" Nor is this marvel confined to Joshua. I believe this is a matter of wonder in the case of every saved sinner. Was there ever a man saved by Grace who was not a wonder? Is not every Christian conscious that there is some peculiarity about his own salvation which makes it marvelous? If you cannot all chime in with, "Yes," I must at least lead the chorus in which an overwhelming multitude will join—confessing that it was so with myself! For a long while, I could not believe that it was possible that my sins could be forgiven. I do not know why, but I seemed to be the odd person in the world. When the catalog was made out, it seemed to me that, for some reason, I must have been left out. If God had saved me and not the rest of the world, I would have wondered, indeed! But if He had saved all the world except me, that would have seemed to be according to the common course—and a right course, too. And now, being saved by Grace, I cannot help saying, "Yes, I am a brand plucked out of the fire!" And does not each Believer say the same? Why, look at the Believer! He is fallen, lost, and yet, though lost in his first parent, he is saved in Christ! The Believer's own nature is depraved like that of other men and yet, contrary to nature, his is made a new creature! As though Niagara were suddenly made to leap upwards instead of falling downwards, our nature, so mighty for sin, has been suddenly turned into the opposite direction and we have been compelled to seek after Grace and holiness!

Out of the state of our natural depravity we have been plucked so that every man who is delivered from its sway may well say, "Am not I a brand plucked out of the fire?" Each Christian, knowing his own heart and having a special acquaintance with his own peculiar besetting sin, feels as if the conquest of his own will by the Grace of God were a more illustrious trophy of that Grace than the conquest of a thousand others! I can well understand that none of us will yield the palm in Heaven to any other as to our indebtedness to the Mercy of God. You may sing, and sing loudly, each one of you, and each one say, "I owe more to God's Grace than any other"—but there is not one of us who will concede the point! We shall each strike up our own peculiar note and louder yet, and louder yet, and louder until our notes of gratitude will rise to the seventh Heaven—"unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood: to whom be Glory and dominion forever and ever!" Each Christian, then, for some reason, will feel that he is peculiarly "a brand

plucked out of the fire." I envy not the feeling of any Believer who should dispute this. May you and I be more thoroughly baptized into the spirit of humility—that with deeper gratitude we may feel how peculiarly

we are indebted to the Grace of God!

Though this is the case universally, there are instances so uncommon that they excite surprise in the minds of all who hear of them. In the cases of extraordinary conversion, one of the first is the salvation of the extremely aged. Imagine a person, here, who has lived to be 70 or 80 years old and all this time his heart has never heard the sigh of repentance and never felt the joy of pardon! You have lived only to cumber the ground all these years and you are still an enemy to God! While on the borders of the grave you have no hope of Heaven. O Soul, your case is very sad! It were enough to make angels weep, if weep they could, to think that such an one as you, after so many years of long-suffering, should not be melted thereby! Now, suppose the Lord should appear to you tonight and say to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you. I took you into the House of Prayer tonight on purpose that My Word might come with power to your soul, and I have this to say to you—"Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." What do you say, you hoary Jacob, but without Jacob's faith, leaning upon your staff—would it not be a wonder if now you should begin to love the Lord and begin to believe in Jesus? Oh, may God give you Grace to do so! And then I am sure you will say to your kinsfolk and acquaintance, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

There have been instance of persons converted at the most advanced age. There was one who went, I believe, to hear Mr. Toplady preach the very day when he turned a hundred! He had been a constant neglecter of the House of God, but when he arrived at the age of a hundred, attracted by the fame of Mr. Toplady, who was an exceedingly popular, and he certainly was a highly evangelical preacher, and happened to be preaching in the town where the man lived, he said he would go on that day to hear him, that he might remember his birthday. He went—and that day God, in His Grace, met with him! I remember, too, the instance of a man who was converted by a sermon which he heard Mr. Flavel preach, and which was blessed to him 83 years after he had heard it, when he was at the age of ninety-eight. The Word came with power to his soul after all that interval of time! Just as he was on the borders of the tomb, he was made to enter into eternal life! If the God of Infinite Mercy gives such a blessing to aged ones here—then they will be brands plucked out of the fire!

Remarkable, too—I might almost say exceptional—is the conversion of people who have been accustomed to hear the Gospel from their youth up, who, though not, perhaps, absolutely aged, have nevertheless been for years receiving Gospel privileges without any result. They have been lying at Bethesda's pool with its many porches, for 40 or 50 years! Oh, there are some such here. You have not heard me all that time. Some other ministry has, in times past, fallen upon your ears and, perhaps, our own voice is now familiar to you through your having heard it these 10 or 12 years. You listened to it at first with attention. You were riveted for a little while. Then it grew to be an ordinary thing and though you still give the preacher a fair hearing, there is very little of that drinking in of the Word of God which there once seemed to be. Some of you, perhaps, will almost go to sleep here now. I sometimes wish that you were elsewhere—perhaps another voice would make your ears tingle—you know my voice full well. It is quite possible for a minister to preach too long to any one set of people—they can get so accustomed to the tones of his voice that they are never awakened. The "click, click" of the mill gets to be so to the miller that he goes to sleep. Over in Bankside, I am told, when a man is first put inside a boiler while the rivets are being fastened, he cannot stay long—the noise is so dreadful. But after a time, the boilermaker gets so used to the horrible din that he can almost go to sleep inside! Well, now, so it is, too, under any ministry when the people get Gospel-hardened. The same sun which melts wax hardens clay. The influences

which tend to make some people better, make other people a great deal worse. Some of you have thus trifled with your own conscience! Should you be saved tonight, you would be brands plucked out of the fire, and may we not hope that you shall be? Will not some of us pray for it?

Further still, and apparently the wonder increases, there have been cases of gross sinners in which this marvel has been still more exciting! It is a merciful thing that God forgives drunkenness. Some of those who have wallowed in it have been saved. We sometimes talk of a man being "as drunk as a beast," but who ever heard of a beast being drunk? Why, it is more beastly than anything a beast ever does! I do not believe that the devil himself is ever guilty of anything like that. I never heard even him charged with being a drunk. It is a sin which has no sort of excuse—those who fall into it generally fall into other deadly vices. It is the devil's backdoor to Hell and everything that is hellish, for he that once

gives away his brains to drink is ready to be caught by Satan for anything! Oh, but while the drunk cannot have eternal life abiding in him while he is such, is it not a joy to think of the many drunks who have been washed and saved? This night, there are sitting here those who have done with their cups, who have left behind them their strong drink and who have renounced the haunts of their debauchery! They are washed and cleansed—and when they think of the contrast between where they used to be on Sunday night and where they are now, they give an echo to the question—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Very frequently where this sin comes, blasphemy is added to it! And how many we have who, though now saved by Grace, were once fearful swearers and could dare the God who made them to destroy them! Or to inflict the most horrible judgments which it were a shame even to mention, upon them! But Almighty Grace takes the swearer and says to him, "You shall curse no longer, for I have blessed you; I do not intend that you should imprecate curses on yourself; you shall now begin to plead with Me for saving mercy!" Many, many, many such, whose tongues might well have rotted in their mouths through blasphemy, have been cleansed by Jesus' blood! And the tongue can now sing, that once could curse, and the lips can now pray, that once could utter oaths! "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Oh, you are here, Jack, are you? You can swear! Sometimes, when you are at sea, you roll out an oath or two. And when you are on shore, you know what you are—but may my Master meet you and may He once and for all transform you and put His Holy Spirit to dwell in you, instead of the seven devils that are now there! And then you will say, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Can we pass over the case of some who have given themselves up to sin, to work it with greediness? Alas, how men turn aside with scorn from the harlot in the street, and they think of her as though she must be consigned to the seventh Hell, albeit that they, themselves, perhaps, are viler still! But how shall we give a preference to one sinner rather than to another when it must take two to commit this iniquity? But, alas, we know that in London, our streets abound with those whose very names seem to make the cheek of modesty to mantle with a blush. Well, should there be such an one strayed in here—Sister—for you are a Sister, still—the Lord Jesus receives sinners, and though you have sinned very foully, "there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared." And His voice still says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Whoever you may be that has fallen into these polluting sins which do such terrible mischief and which bring down God's anger upon men—still the heart of God melts with pity to the chief of sinners and He cries, "How can I give you up?" and lets the lifted thunder drop! Oh, when such are saved—and there are scores, and scores, and scores, to our knowledge, now rejoicing in Christ who have found peace in this House, though once the chief of sinners—when such are saved, we say of each one of them, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Or, what if you have even worn the felon's dress? What if you have even plunged into such sin that the very thought of it makes your ears tingle? What if the darkness of the night could tell of such hideous crimes that the brightness of day seems all too good for such an offender as you have been? Still the rivers and floods of Divine Mercy can break forth and rise above the loftiest Alps and Andes of iniquity! The deluge of the Savior 's pardoning Grace shall mount to 20 cubits upwards, until the tops of the mountains of sin are covered and you, the chief of sinners, shall have it said of you, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

We have gone a good length in the way of wonderment, yet one wonder, I think, is greater than all. I have almost ceased to wonder when the swearer is converted, or when the harlot is saved—not because it is not a mighty act of Grace, but because it is common enough to be often repeated! God's mercy is extended very freely to such sinners as these, but there is a wonder which I do not often see. I do see it, though not often—I wish I could. It is when a self-righteous religious man gets saved.

"What," you say, "do you mean by that?" Why, I mean those good people who go to Church and Chapel regularly, have family prayers, say their own prayers and think themselves upright! They will not confess that they have sinned, except in the mere complimentary way in which they are accustomed to say that they are "miserable sinners," though they do not look very miserable! Perhaps I address some such, now, who felt, while I was preaching to the sinner, as if their dainty holiness was quite shocked. They are double-distilled in their refinement. They are unutterably holy and free from hypocrisy—their heart all the while loathing the plan of salvation and rejecting the Grace of God—because they believe that they are as good as they need be! To talk to them of crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is to insult them! Have they not been baptized? Have they not been confirmed? Have they not gone through all the means? All must be right with them—they are so good—who could think of finding fault with them?

Now, if ever such people as these are saved from this terrible disease of self-righteousness, we would have to say, indeed, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And nowadays it is getting so common that it ought to be a subject of prayer with God' s people that God would deliver this land from the spreading poison—the Romanism, alias Pusey-ism—which has covered it almost everywhere! If a man wants to make sure of everlasting wrath, let him fall into the deep ditch of Puseyism, for the abhorred of the Lord fall therein! You may get out the common sinner, but those who wrap themselves about with vestments and fine garments of ceremony—who shall reach these? The hocus-pocus of the priesthood, the gewgaws, the ceremonies, the mummary which they designate worship—these things form the refuge of lies behind which they hide themselves—and the true Gospel of the blessed God is scarcely heard! What with their chants and intoning, how can the still small voice of the Gospel be heard? Through the dim smoke of incense and the glare of gorgeous vestments, how shall Christ have a hearing? The Man of Nazareth, alone, is He who can save sinners! May He, in His mighty power to save, rend away these rags of Rome from before His Cross and let the naked beauty and simplicity of the Gospel shine out again! Once more may we have to say, in the words of Cowper—

"Legible only by the light they give,

Stand the soul-quickenings words—

'BELIEVE AND LIVE.'"

II. With more brevity than the preacher likes, though with perhaps as much amplitude as will be pleasant to yourselves, we shall now take the text BY WAY OF ENQUIRY OR HOPE. Our time has so far gone that I

can only hint at what I meant to say.

When a sinner's eyes are suffused with tears and the sorrowful cry breaks forth, "Alas! Woe is me!" you may then say, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" for the tear of sorrow for sin is a blessed omen of Mercy's dawning! May Mercy reach her noontide soon! And when, alone, the knee is bent and the whispered prayer goes up, "Jesus, Master, pity me! Save me, or I die," the angels recognize the penitent's prayer. They say, "Behold, he prays!" And then they feel that this is "a brand plucked out of the fire." The tear of penitence and the prayer of the seeking soul are evidences of the working of Almighty Grace!

And when the poor soul at last, driven by necessity, throws itself flat at the foot of the Cross and rests its hope wholly and alone on Jesus, then we may say of it, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

And when, in the midst of many a conflict and soul-struggle, the heart flings away its idols and resolves to love Christ, and vows in His strength to be devoted to His service, we may say again with pleasure, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

I would invite you to think over these signs of Grace and if you see them in yourselves, may you ask the question, and be able to answer it with joy, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

III. And lastly, WHAT A QUESTION OF DEFIANCE THIS IS!

Do you not catch the idea of the text? There stood Joshua, the High Priest. There stood the angel of the Lord and there stood Satan. The adversary began to attack Joshua, but the angel of the Lord said to him, "'The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you: Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?' What have you to do with him? If God has plucked him out of the fire, you can never put him in again. Seeing God has plucked him out of the fire, go your way and mind your own business! You have nothing to do with this saved soul, this elect vessel, this one whom God has chosen, in whom the Spirit's power has shown itself! He has plucked him out of the fire! Go your way, Satan, and leave this soul alone!"

It is a defiance full of majesty and grandeur! It reflects a gorgeous luster on the past 'God saved that soul,' says the angel to Satan. "Why did He do it? Why, because He chose him, because He ordained him unto eternal life, because everlasting love had set itself upon him! What have you to do with him? If God has chosen him, do you think that you can undo the Divine decree? Can you reverse the counsels of the Most High, or dash in pieces the settled purposes of the Infinite mind? Go your way! God has snatched him from the fire, determined to save him. Go and think not to frustrate that Divine design!"

Nor less did the angel seem to dart a look forward. If God had plucked him from the fire why did He do it? To let him go back again? Will God play fast and loose with men? Does He pluck brands out of the fire to thrust them into the flame again? Absurd! Preposterous! Why has He plucked this brand out of the fire? Why, to keep it from ever being burned! That brand, taken out of the fire, shall be exhibited in Heaven as a proof of what God's Almighty Grace can do!

And therefore the angel says to the devil, "Get out of here! What have you to do with this man? God means to save him, so can you destroy him? God has done that which is the earnest and pledge of his perfect eternal safety—do you think that you can thwart God's resolution and intention?"

Now, Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, realize in yourselves this precious thought, each one of you. If the Lord has changed you. If, indeed, you are a brand plucked out of the fire, why should you fear the

temptation which now assails you? Dread not all the temptations that may attack you! Weak as you are, the God who has done so much for you cannot leave you! He will not leave His purpose half accomplished! He will not be disappointed. He will to the end carry on His work till He brings you up to Heaven. Why, I think some of you who were very great offenders ought to often take comfort from your conversion—you can say, "What a change there is in me! How far beyond anything I could ever have worked in myself. It must have been God's work—

'And can He have taught me to trust in His name, And thus far have brought me, to put me to shame?'"

The whole end to which we drive is this—May God enable us all to see that our salvation is in Him! Jonah had to go into the whale's belly to learn that grand axiom of theology—and the most of us had to be sorely beaten before we found out that "salvation is of the Lord." If you know this, look to the Lord for it! Repose yourself on Him right now and you shall be His forever—you shall dwell on high, your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks—and your eyes shall see the King in His beauty—they shall behold the land that is very far off!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOB 1

Verse 1. There was a man in the land of Uz. Job was a man, indeed—a true man—a man of the highest type, for he was a man of God.

1. Whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright. Job was thoroughly true and sincere. And in this sense he "was perfect and upright."

1. And one that feared God, and eschewed evil. He had both sides of a godly character—a love of God and a hatred of sin.

2. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. Job was highly favored in having such a family of sons and daughters.

3. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the East. Job was not a poor man, yet he was a man of God—one of those "camels" that manage to go through "the eye of a needle."

4. And his sons went and feasted in their houses, each on his appointed day; and sent and called for their three sisters— Who were very modest and retiring, and would not have gone to the feast if they had not been sent for, but their brothers were kind and thoughtful, as all good brothers will be.

4. 5. To eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them. Job did not go to the feast. Perhaps he felt too old—his character was too staid for such a gathering. He had higher joys that were nearer his heart than any earthly feast could be.

5. And rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their heart. Thus did Job continually. He thought, "Perhaps, in their rejoicing, unholy thoughts may have intruded. They may have been unguarded and lax in their conduct. They may not have fallen into any gross sin, but in their feasting they may have sinned against God. Therefore I will offer sacrifices for them." "Thus did Job continually." Not only occasionally, but every day he sacrificed upon his altar unto God, and so sought to keep his household

right before Jehovah.

6. Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. Into Heaven? Oh, no! The Presence of God is very widespread and there was no need to admit the evil spirit into Heaven in order that he might be present before God!

7. And the LORD said unto Satan, From where do you come? God is Satan's Master, so He asks him where he has been. I wonder whether if the Lord were to put that question to everybody here, "From where do you come?" if each of us could give a satisfactory answer to it.

7. Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it Uneasy, restless, ever active, like a roaring lion "seeking whom he may devour." Ah, we little know how near Satan is to us now! And even in our hours of prayer, when we are nearest to God, he may come and assail us.

8. And the LORD said unto Satan, Have you considered My servant Job. He is an example to you. He may well chide you, he

is so obedient, and you are so rebellious: 'Have you considered My servant Job'—

8, 9. That there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and eschews evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said— We may be certain that if there had been anything bad in Job, Satan would have found it out and brought it against him. However excellent a man is, though there are none like him on earth, you can find fault with him if you want to do so. Satan found fault with Job because he had prospered. And his friends afterwards found fault with him because he did not prosper! So you can make anything into a blot on the character of men if you have a mind to do so. "Satan answered the Lord, and said"—

9, 10. Does Job fear God for nothing? Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? The black dog of Hell had been prowling around to see where he could get in, so he knew that there was a hedge around Job and round his house and all that he had. Notice how the devil insinuates that Job feared God for what he could get out of Him. "His love is cupboard love," says Satan, "he is well paid by Providence for his reverence to God."

10, You have blessed the work of his hands—Even the devil dared not deny that Job was a working man, or say that he had come by his estate by oppression or plunder. No. He said to God, "You have blessed the work of his hands"—

10, 11. And his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Your hand, now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to Your face. Oh, what mischief Satan can imagine against the righteous! The mercy is that although he is mighty, he is not almighty—he is very malicious, but there is One who is far wiser and stronger than he is who can always circumvent and overpower him!

12-15. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the Presence of the LORD. And there was a day when Job's sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away; yes, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you. Job had not wronged these Sabeans— they were plunderers on

the lookout for spoil. And when Satan moved them, they came and stole the Patriarch's oxen and asses—and slew his servants.

16. While he was yet speaking As if to give Job no time to rally his faith and encourage his heart—

16. There came, also, another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from Heaven, and has burned up the sheep, and the servants and consumed them; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you. This calamity must have distressed Job all the more because "the fire of God" had burnt up the sheep that he was accustomed to offer in sacrifice to Jehovah—and the blow had seemed to come directly from God, Himself—as if it was lightning that had destroyed both sheep and shepherds, too. Poor Job had not time to recover from that shock before the next blow fell upon him—

17. While he was yet speaking there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels and have carried them away, yes, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell you. He had not time to think before the heaviest stroke of all came—

18. 19. While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: and, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and, they are dead; and I, only, am escaped alone to tell you. Satan had arranged to bring on the Patriarch's troubles so quickly, one after another, as to utterly overwhelm the good man—at least, so the devil hoped it would prove—yet it did not.

20. Then Job arose— With all his burden on him, he arose—

20. And tore his mantle, and shaved his head—He did not pull his hair out as a Pagan, or a maniac, or a person delirious through trouble might have done. But he deliberately "tore his mantle, and shaved his head"—

20. And fell down upon the ground and worshipped Grand old man! How bravely does he play the man here! He "fell down upon the ground and worshipped"—

21. And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. That is, to the womb of Mother Earth.

21. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD [See Sermons #2457, Volume 42—jobs

RESIGNATION and #3025, Volume 53—FIFTEEN YEARS LATE.] I think these are

the grandest words in the whole record of human speech! Considering the circumstances of the man at the time, that he should thus speak was, I think, a miracle of Grace!

22. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

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