

The Hope of the Hypocrite

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon highlights the characteristics of a hypocrite, including a false hope, a gain that is not based on God's work, and a trouble that comes when God takes away his soul.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 1:10, Job 27:8, Psalm 16:8, Psalm 50:15, Psalm 107:13, Jeremiah 15:16, Romans 5:5, Ephesians 2:16, Hebrews 6:19

Topics: "True Faith", "Hypocrisy"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the characteristics of a hypocrite as seen in the book of Job, emphasizing the importance of true delight in the Almighty and continual calling upon God as distinguishing marks of a genuine believer. He contrasts the hope, gain, trouble, and cry of a hypocrite with that of a sincere seeker of God, highlighting the necessity of a spiritual nature, reconciliation, and a spirit of grace and supplication in true worship. Philpot challenges listeners to examine their hearts, urging them to seek genuine delight in God and a consistent habit of calling upon Him as evidence of true faith.

Transcript

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Evening, August 3, 1843, by J. C. Philpot

"For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul? Will God hear his prayer when trouble comes upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job 27:8-10

What was the main subject of controversy between Job and his three friends? It was whether Job was a hypocrite or not. His friends, seeing him afflicted with such heavy calamities, and hearing the passionate and rebellious expressions that came out of his lips, unanimously came to the conclusion in their minds, that a child of God could neither, on the one hand, receive such heavy visitations from the Lord's hand, nor, on the other, make use of such peevish and rebellious language; they set him down therefore to be a hypocrite.

Job, on the contrary, knew he was not that. Why the hand of the Lord had so gone out against him he knew not; and why his soul was permitted to be so harassed and distressed he could not understand. But one thing he was certain of, from God's past dealings with his soul, and from the experience which the

Lord had wrought in his heart, that he was not the character his friends believed him to be. He would not yield, nor submit to such a charge; and God himself knew that Job was in the right; and that however harassed he was in his mind, and whatever self-righteousness might lurk in him, yet he was free from that imputation.

By way then of answer to his friends' accusation, Job in the text brings forward certain marks and tests which he knew hypocrites had not, and which he knew he had. He says, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" Job knew well that no hypocrite could ever come up to these two marks; and that with all his craft and subtlety, he never was in possession of these two tests.

But before we come to this part of the subject, it will be desirable to go through the preceding portion of the text. And I do not know a simpler or better way than to take it as it stands, and see what light the blessed Spirit may throw upon it.

I. We will commence then, first, with the CHARACTER pointed out in the expressive word "hypocrite." What is the meaning of the term? It signifies, at least in our acceptation, "a stage-player; one who assumes a part, and wears a character that is foreign to him; one who is not the man he professes to be." This is as simple and as concise a definition as I can give of the character of a hypocrite.

But it appears to me that there are two classes of these characters; one, who knows what he is, and the other, who knows it not. There is one who may deceive others, but does not deceive himself; and there is another who may deceive himself, but does not deceive others. Thus, there are those, I believe, who know they are wrong, and yet never put up a cry to a heart-searching God to make them right; who know that they have taken up religion for wrong ends and base motives, and that they were never led into any portion of truth by the Spirit of God; but in order to gratify some carnal design, have embarked upon a profession without any moving power felt in the heart.

The other, who form the more numerous class, and most abound in the professing church, are people so deceived by Satan, so ignorant of themselves and of the God they have to deal with, and having such a veil of delusion over their hearts, that they are self-deceived, according to that word, and a solemn word it is, "deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:13.) Not merely deceiving others, but being deceived themselves; not base designing hypocrites, but believing they are right, and only learning they are wrong when "trouble comes upon them, and God takes away their soul."

And be it remarked, that neither of these two classes are ever troubled or distressed about their hypocrisy; the first, because their conscience is seared, and the second, because they are fully persuaded they are right. So that I believe we may lay it down pretty well as a general truth, that those who are exercised with distressing doubts and fears about hypocrisy, are not hypocrites; and, on the other hand, that those who, with brows of brass, and necks of iron, would resent with the greatest warmth the imputation of hypocrisy, would, could you look into their hearts, be found really guilty of the charge.

II. But having considered his character, I pass on to consider the hypocrite's HOPE. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite?" He has then a hope. Scripture speaks of two kinds of hope. "There is a hope that makes not ashamed," (Rom. 5:5); "a good hope through grace," (2 Thess. 2:16); "a hope, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil," (Heb. 6:19); the hope that stands as a sister with faith and love, (1 Cor. 13:13); and the hope whereby the soul is saved. (Rom. 8:24.)

And there is another kind of hope, which the Scripture also speaks of, and which it has stamped with peculiar and indelible marks. It is compared for instance to "a spider's web," (Job 8:14); and this comparison throws a little light on its character. What is the spider's web? It is a filthy thing- spun out of the creature's own bowels- only intended to catch flies- and broken to pieces by the first puff of wind. Now carry these ideas into the spiritual figure. The "hope of the hypocrite" comes from himself; it does not spring out of any testimony of God in his conscience, any dealings of the Spirit upon his soul, any drawings up of his affection towards the Lord Jesus, or any discovery of God's presence or favor- but it is spun, laboriously spun, out of his own filthy heart. As the spider also spreads out its web in order to catch flies for its food and sustenance, so the hypocrite spreads out his hope before the eyes of men, that he may catch the buzzing flies that flit about the religious world, and feed upon their flattery and applause. But, like the spider's web, it will be blown away by the first puff of God's anger; by the first blast of his nostrils it will be swept away, and no trace of it left.

But the Scripture (Job 8:11, 12, the same chapter that compares it to the "spider's web") gives us another description of this hope, and illustrates it by another figure. "Can the papyrus grow up without mire? can the reed grow without water? While it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withers before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." The "hope of the hypocrite" is here compared to "the papyrus" and "the reed." What is their location? Not the flowing stream, but the miry, sluggish ditch. Out of the mud they grow, and by the mud they are supported; let the muddy water be dried up, and "they perish before any other herb." Thus the "hope of the hypocrite" is not a tree that rests on a rock; it has no solid foundation on the work, blood, love, grace, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, but grows up as a perishing reed out of the mud and mire of his own corrupt nature. It is not "a tree planted by the waters, that spreads out her roots by the river, whose leaf is ever green," (Jer. 17:8); but a wretched reed that stands in a sluggish pool, and fades and dies while yet in its greenness, as soon as the ditch dries up.

III. But we pass on to consider the GAIN of the hypocrite. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained?" He has then a certain object in view, which he is often allowed to gain. Now this gain is not necessarily, nor perhaps in the majority of cases, money, or filthy lucre. It may indeed happen that a man may put on a profession of religion for the sake of filthy lucre; but we cannot confine the gain here spoken of to that one thing. If he has obtained his purpose in any way, it is gain; and Job seems to intimate this, by not mentioning any specific object, but leaving the nature of the gain ambiguous. But "what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained?"

God then allows him to gain his ends. And if this be money, perhaps while he is thwarting every plan that his people set their hand to, and blighting every prospect that rises up before their eyes; while he is bringing them continually to poverty, and never allowing them to prosper in anything; every project that the hypocrite puts his hand to flourishes; and, like the fabled Midas, everything becomes gold under his touch. Let him, for instance, commence business under the most unpromising circumstances, let him set up a shop in the most unlikely neighborhood, everything succeeds, customers come in, and all things are prosperous.

But I have hinted that we should err, if we limited this gain to filthy lucre. Each man has a peculiar object, and in the attainment of that object his gain consists. Thus, the approbation of others may be an object of gain with many; to have the good opinion of his fellow-creatures, and to be highly thought of may be his darling aim. Perhaps such a one may have a strong memory, and being well versed in the Scriptures, and very fluent in quoting them, may draw a certain degree of approbation from those before whom the gift is

exercised; and this is his gain.

Or he may be well informed in his judgment upon Scriptural truth, may compare passages together with great clarity, and so cast light upon the word; and may derive much pleasure from being "confident that he is a guide to the blind, a light of those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes;" when all the time he has but "the form of knowledge and of the truth" in the letter. (Rom. 2:19, 20.) Or he may have a gift in prayer, and this gift may so shine in the eyes of professors as to draw their approbation; and thus this wretched creature may gain his ends, in having the applause of others bestowed upon his gift.

Or it may be, and this perhaps is the most common case of all, that his gain is his own good opinion. The good of opinion of others is only now and then given, and that perhaps rather grudgingly- but our own good opinion, what a constant companion is that! It gets up with us, and it lies down with us; there is no one to contradict it, and it is always present to whisper its sweet flattery into our ears. If a man only gets his own good opinion and his own approbation, he has a constant source of pleasure opened up in his own mind. There are a great many people, therefore, who become hypocrites merely to gain a good opinion of themselves, and will adopt any mode of compassing this end.

Is it then to be gained by a profession? By a profession it shall be gained. Is it to be obtained by receiving the doctrines? By the doctrines it shall be obtained. By talking about experience? By talking of experience it shall be attained. By humble looks? By humble looks it shall be had. By acts of liberality? By such actions it shall be gained. Whenever a hypocrite is fully bent upon gaining a certain object, he will put in practice every artifice in order to get it. And God lets him gain it. He does not deal with him as with his own children; he will not let them do anything that is not for their welfare; but he deals with him spiritually, as you do with yours naturally. If you have children, and see them playing in the streets, and quarreling or acting wrong, you rush out, or call them in doors, and chastise them if you know it is necessary.

But if you look through a window, and see others fighting and quarreling who are not your children, you leave them alone and take no notice of them. The reason is, because they are not yours; if they were, you would punish them severely, rather than they should be doing those things which you know to be wrong. Thus it is with those who are God's children, and those who are not. The Lord lets the hypocrite fill up the measure of his iniquities; he allows "his eyes to stand out with fatness, and lets him have more than heart could wish" (Psalm 82:7); but he sets his feet in slippery places, and he is brought into desolation in a moment. Be not surprised then that ungodly men and hypocrites flourish in the world, and are at ease in Zion, while you, on the contrary, are poor in circumstances, and are tried and exercised in your mind. Be not surprised, if you see every dishonest plan and scheme of theirs flourish, while every honest plan of yours is marred and blighted. God has reserved some better things for you; therefore he chastises you with affliction as a child; but he has reserved eternal wrath for them, and therefore they have their portion in this life.

IV. But we pass on to consider the hypocrite's TROUBLE. "Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?" It seems then there is a period when troubles comes upon him. And what is that period? The blessed Spirit has marked it out in the text. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul?" That is his time of trouble, "when God takes away his soul;" when he stands before the eyes of an angry God on his deathbed, and his soul is about to pass into eternity. Now it is very sweet to my mind, that the time of the hypocrite's trouble is thus distinctly marked out, because it shows that he has no soul-trouble until he comes to die. If you and I, then, have known something of soul

trouble before now, we have not this mark against us. He embarked smoothly on a profession; his religion never began nor went on with trouble; his was an easy, comfortable, flesh-pleasing path from first to last. He never knew sighs, groans, tears, and cries; he never rolled upon his bed, full of anguish, and bitterness of soul; his conscience never bled under wounds, bruises, and putrefying sores. In all his profession of religion, all his life long, he had been cheerful, easy, and comfortable. But now, when God is going to "take away his soul;" when the wrath of the Almighty, the foretaste and prelude of wrath to come, flashes into his conscience, then for the first time he begins to be in trouble.

V. But with this trouble we read of the hypocrite's CRY. "Will God hear his cry?" No; he will not. But why should not God hear his cry? Has he not promised to hear cries and groans? He has. But not the cries of hypocrites; he has never promised to hear them. When a man has mocked God all his life-time, insulted him to his face, done everything to provoke him, and to deceive and distress his people; when it comes to the last, and he stands upon the brink of eternity, should natural convictions at last press a cry from his carnal mind- will God hear that? No- I say, God will not hear that cry; because it is not the cry of a child, not the cry which the blessed Spirit raises up in the soul, not the breathings forth of a broken and contrite heart into the ears of a listening God. It is nothing but the cry of a natural conviction; and God has never promised to hear and answer that.

Nor after all, is it so much a cry to God for mercy, as a howl of fear and anguish as the Lord says (Hos. 7:14), "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." But whether so or not, he never cried to God before- it was with him all assurance and confidence. I dare say, had he been here he would have sung at the top of his voice every hymn given out that spoke of assurance. I cannot doubt but his voice would have been heard swelling among the throng; and the higher the assurance, the louder would the note have swelled. But there was no cry when alone in his room; when he sat by his fire-side, and hung his head upon his hand, there was no groaning prayer going out of his soul unto God; when he was engaged in his daily business, there was no secret sigh that the Lord would look upon him and bless him. His religion never consisted in sighs and cries unto the Lord; but was a web of deceit and hypocrisy from beginning to end.

VI. But having seen what he is, we will now proceed to see what the hypocrite is not. The Holy Spirit by Job speaks in the text of certain marks and tests which this wretched character, with all his gains, never attained to, and which Job knew his soul was in possession of. He says, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?" As though he had said, "You have charged me with hypocrisy; and though you have known me many years, and have seen how God has dealt with me in time past; yet now, because this trouble has come upon me, you accuse me of the blackest of crimes, you charge me with being a hypocrite. Now I ask you," said the Patriarch "this question- answer me as honest men. Call to mind all the hypocrites you ever knew; look at them in their various classes- gauge and measure them in their different bearings; and then tell me, if you can find these two marks in any one of them, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?'" Depend upon it they were speechless. Not one of them could say, that of all the hypocrites they had known in the course of a long life, they had ever found one with these two marks on him.

1. "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" No- he will not. And why not? Because with all his self-assumed religion, he was never made a partaker of a new nature, was never regenerated by the Holy Spirit, never had a new heart given to him, and a new spirit put within him; in a word, he never had bestowed upon him an inward, spiritual, and supernatural faculty, whereby alone God can be seen and known. And that was one and the main reason why he could not "delight himself in the Almighty." Nature,

however highly polished and varnished, can never rise up to a spiritual knowledge of eternal realities, still less rise up to any spiritual acquaintance and communion with the blessed God. But, besides this, the Lord had never, in any degree, let down a measure of his mercy and grace into his soul; and for lack of this also, he could not "delight himself in the Almighty."

But what does delighting himself in the Almighty imply? It implies reconciliation. God and man by nature are at variance; there is a bar between them; sin has interposed, and cut asunder the original knot that linked the Creator and the creature together. Man has become "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart." He is born in sin; his "carnal mind is enmity against God;" therefore he needs reconciliation. And in order that this reconciliation may be effected, there must be an external and an internal reconciliation. Sin must be put away, righteousness brought in, and God well-pleased with the sinner, before external reconciliation takes place. And this was effected by the sacrifice of Christ once on the cross, when "by that one offering he perfected forever those who are sanctified." (Heb. 10:14.) The apostle therefore says, "And that he might reconcile both unto God by the cross, having slain the enmity." (Eph. 2:16.)

But besides the external there is an internal reconciliation, according to Rom. 5:11, "And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement," or, as it is in the margin (which is the more literal rendering of the word), "by whom we have received the reconciliation." To receive this reconciliation is to receive into our heart and conscience the reconciliation Christ has effected by the substitution of his sacred person; and to receive into our affections the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator between God and man.

But the wretched character in the text never knew the enmity of his carnal mind; sin was never opened up to him in its hideous colors; he had never felt the alienation of his heart from God; he never knew the curse of God's law; and therefore he knew nothing experimentally of reconciliation, because he had never experimentally known variance. Nor had his eyes been enlightened, his heart touched, or power been given to him to embrace the Lord Jesus as the Reconciler of the church to God. Nor again, had the Lord God Almighty ever let down any measure of his love into his soul, or ever indulged him with a taste of his presence. He had never found the word, and eaten it. (Jer. 15:16.) He had never fed upon it, and found it "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb." He never had his affections fixed where Jesus sits at the right hand of God; he never enjoyed, feelingly enjoyed the truths of the gospel, nor did his soul ever banquet on them, and find them to be "fat things, full of marrow, and wine on the lees well refined."

He had never, in all his religion, any sensible enjoyment in his soul of the truths which he professed to believe; for they had no place in him, as the Lord said to the Jews, "My word has no place in you." The truths of the gospel were never grafted in his heart; never formed his spiritual food and drink; never were the element in which his soul lived. The tokens of God's favor never were his happiness and his heaven, and he could be perfectly contented without them; indeed he was more happy without religion, even such as he had, than he was with it; for his heart was in the world, buried in the things of time and sense.

He had never, in all his professing life, one feeling desire after God, one spiritual panting after him, "as the deer pants after the water-brooks." He and the Almighty never enjoyed blessed converse; he never walked and talked with him "as a man talks with his friend." He never sat alone that he might converse with God, away from all intrusion; he never hid himself in his chamber, or buried his head beneath the bed-clothes, that he might commune secretly with the Almighty. He never enjoyed the presence of God, nor mourned his absence; never sought his favor, nor feared his frown. His heart was never lifted up

towards the Lord that he would come down and bless his soul. So that all his profession, his gain, and his hope were idle and vain, because he lacked this one grand thing, "delighting himself in the Almighty." Spiritual joy and consolation were never known in his soul, but were always foreign to his experience, and always a stranger to his feelings.

Now, do you think, with all your doubts, fears, troubles, and exercises, that you did ever "delight yourself in the Almighty?" Was your soul ever drawn out in unutterable partings and longings after the blessed enjoyment of his presence? Was this ever your heart-felt language, "Whom have I in heaven but you? and there is none upon earth I desire beside you." And have you ever said to Christ, "You are all my salvation, and all my desire." Was there never an object on earth that yielded such delight to your soul as the Lord Jesus Christ? never an object so embraced in the arms of your affection as his glorious Person; never anything that so melted, moved, and softened your heart as a sense of his dying love?

Then you are not a hypocrite, nor can all the men or devils in the world make you out to be one; for you are one that "delights yourself in the Almighty." God himself has stamped that as an indelible mark on his children, as a proof of their sincerity; and recorded it in these burning letters of ever-living light, as a testimony for them, as well as a mark against all, however high in their pretensions, or consistent in their profession, who live and die ignorant of it.

2. But the Lord in the text has given us another test, "Will he always call upon God?" No. How beautiful it is to see the evidences that the Lord has given us in his Scripture. If we look at these two evidences, we shall see how wisely they are put together. For there are doubtless living souls that might say, "The test just brought forward is too high for me; I fear I do not delight myself in the Almighty; I cannot come up to that; it is beyond my reach- My heart is so hard, my faith so weak, my love so little, my affections are so roving after the things of time and sense, and my soul walks in such darkness, that I cannot reach up to this solemn test, delighting myself in the Almighty; it seems to cut me off!"

Well, but the Lord has not cut you off, because you cannot come up to this test; he has given you another. So that if the first test cuts your head off, the other test will put it on again. "Will he always call upon God?" See the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in the position of the words. Men sometimes think they can improve the Scriptures; they are going to introduce this alteration, and make that wonderful correction; but they would only mar the word of God, if they were to touch it with their critical fingers. Suppose then the word, "always," were transposed; what would the effect be? "Will he always delight himself in the Almighty? Will he call upon God?" The mere transposition of the word always would spoil both tests. For where is the man who always "delights himself in the Almighty?" And the hypocrite himself may and does call upon God once in his life, when trouble comes upon him, and God "takes away his soul." So that could we transpose the word "always," by that little transposition we would spoil both tests.

But when we look upon the word "always" as applicable to "calling upon God," we see how it suits and exactly fits in with the experience of a living soul, and gives the prayerless hypocrite no quarter. Does not he then, "always call upon God?" No- you never hear of his calling upon God, until "God takes away his soul;" and then just before he breathes out his miserable soul into a never-ending eternity, he howls upon his bed, and cries unto God for mercy. But he never always "called upon God:" it was never his habitual practice- prayer had never been wrought in him by the hand of the Spirit; and it was only just when hell was opened before him that he prayed, sooner than be plunged into it. But the living family are marked by this test, that they always call upon God; that is, they are a praying, groaning, crying, sighing people, ever calling upon God- not calling upon him once, twice, or a few times in their lives, but it is more or less, their

daily and habitual practice.

But what is it "to call upon God?" You will observe that the cry and the call are here distinguished from each other. It does not say, "Will God hear his call?" but "Will God hear his cry?" Nor again does it say, "Will he always cry unto God?" but, "Will he always call upon God?" There is, then, a difference which the Holy Spirit here makes; that a man may cry who never calls. We read in Genesis (4:26), "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;" and in the first verse of the sixth chapter, which is connected with it read, "When men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose." Thus we see the connection (for the two chapters are closely connected), the fifth being, as it were, in a parenthesis, between calling on God, and being sons of God.

To call on God is to call on him with "a spirit of grace and supplication" interceding in a man's heart. It therefore implies a knowledge of God. When the Lord first quickens the soul into spiritual life, he implants in it "a spirit of grace and supplication." I have always insisted on this mark, for I felt it so my self. I must always, then, insist upon it, that whenever God quickens a soul into spiritual life, with his quickening work on the conscience, he communicates to the soul "a spirit of grace and supplication," and that spirit is never lost out of the heart, until the "spirit of supplication" is lost in the universal song of praise before the Lamb.

Now no man ever did call upon the Lord, unless he had "a spirit of grace and supplication" implanted in him. He might have squeezed out a few formal prayers; he might have gone through a daily round of self-imposed forms; yet he never worshiped God "in spirit and in truth." Or, he might, as very many do, pray what is called extempore- he might have kneeled down night and morning, or perhaps even seven times a day, and might have prayed without a form as the thoughts rose in his mind; and yet all the time never have had a breath of true prayer in his soul, nor once offered up a spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

But the soul that "calls on God," calls on him through the Spirit interceding within him, "with groanings that cannot be uttered." He has God set before his eyes, as the Psalmist says, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." (16:8.) He has at times the presence of God in his heart, and the fear of God ever in his soul. He worships him "in spirit and in truth," and he serves him "acceptably, with reverence and godly fear." He does not worship an unknown Jehovah, but he knows whom he worships, because he has had a spiritual discovery of the being and character of God to his soul. And no man will or can call upon God, until he in some measure discovers himself to him, and draws out the pantings, longings, hungerings, and thirstings of the soul to himself.

But, as I have before hinted, much of the force of the expression lies in the word always. The word always is not to be taken in the strictest sense of the term; that is to say, it does not imply that a child of God is praying all day long, but that once having been favored with "a spirit of grace and supplications" he never loses it out of his heart; but, from time to time, as the Lord the Spirit draws it forth, he pours it out into the bosom and ears of Jehovah. For instance, there are times of soul adversity, trouble, and affliction; and when these come, the living soul will still be calling upon God; he will not be waiting for the sun to rise and shine before he seeks the Lord's face; he will not be waiting until a promise comes with power to his heart, before he visits the throne of mercy with sighs and tears.

But when the soul is troubled and distressed, then prayers and supplications begin to flow out of the heart into the ears of God. And I believe, if I know anything about it, the more a man is pressed down with

trouble, the more he will call upon God. When everything is smooth with us, our visits to a throne of grace are short and rare; but when the soul is burdened, pressed down, afflicted, and troubled, these things press and squeeze prayer out of our bosoms; so that a man is never so prayerful, so continually seeking the Lord's face, and pouring out his heart before him, as when he is in soul trouble.

Was it not so with Hannah? What made her pour out her soul before the Lord? Because she was "in bitterness of soul, and wept sore." (1 Samuel 1:10.) She spoke "out of the abundance of her complaint and grief." (5:16.) When did Hezekiah pray? Was it when he was displaying the treasures of the temple to the Babylonish ambassadors? There was no prayer, I will venture to say, going out of the heart, when, in his pride, he was showing them "the house of his precious things." But when the prophet came with a message, that he was to "set his house in order," then "he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore." When did Jonah call unto God? Not when he was asleep in the sides of the ship; but when he was in the whale's belly, then "he cried unto the Lord out of the belly of hell."

Thus it is that times of soul trouble, force, so to speak, cries and sighs out of the heart of God's people. And then God will bow down his ear, and hear them; for he says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me," (Psalm. 50:15); especially pointing out that as the season for the soul to call, and, that as the season when God will hear and deliver the soul that calls upon him. So the children of Israel, who were typical of God's people, when in Egypt their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, cried unto the Lord. So in their various captivities, when they were oppressed by the Midianites, or by the Philistines, or by their other numerous enemies, they always "cried unto the Lord in their trouble," and he heard and delivered them "out of their distresses." (Psalm. 107:13.)

But again. Worldly things are often much against God's people. Dark clouds in providence encompass their path, so that they cannot see their way; and this makes them call upon the Lord. But hypocrites do not go to the Lord in worldly trouble; they cannot go about mumping for charity, and "living," as they call it, "on Providence," when they have no object but to get all they can out of the affections of God's compassionate children; while a true child of God, in his lonely garret, will be calling upon the Lord, and beseeching him to appear. The hypocrite will go down to Egypt and Assyria for help, and never think of asking it from the Lord. But his real children, who are suffering from poverty, will often conceal their needs even from the Lord's people, and go to the Lord himself, and tell him how they are suffering under temporal distresses.

The word "always" implies further, that under all circumstances and all states, at all times and seasons, and in all places, a God-taught soul will call upon the Lord. God's people will not be waiting for the morning or evening to come that they may pray. As they walk the streets, sometimes even as they are in worldly company, if thrown into it by business or accident, or as they are occupied in the various employments of life, from time to time there will be a lifting up and a breathing forth of their hearts unto God. They must call upon the Lord, because they cannot be truly happy without him. Guilt sometimes oppresses, condemnation burdens, and heavy temptations harass them; God hides his face; and they cannot obtain what their soul longs to enjoy. These things cause groans and supplications to flow out of their souls unto God that he would appear for them, come down, bless, and deliver them.

There may be, perhaps, some here who are exercised (as, I believe, many of God's people are at times exercised) as to their hypocrisy; and sometimes they may think themselves the most consummate hypocrites that ever stood in a profession. They may even think themselves so crafty and subtle that they are deceiving those who have the keenest discernment. But if you are exercised with these painful

surmises, these doubts and fears, just see (and the Lord enable you to bring it to the light of his countenance) these two features of a spiritual character. Do not talk about your hope; it may be "a spider's web." Do not boast of your gifts; they may be altogether in the flesh. Do not bring forward the good opinion of men; they may be deceived by you. But just see if, with the Lord's blessing, you can feel these two tests in your soul, as written there by his own hand.

If so, you are not an hypocrite; God himself, by his servant Job, has acquitted you of the charge. Did you, then, ever "delight yourself in the Almighty?" It is a solemn question. Did your heart and soul ever go out after the living God? Did affection, love, and gratitude ever flow out of your bosom into the bosom of the Lord? Did you ever feel as if you could clasp him in the arms of faith, and live and die in his embrace? Now if your soul has ever felt this, you are no hypocrite; and nothing can rise up out of your wretched heart, as an accusing devil, that can prove you to be one.

Or if you cannot fully realize this, if you are one that always calls upon God, you are no hypocrite. I do not mean your family prayer, social prayer, wife or husband prayer, or your private night and morning prayers. I do not speak of your regular prayers, or any other of your regularities; for I believe that there is often more of God's Spirit, and more craving after God and delighting in him, in your irregularities, than in all the daily regularities which hypocrites delight in. But I mean, is there a sigh or cry by night, as well as by day; a pouring out of the heart into the bosom of God from time to time, as the Lord works it in you, in trouble, in perplexity, in sorrow, and in distress? This is a test and a mark which no hypocrite ever had or ever can have.

But if neither of these marks are to be found in you, what then must I say? Why, it is greatly to be feared that if you are a professor, you are a hypocrite. If you have never known, in all your profession, what it was to "delight yourself in the Almighty;" if you have never turned away from creatures to converse with God; never felt his word precious, and enjoyed the sweetness of it in your heart. Or if you do not know what it is always thus to call upon God, as I have endeavored to explain it, I say, it is a black mark against you, and it is to be feared, that your religion began in hypocrisy, is going on in hypocrisy, and is likely to end in hypocrisy; or I would rather say, end in an ineffectual cry, which God will not hear, when "he takes away your soul."

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