

PERFECT AND UPRIGHT.

SERMON BY REV. A. C. DIXON OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Job and His Wife—Elements in Job's Character That Go to Make a Man Prosperous—Prosperity, Adversity, and Affliction.

Text: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil" (Job 1, 1).

The Book of Job is patriarchal. In it the family is unit of society. The father is prophet, priest and king. He rules in his little realm of children and servants, while other fathers do the same. It is quite certain that the book was written before Genesis because there is no reference in it to the law of Moses, and it is quite impossible to conceive of such a book having been written without a reference in it to Moses after the Mosaic law had made its impress upon the world. It is, therefore, the oldest book in the Bible. We believe that it is historic. There lived in the land of Uz a real man whose name was Job. In Ezekiel 14, 20, Job is mentioned with Noah and Daniel. The theory that the book is a sort of fiction, with Job as the hero, does not appeal to our faith or reason. It is the biography of Job and his wife, and may be divided into seven periods.

THE PERIOD OF PROSPERITY.
Job was a very rich man. He owned 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 she asses, and a very great husbandry. "so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east." And there were four elements in the character of Job which first made him a man prosperous. First, he was sincere. Such is the meaning of the word perfect. There was about him no sham or pretense. He had only one face. Not even for the sake of peace would he imitate the god Janus by facing both ways. His sincerity made him thoroughly honest. His neighbors could trust him. His word was his bond. Character was the basis of his wealth, and counted for better security than thousands of dollars.

Second, he was upright. He had a backbone. In the consciousness of his sincerity he stood erect. In his morals there was no india rubber capacity for bending. Being upright before God and man he could afford to be outright and downright. People did not misunderstand his meaning. He moved in straight lines, never trying to accomplish his purpose by sinister means. When people begin to know such a man they trust him, and prosperity is apt to flow into his lap. Third, Job was religious. He was one that feared God. It was this fear of God that made him sincere and upright. He walked before the Lord in the land of the living. His aim was first of all to please God as a filial son would please a loving father, and since he feared God there was no need that he should fear man. The fear of God casts out the fear of man. It makes one brave to meet opposition and endure persecution. This fear of God which casts out all fear of man will sooner or later gain the confidence and admiration of one's friends and enemies. The man who fears only God can be trusted, and when people find that out, they commit to him large responsibilities. Such fear of God is often the beginning of a prosperous life.

Fourth, Job was moral. He eschewed evil. He did not believe in the syndication of the good and the bad. As the friend of God he was against Satan; as the child of light he opposed darkness; as an heir of righteousness he resisted sin. He put out of his life everything that was against good character. His habits did not consume his health or his wealth. Many a man has lost his prosperity as the result of the enfeeblement which comes from indulgence in sin. And yet he was no ascetic. He lived as a man among men. There were born unto him seven sons and three daughters, and he seems to have allowed his children the free use of his wealth. But in the midst of this prosperity he was careful about the religious training of his family. After one of their feasts he "sent and sanctified them, 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 hearts. Thus did Job continually."

The child of wealth is often in more danger than the child of poverty. Money frequently brings more curse than blessing. It affords the opportunity for sensual indulgence; it leads one to forget God. It is very important, therefore, that wealthy parents should be careful in the religious training of their children. While they do not withhold from them the benefits of wealth they should give to them the blessings of religious instruction from the open Bible at the family altar and in the church.

THE PERIOD OF ADVERSITY.
Satan, in the days of Job, as he is now, was a messenger of light. He came up among the sons of God and accused Job of selfishness in his religious service. He asked, "Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will

curse thee to thy face." In these words of the devil there is even some comfort for the Christian. He acknowledges that that God hedges His child about and keeps him on every side. He also confesses that the prosperity of Job was the result of God's blessing. Then he mixes truth and falsehood when he said of Job, "Touch all that he hath and he will curse thee to thy face." He was a liar, and God decided to hold Satan up before the world as the liar that he is, by giving him permission to take Job's prosperity from him. While his sons and daughters are feasting the Sabbeaus, under the direction of Satan, take away the ploughing oxen and the asses feeding beside them, and leave the fields without cultivation. The fire fell upon the sheep and the servants and consumed them. The Chaldeans came in three bands and took away the camels and slew their keepers. The great wind from the wilderness smote the four corners of the house and threw it upon his children, so that they were killed. Job was no stoic, and he showed the real grief he felt; he rent his mantle, shaved his head, fell upon the ground, and worshipped.

Right here Job gained the victory. If he had rent his mantle, shaved his head, and fallen upon the ground, while he refused to worship, the devil would have conquered. Satan can never overcome the children of God who worship in the dark, who, while they cannot understand God's dealings with them, will kneel and pray and offer their praises. When great calamity keeps us from church, and leaves us to neglect prayer, Satan has accomplished his purpose. The prophet Isaiah seems to have learned from the patriarch Job the truth which he wrote in Isaiah 50, 10: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God." Happy the man who, like Job, can trust and worship in the darkness of grief and perplexity. And Job worshipped in the dark because he recognized God as the giver of all good, and did not claim that he owned anything in his own right. "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return to Thee. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

But suppose I could have stood by Job and said: "My friend, you are mistaken, not the Lord but the devil has taken away; it is Satan that has destroyed your property and your children." I believe that Job would still have said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord, for it is only by His permission that Satan can work." I have heard of an old woman, who lived in a cabin on a mountain side, where it was so steep that the top of the chimney could be reached from the overhanging cliff. The good woman was very poor, and in her need prayed God for bread and meat. Some mischievous boys overhearing her prayer, decided to surprise her by throwing a ham of meat down the chimney, while one of them stood by the door to hear what she would say. She picked up the ham, brushed off the ashes with her apron, as she said, "Thank God, He has answered my prayer." The boy at the door thought it was too bad to fool the old woman in this fashion, so he pushed the door ajar and said, "Auntie, God did not send you that ham; we brought it ourselves." "No matter, honey," replied the woman of faith; "God sent it, if the devil brought it." That is just the theology of Job. The devil had dealings with Job, but Job had no dealings with the devil. He dealt only with God, and his faith in God was such that even the devil's persecution could not make him swerve. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." When we lose our property or friends, it is so easy to charge God foolishly. I have known persons to turn from the Lord entirely because he did not see fit to answer their selfish prayers in restoring friends to health, or in preventing the loss of their fortunes. Such persons lose not only their friends and fortune, but the joy of the Lord which is a thousandfold more.

THE PERIOD OF AFFLICTION.
After the loss of property and children had failed to make Job curse God, Satan comes with the number 2: "Skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life, but put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." And the Lord had such confidence in Job that He replied to Satan: "Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life." I cannot think of a greater compliment God could have paid to the patriarch. "So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." These boils were the signs of a loathsome disease. And now Mrs. Job can stand it no longer. She exclaims: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die." The new version says, "Bless God and die," but there is doubtless little difference in the meaning. It was the dying that the wife was willing to see; she thought it better her husband should be dead than that he should live with such evidences of loathsome sin. Her question has in it an implication which must have cut Job to the heart, yet though he lost faith in her wisdom he did not lose faith in God. "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh; what shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Job knew that he had not sinned in such a way as to bring this great affliction upon him. He still stood upright be-

fore God, and when a man is in right relation with God he can bear almost anything that comes from man. It is hard, however, to bear the reproach of a wife. Some one has said that the devil played his sharpest trick when he took everything away from Job except his wife, and left her to reproach him. The German proverb is true: "Happily married nothing can make you miserable, and miserably married nothing can make you happy." If a man has in his wife at home a sympathizing friend, who shares with him every joy and grief, and bears with him every burden, he can face the world's frown with a smile, and fight its battles confident of ultimate victory. But when the wife turns against him, and the home after the day's work and disappointment offers only criticism and repining, it is only a matter of time when the man will break, unless he has, like Job, the support of the everlasting arms.

A good wife is the best gift of God, and a bad wife is the best agent of the devil. The Reformation owed as much to the loving ministry and encouraging words of Catherine as to the brave, thundering speeches of Luther. The gentle spirit of Spurgeon's invalid wife gave tenderness to the heart and tones of the great preacher. Moody's mastery over men was due more than the world ever knew to the mastery of quiet love of which he delighted to be the servant in his home. All the more honor, however, to Job and John Wesley, who, in spite of unsympathetic wives, kept their integrity and served their generation.

THE PERIOD OF CONTROVERSY.
Three friends of Job hear of his calamities and afflictions and come to comfort him. When they saw him they were dumbfounded; they could not utter a word, and there they sat in silence for seven days. Shall we praise or blame them? There is such a thing as sorrow which words cannot comfort; the less said the better. The silent visit, the quiet handshake, is better than all the speeches we can make, but for three men to sit seven days and not utter a word must have been a trial even to the patience of Job. It may be they were looking for the death of the old patriarch, and if he suspected such a motive their presence was certainly not very assuring. It may be they were silently studying the speeches they were going to make to Job; if so, they might have saved themselves so much trouble, for a few extemporaneous words the first day of their visit might have done the old patriarch more good. It is possible for one to study his speech or sermon until it becomes a mere skeleton of thought and precepts, without any heart-beat of sympathy and love. A few words out of a warm heart are better than many words marshalled like an army with banners carrying the cold steel of criticism.

Job breaks the silence and curses his day. It is better to curse one's day than to curse God. One sometimes feels that he must curse something. Job refused to curse God; he was too kind and courteous to curse his three silent friends, so he vents his feelings by cursing the day of his birth. This tirade of cursing stirs the eloquence of Eliphaz the Temanite, and in a long address he insists that sin must be the cause of Job's trouble. He cannot see how such affliction could come upon one who had lived a righteous life. Job acknowledges that he had sinned, and cries for forgiveness, though he is not willing to confess that the boils upon his body are the fruit of loathsome iniquity. Eliphaz intimates that Job is afflicted because of the sins of his children, and this the patriarch resents, because he knows that he was careful in their religious training. Zophar philosophizes by saying that it is not as bad as it might be, and intimates that if Job had his just deserts his affliction would be greater. At last the man of patience loses all patience, and he says, "Miserable comforters are ye all. If I were in your place and ye were in my place, I could heap up words against you and shake my head at you." Finally, Job grows indignant and tells them that he is as good as they are; that he would have disdained to set their fathers with the dogs of his flock. Such is apt to be the end of the controversy which stirs passion and cultivates egotism, which fosters party spirit, and even separates friends. "For as we fall into controversy about the dealings of God with us, we are apt to get into the fog of doubt.

There are some things we cannot solve by a process of reasoning; we must accept them by faith. Much in the Bible can be understood better without explanation than with it. A mother was reading a poem to her child, and after explaining some difficult parts of it, she said, "I am afraid, my dear, you do not understand." "Oh, yes, I do," replied the boy, "if only you would not explain." The poem itself was plainer than any of her explanations, and God's dealings with us in the light of His word are plainer when received by loving faith than any philosophic explanation can make them.

THE PERIOD OF REVELATION.
In the thirty-eighth chapter God speaks and Job listens, and when Job replies it is with few words. He can answer his friends, but not God. All he can say is, "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." When God shuts a man's mouth He begins to bless him. As long as we can talk back we deprive ourselves of the blessing God would bestow. Then comes

THE PERIOD OF REPENTANCE.
Job looks away from his imperfect friends to God himself. "I have heard of Thee, he says, by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." While we compare ourselves with others, we are apt to be puffed up with pride. We see and truly that we are as good as they are, perhaps better, but when we get a view of God in Christ we see our selfishness and sinfulness; we begin to abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. We must come to the end of self before God can use us as he would.

In the window of a Salvation Army barracks on the Bowery is a picture of a wretched creature in rags and misery. Beside him stands an angel with loving face pointing upward, and the title of the picture is, "Love and Hope." It carries the lesson that there is no condition in life which the love of God cannot make hopeful, and there is no wreck which cannot be retrieved through His grace. After Job's genuine repentance his property and his family are restored. He renews his youth; old age becomes a mountain top sun kissed from heaven; the devil has been defeated, God is victorious, and Job is a faithful witness. So Jesus Christ can take any life and make out of it a great success. Whatever has been lost through your own fault, the faults of others, or the machinations of Satan, God can give back and more, if you will repent of sin and accept salvation with all that it brings through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PUBLIC OPINION.
Opinions From Various Sources on Questions of Public Interest.
It remained for Mr. Grosvenor to point out the inconsistency of the gentlemen who declined to change their minds on the Porto Rican question.—Washington Post.
Senator Pettigrew is branded as a traitor for asking in behalf of the Filipinos what Washington and Jefferson demanded for the American colonists.—Kansas City Times.

With Mr. McKinley a candidate for re-election, the question is to be asked if he has been a dignified, consistent, statesmanlike, self-reliant president in his first term of office.—Boston Herald.

The Hanna ship subsidy steal will tax the people of the United States about \$9,000,000 a year for 30 years. Why should such outrageous thefts as this be allowed?—Memphis Commercial-Appal.

Mr. McKinley should by all means have attended Cleveland's lecture on "The Independence of the Executive." It might possibly have injected something of the kind into his own spinal column.—Montgomery (Ala.) Advertiser.

In spite of Senator Hoar's eloquent pleadings against the new imperial and empirical politics of McKinley it is once more in order to quote Lowell's famous line, "Massachusetts, God forgive her, she's a kneeling with the rest."—New York World.

If the high officials of the present administration ever knew anything about the Monroe doctrine they have probably become so muddled on the subject that it is all a dream to them. They have been trying to teach Monroe doctrine in the Orient and neglecting the uneducated people at home.

With 12,500 men thrown out of work by the steel and wire trust, 5,000 thrown out of work by the tobacco trust and 1,600 thrown out of work by the sugar trust recently, John Archbold's assertion that trusts insure men wages all the year round smacks of irony.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

The Pennsylvania Republican platform is long. It contains nearly 2,000 words. But there is not one word in it with reference to the president's colonial policy. Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines are all unmentioned. Is this a case where "silence gives consent"? Or does it mean that silence was the price of harmony?—N. Y. World.

The men who, like Paul, have gone to heathen lands with the message, "We seek not yours but you," have been hindered by those who, coming after, have reversed the message. Rum and other corrupting agencies come with our boasted civilization, and the feeble races wither before the hot breath of the white man's vices.—Ex-President Harrison.

Cruel, barbarous Spain placed a duty of 10 per cent on Porto Rican goods and granted the island representation on a population basis in the Spanish cortes. The enlightened, merciful United States places a duty of 25 per cent of the Dingley rates—say 50 per cent ad valorem—on Porto Rican goods, and declares that the island shall have no representation.—Centre Democrat.

The Quayites claimed Dan Hastings went out of the executive chair at Harrisburg the most despised governor Pennsylvania ever had. But Dan won't be in it with Weary Willie Stone when time forces him to wear the "ex" before his name. For low-down subservience and general all-around mediocrity Stone is the champion of the day and generation. May there never be another of his kind.—Clearfield Republican.

If men lack bread, it is not that God has not done his part in providing it. If men willing to labor are cursed with poverty, it is not that the storehouse God owes men has failed, that the daily God owes men has failed, that the daily wants of his children is not here in abundance. Our trouble lies in that we have given into the exclusive ownership of the few the provision that a bountiful father has made for all.—Henry George.

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