

Worldwide: please use the online downloads worldwide without charge.

In **North America:** please write for a printed copy sent postage paid and completely without charge.

Chapel Library does not necessarily agree with all the doctrinal positions of the authors it publishes.

We do not ask for donations, send promotional mailings, or share mailing lists.

© Copyright 2007 Chapel Library; Pensacola, Florida.

SATAN CONSIDERING THE SAINTS

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Contents

Introduction	1
1. In What Sense Does Satan "Consider" the People of God?	2
2. What Is It that Satan Considers to Injure God's People?	4
Our peculiar infirmities	5
Our frames and states of mind.....	5
Our position among men.....	5
Our condition in the world.....	6
All of the objects of our affection.....	6
3. A Higher Consideration Overrode Satan's	6
How far the Lord would let Satan go.....	7
How He should sustain His servant under the trial.....	7
How to sanctify Job by this trial	7
Job was enabled to earn a greater reward.....	7

"And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job"—Job 1:8.

Introduction

How very uncertain are all terrestrial things! How foolish would that believer be who should lay up his treasure anywhere, except in heaven! Job's prosperity promised as much stability as anything can do beneath the moon. The man had round about him a large household of, doubtless, devoted and attached servants. He had accumulated wealth of a kind which does not suddenly depreciate in value. He had oxen, asses, and cattle. He had not to go to markets and fairs, and trade with his goods to procure food and clothing, for he carried on the processes of agriculture on a very large scale round about his own homestead, and probably grew within his own territory everything that his establishment required. His children were numerous enough to promise a long line of descendants. His prosperity wanted nothing for its consolidation. It had come to its flood-tide: where was the cause which could make it ebb?

Up there, beyond the clouds, where no human eye could see, there was a scene enacted which augured no good to Job's prosperity. The spirit of evil stood face to face with the infinite Spirit of all good. An extraordinary conversation took place between these two beings. When called to account for his doings, the evil one boasted that he had gone to and fro throughout the earth, insinuating that he had met with no hindrance to his will, and found no one to oppose his freely moving and acting at his own pleasure. He had marched everywhere like a king in his own dominions, unhindered and unchallenged. When the great God reminded him that there was at least one place among men where he had no foothold, and where his power was unrecognized, namely, in the heart of Job—that there was one man who stood like an impregnable castle, garrisoned by integrity, and held with perfect loyalty as the possession of the King of Heaven—the evil one defied Jehovah to try the faithfulness of Job, told him that the patriarch's integrity was due to his prosperity, that he served God and eschewed evil from sinister motives, because he found his conduct profitable to himself.

The God of heaven took up the challenge of the evil one, and gave him permission to take away all the mercies which he affirmed to be the props of Job's integrity, and to pull down all the outworks and buttresses and see whether the tower would not stand in its own inherent strength without them. In consequence of this, all Job's wealth went in one black day, and not even a child was left to whisper comfort.

A second interview between the Lord and his fallen angel took place. Job was again the subject of conversation; and the Great One defied by Satan, permitted him even to touch him in his bone and in his flesh, till the prince became worse than a pauper, and he who was rich and happy was poor and wretched, filled with disease from head to foot, and fain to scrape himself with a miserable potsherd, to gain a poor relief from his pain.

Let us see in this the mutability of all terrestrial things. "He hath founded it...upon the floods" (Psa 24:2), is David's description of this world; and, if it be founded on the floods, can you wonder that it changes oft? Put not your trust in anything beneath the stars: remember that "Change" is written on the fore-front of nature. Say not therefore, "My mountain standeth firm: it shall never be moved." The glance of Jehovah's eye can shake thy mountain into dust; the touch of His foot can make it like Sinai, to melt like wax, and to be altogether on a smoke. "Set your affection on things above" (Col 3:2), "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col 3:1), and let your heart and your treasure be "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal" (Mat 6:20). The words of Bernard may here instruct us: "That is the true and chief joy which is not conceived from the creature, but received from the Creator, which (being once possessed thereof) none can take from thee: compared with which all other pleasure is torment, all joy is grief, sweet things are bitter, all glory is baseness, and all delectable things are despicable."

This is not, however, our subject this morning. Accept this much as merely an introduction to our main discourse. The Lord said to Satan, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Let us deliberate, *first*, in what sense the evil spirit may be said to consider the people of God. *Secondly*, let us notice what it is that he considers about them; and then, *thirdly*, let us comfort ourselves by the reflection that One Who is far above Satan considers us in a higher sense.

1. In What Sense May Satan Be Said to Consider the People of God?

Certainly not in the usual Biblical meaning of the term "consider." "O Lord consider my trouble" (Psa 9:13). "Consider my meditation" (Psa 5:1). "Blessed is he that considereth the poor" (Psa 41:1). Such consideration implies good-will and a careful inspection of the object of benevolence with regard to a wise distribution of favour. In that sense Satan never considers any. If he has any benevolence, it must be towards himself; but all his considerations of other creatures are of the most malevolent kind. No meteoric flash of good flits across the black midnight of his soul. Nor does he consider us as we are told to consider the works of God, that is, in order to derive instruction as to God's wisdom and love and kindness. He does not honour God by what he sees in His works, or in His people. It is not with him, "Go to the ant...consider her ways and be wise" (Pro 6:6); but he goes to the Christian and considers his ways and becomes more foolishly God's enemy than he was before. The consideration which Satan pays to God's saints is upon this wise. *He regards them with wonder, when he considers the difference between them and himself.* A traitor, when he knows the thorough villainy and the blackness of his own heart, cannot help being astounded, when he is forced to believe another man to be faithful. The first resort of a treacherous heart is to believe that all men would be just as treacherous, and are really so at bottom. The traitor thinks that all men are traitors like himself, or would be, if it paid them better than fidelity.

When Satan looks at the Christian, and finds him faithful to God and to His truth, he considers him as we should consider a phenomenon—perhaps despising him for his folly, but yet marveling at him, and wondering how he can act thus. "I," he seems to say, "a prince, a peer of God's parliament, would not submit my will to Jehovah: I thought it better to reign in hell than serve in heaven: I kept not my first estate, but fell from my throne: how is it that these stand? What grace is it which keeps these? I was a vessel of gold, and yet I was broken; these are earthen vessels, but I cannot break them! I could not stand in my glory—what can be the matchless grace which upholds them in their poverty, in their obscurity, in their persecution, still faithful to the God Who doth not bless and exalt them as He did me!"

It may be that he also wonders at their happiness. He feels within himself a seething sea of misery. There is an unfathomable gulf of anguish within his soul, and when he looks at believers, he sees them quiet in their souls, full of peace and happiness, and often without any outward means by which they should be comforted, yet rejoicing and full of glory. He goes

up and down through the world and possesses great power, and there be many myrmidons¹ to serve him, yet he hath not the happiness of spirit possessed by yonder humble cottager, obscure, unknown, having no servants to wait upon her, but stretched upon the bed of weakness. He admires and hates the peace which reigns in the believer's soul.

His consideration may go farther than this. Do you not think that *he considers them [in order] to detect, if possible, any flaw and fault in them, by way of solace to himself?* "They are not pure," saith he. "These blood-bought ones, these elect from before the foundations of the world—they still sin! These adopted children of God, for whom the glorious Son bowed His head and gave up the ghost—even they offend!" How must he chuckle, with such delight as he is capable of, over the secret sins of God's people, and if he can see anything in them inconsistent with their profession, anything which appears to be deceitful, and therein like himself, he rejoices. Each sin born in the believer's heart, cries to him, "My father! my Father!" and he feels something like the joy of fatherhood as he sees his foul offspring.

He looks at the "old man" in the Christian, and admires the tenacity with which it maintains its hold, the force and vehemence with which it struggles the mastery, the craft and cunning with which every now and then, at set intervals, at convenient opportunities, it putteth forth all its force. He considers our sinful flesh, and makes it one of the books in which he diligently reads. One of the fairest prospects, I doubt not, which the devil's eye ever rests upon, is the inconsistency and the impurity which he can discover in the true child of God. In this respect he had very little to consider in God's true servant, Job.

Nor is this all, but rather just the starting point of his consideration. We doubt not that he views the Lord's people, and especially the more eminent and excellent among them, as the great barriers to the progress of his kingdom. Just as the engineer, endeavouring to make a railway, keeps his eye very much fixed upon the hills and rivers, and especially upon the great mountain through which it will take years laboriously to bore a tunnel, so Satan, in looking upon his various plans to carry on his dominion in the world, considers most such men as Job.

Satan must have thought much of Martin Luther. "I could ride the world over," says he, "if it were not for that monk. He stands in my way. That strong-headed man hates and mauls my firstborn son, the pope. If I could get rid of him I would not mind though fifty thousand smaller saints stood in my way." He is sure to consider God's servant, if there be "none like him," if he stand out distinct and separate from his fellows.

Those of us who are called to the work of the ministry must expect from our position to be the special objects of his consideration. When the glass is at the eye of that dreadful warrior, he is sure to look out for those who by their regimentals are discovered to be the officers, and he bids his sharpshooters be very careful to aim at these, "For," saith he, "if the standard-bearer fall, then shall the victory be more readily gained to our side, and our opponents shall be readily put to rout." If you are more generous than other saints, if you live nearer to God than others, as the birds peck most at the ripest fruit, so may you expect Satan to be most busy against you.

Who cares to contend for a province covered with stones and barren rocks, and ice-bound by frozen seas? But in all times there is sure to be contention after the fat valleys where the wheat-sheaves are plenteous, and where the husbandman's toil is well requited, and thus, for you who honour God most, Satan will struggle very sternly. He wants to pluck God's jewels from His crown, if he can, and take the Redeemer's precious stones even from the breastplate itself.

He considers, then, God's people; viewing them as hindrances to his reign, he contrives methods by which he may remove them out of his way, or turn them to his own account. Darkness would cover the earth if he could blow out the lights. There would be no fruit to shake like Lebanon, if he could destroy that handful of corn upon the top of the mountains; hence his perpetual consideration is to make the faithful fail from among men.

It needs not much wisdom to discern that *the great object of Satan in considering God's people is to do them injury*. I scarcely think he hopes to destroy the really chosen and blood-bought heirs of life. My notion is that he is too good a divine for that. He has been foiled too often when he has attacked God's people, that he can hardly think he shall be able to destroy the elect, for you remember the soothsayers who are very nearly related to him, spoke to Haman on this wise, "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him" (Est 6:13). He knows right well that there is a seed royal in the land against whom he fights in vain; and it strikes me, if he could be absolutely certain that any one soul was chosen of God, he would scarcely waste his time in attempting to destroy it, although he might seek to worry and to dishonour it.

It is, however, most likely that Satan no more knows who God's elect are than we do, for he can only judge as we do by outward actions, though he can form a more accurate judgment than we can through longer experience, and being able to see persons in private where we cannot intrude—yet into God's book of secret decrees his black eye can never peer. By their fruits he knows them, and we know them in the same manner. Since, however, we are often mistaken in our judgment, he too may be so; and it seems to me that he therefore makes it his policy to endeavour to destroy them all—not knowing in which case he may succeed. He goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and, as he knows not whom he may be permitted to swallow up, he attacks all the people of God with vehemence.

Someone may say, "How can one devil do this?" He does not do it by himself alone. I do not know that many of us have ever been tempted directly by Satan: we may not be notable enough among men to be worth his trouble. But he has a whole host of inferior spirits under his supremacy and control. As the centurion said of himself, so he might have said of Satan,

¹ **myrmidons** – soldiers of rough character, from Greek mythology at the battle of Troy.

“he saith to this spirit, ‘Do this,’ and he doeth it, and to his servant, ‘Go,’ and he goeth.” Thus all the servants of God will more or less come under the direct or indirect assaults of the great enemy of souls, and that with a view of destroying them; for he would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect.

Where he cannot destroy, there is no doubt that Satan’s object is to **worry**. He does not like to see God’s people happy. I believe the devil greatly delights in some ministers, whose tendency in their preaching is to multiply and foster doubts and fears, grief and despondency, as the evidences of God’s people. “Ah,” saith the devil, “preach on; you are doing my work well, for I like to see God’s people mournful. If I can make them hang their harps on the willows, and go about with miserable faces, I reckon I have done my work very completely.”

My dear friends, let us watch against those specious temptations which pretend to make us humble, but which really aim at making us unbelieving. Our God takes no delight in our suspicions and mistrusts. See how He proves His love in the gift of His dear Son Jesus! Banish then all your ill surmisings, and rejoice in unmoved confidence. God delights to be worshipped with joy. “O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms” (Psa 95:1-2). “Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart” (Psa 32:11). “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice” (Phi 4:4). Satan does not like this. Martin Luther used to say, “Let us sing psalms and spite the devil,” and I have no doubt Martin Luther was pretty nearly right; for that lover of discord hates harmonious, joyous praise.

Beloved brother, the arch-enemy wants to make you wretched here, if he cannot have you hereafter; and in this, no doubt, he is aiming a blow at the honour of God. He is well aware that mournful Christians often dishonour the faithfulness of God by mistrusting it, and he thinks if he can worry us until we no more believe in the constancy and goodness of the Lord, he shall have robbed God of His praise. He that “offereth praise glorifieth me” (Psa 50:23), says God; and so Satan lays the axe at the root of our praise, that God may cease to be glorified.

Moreover, if Satan cannot destroy a Christian, how often has he **spoiled his usefulness**? Many a believer has fallen, not to break his neck—that is impossible—but he has broken some important bone, and he has gone limping to his grave! We can recall with grief some men once eminent in the ranks of the Church, who did run well, but on a sudden, through stress of temptation, they fell into sin, and their names were never mentioned in the Church again, except with bated breath. Everybody thought and hoped they were saved so as by fire, but certainly their former usefulness never could return. It is very easy to go back in the heavenly pilgrimage, but it is very hard to retrieve your steps. You may soon turn aside and put out your candle, but you cannot light it quite so speedily.

Friend, beloved in the Lord, watch against the attacks of Satan and stand fast, because you, as a pillar in the house of God are very dear to us, and we cannot spare you. As a father, or as a matron in our midst, we do you honour, and oh!—we would not be made to mourn and lament. We do not wish to be grieved by hearing the shouts of our adversaries while they cry, “Aha! Aha! so would we have it.” For alas! there have been many things done in our Zion which we would not have told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised should rejoice, and the sons of the Philistines should triumph.

Oh may God grant us grace, as a Church, to stand against the wiles of Satan and his attacks, that having done his worst he may gain no advantage over us. After having considered, and considered again, and counted well our towers and bulwarks, he may be compelled to retire because his battering rams cannot jar so much as a stone from our ramparts, and his slings cannot slay one single soldier on the walls.

Before I leave this point, I should like to say that perhaps it may be suggested, “How is it that God permits this constant and malevolent consideration of His people by the evil one?” One answer, doubtless, is, that God knows what is for His own glory, and that He giveth no account of His matters; that having permitted free agency, and having allowed, for some mysterious reason, the existence of evil, it does not seem agreeable with His having done so to destroy Satan. But He gives him power that it may be a fair hand-to-hand fight between sin and holiness, between grace and craftiness.

Besides, be it remembered, that incidentally the temptations of Satan are of **service** to the people of God. Fenelon (1651-1715) says they are the file which rubs off much of the rust of self-confidence, and I may add, they are the horrible sound in the sentinel’s ear, which is sure to keep him awake. An experimental divine remarks that there is no temptation in the world which is so bad as not being tempted at all. For to be tempted will tend to keep us awake: whereas, being without temptation, flesh and blood are weak—and though the spirit may be willing, yet we may be found falling into slumber. Children do not run away from their father’s side when big dogs bark at them. The howlings of the devil may tend to drive us nearer to Christ, may teach us our own weakness, may keep us upon our own watch-tower, and be made the means of preservation from other ills. Let us “be sober, be vigilant, because our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour” (1Pe 5:8). Let us who are in a prominent position be permitted affectionately to press upon you one earnest request, namely, “Brethren, pray for us,” that, exposed as we are peculiarly to the consideration of Satan, we may be guarded by divine power. Let us be made rich by your faithful prayers that we may be kept even to the end.

2. What Is It that Satan Considers with a View to the Injury of God’s People?

It cannot be said of him as of God, that he knoweth us altogether. But since he has been now nearly six thousand years dealing with poor fallen humanity, he must have acquired a very vast experience in that time. Having been all over the

earth, and having tempted the highest and the lowest, he must know exceeding well what the springs of human action are, and how to play upon them.

Satan watches and considers first of all our peculiar infirmities.

He looks us up and down, just as I have seen a horse-dealer do with a horse, and soon finds out wherein we are faulty. I, a common observer, might think the horse an exceedingly good one, as I see it running up and down the road, but the dealer sees what I cannot see, and he knows how to handle the creature just in such quarters and at such points that he soon discovers any hidden mischief. Satan knows how to look at us and reckon us up from heel to head, so that he will say of this man, "His infirmity is lust," or of that other, "He hath a quick temper," or of this other, "He is proud," or of that other, "He is slothful."

The eye of malice is very quick to perceive a weakness, and the hand of enmity soon takes advantage of it. When the arch-spy finds a weak place in the wall of our castle, he takes care to plant his battering-ram and begin his siege. You may conceal, even from your dearest friend, your infirmity, but you will not conceal it from your worst enemy. He has lynx eyes,² and detects in a moment the joint in your harness. He goes about with a match, and though you may think you have covered all the gunpowder of your heart, yet he knows how to find a crack to put his match through, and much mischief will he do, unless eternal mercy shall prevent.

He takes care also to consider our frames and states of mind.

If the devil would attack us when our mind is in certain moods, we should be more than a match for him; he knows this, and shuns the encounter. Some men are more ready for temptation when they are distressed and desponding; the fiend will then assail them. Others will be more liable to take fire when they are jubilant and full of joy; then will he strike his spark into the tinder. Certain persons, when they are much vexed and tossed to and fro, can be made to say almost anything; and others, when their souls are like perfectly placid waters, are just then in a condition to be navigated by the devil's vessel. As the worker in metals knows that one metal is to be worked at such a heat, and another at a different temperature; as those who have to deal with chemicals know that at a certain heat one fluid will boil, while another reaches the boiling-point much earlier—so Satan knows exactly the temperature at which to work us to his purpose. Small pots boil directly they are put on the fire, and so little men of quick temper are soon in a passion; larger vessels require more time and coal before they will boil, but when they do boil, it is a boil indeed, not soon forgotten or abated. The enemy, like a fisherman, watches his fish, adapts his bait to his prey, and knows in what seasons and times the fish are most likely to bite.

This hunter of souls comes upon us unawares, and often we are overtaken in a fault, or caught in a trap through an unwatchful frame of mind. That rate collector of choice sayings, Thomas Spencer, has the following which is much to the point:—"The chameleon, when he lies on the grass to catch flies and grasshoppers, taketh upon him the colour of the grass, as the polypus doth the colour of the rock under which he lurketh, that the fish may boldly come near him without any suspicion of danger. In like manner, Satan turneth himself into that shape which we least fear, and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures, that so he may the sooner draw us into his net. He sails with every wind, and blows us that way which we incline ourselves through the weakness of nature. Is our knowledge in matter of faith deficient?—he tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender?—he tempts us to scrupulosity and too much preciseness. Hath our conscience, like the ecliptic line,³ some latitude?⁴—he tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold spirited?—he tempts us to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful?—he tempteth us to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition?—he tempteth us to inconstancy. Are we stiff?—he labours to make obstinate heretics, schismatics,⁵ or rebels of us. Are we of an austere temper?—he tempteth us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild?—he tempteth us to indulgence and foolish pity. Are we hot in matters of religion?—he tempteth us to blind zeal and superstition. Are we cold?—he tempteth us to Laodicean lukewarmness (Rev 3:16). Thus doth he lay his traps, that one way or other, he may ensnare us.

He also takes care to consider our position among men.

There are a few persons who are most easily tempted when they are alone; they are the subjects then of great heaviness of mind, and they may be driven to most awful crimes. Perhaps the most of us are more liable to sin when we are in company. In some company I never should be led into sin; into another society I could scarcely venture. Many are so full of levity, that those of us who are inclined the same way can scarcely look them in the face without feeling our besetting sin set a-going. Others are so somber, that if they meet a brother of like mould, they are pretty sure between them to invent an evil report of the goodly land. Satan knows where to overtake you in a place where you lie open to his attacks. He will pounce upon you, swoop like a bird of prey from the sky, where he has been watching for the time to make his descent with a prospect of success.

² **lynx eyes** – keen vision.

³ **ecliptic line** – the apparent path of the sun on the celestial sphere, marked by a longitudinal line at a 23.5 degree angle to the equator (the angle of the earth's axis in relation to the plane of its orbit around the sun). Spurgeon's point is that this represents some variance from precise longitude measurements which exactly parallel the equator.

⁴ **latitude** – variance, flexibility.

⁵ **schismatics** – those who cause divisions.

How, too, will he consider our condition in the world!

He looks at one man, and says, "That man has property: it is of no use my trying such-and-such arts with him; but here is another man who is very poor, I will catch him in that net." Then, again, he looks at the poor man, and says, "Now, I cannot tempt him to this folly, but I will lead the rich man into it." As the sportsman has a gun for wild fowl, and another for deer and game, so has Satan a different temptation for various orders of men. I do not suppose that the Queen's temptation ever will annoy Mary the kitchen-maid. I do not suppose, on the other hand, that Mary's temptation will ever be very serious to me. Probably you could escape from mine, I do not think you could—and I sometimes fancy I could bear yours, though I question if I could. Satan knows, however, just where to smite us, and our position, our capabilities, our education, our standing in society, our calling, may all be doors through which he may attack us.

You who have no calling at all, are in peculiar peril—I wonder the devil does not swallow you outright. The most likely man to go to hell is the man who has nothing to do on earth. I say that seriously. I believe that there cannot happen a much worse evil to a person than to be placed where he has no work; and if I should ever be in such a state, I would get employment at once, for fear I should be carried off, body and soul, by the evil one. Idle people tempt the devil to tempt them. Let us have something to do, let us keep our minds occupied, for, if not, we make room for the devil. Industry will not make us gracious, but the want of industry may make us vicious. Have always something on the anvil or in the fire.

"In books, or work, or healthful play I would be busy too,

For Satan finds some mischief still For idle hands to do."

So Watts taught us in our childhood, and so let us believe in our manhood. Books, works, or such recreations as are necessary for health, should occupy our time. If I throw myself down in indolence, like an old piece of iron, I must not wonder that I grow rusty with sin.

Satan notices all of the objects of our affection.

Nor have I done yet. Satan, when he makes his investigations, notices all *the objects of our affection*. I doubt not when he went round Job's house, he observed it as carefully as thieves do a jeweler's premises when they mean to break into them. They very cunningly take account of every door, window, and fastening: they fail not to look at the next-door house, for they may have to reach the treasure through the building which adjoins it. So, when the devil went round, jotting down in his mind all Job's position, he thought to himself, "There are the camels and the oxen, the asses, and the servants—yes, I can use all these very admirably." "Then," he thought, "there are the three daughters! There are the ten sons, and they go feasting—I shall know where to catch them, and if I can just blow the house down when they are feasting, that will afflict the father's mind the more severely, for he will say 'O that they had died when they had been praying, rather than when they had been feasting and drinking wine.' I will put down too in the inventory," says the devil, "his wife—I dare say I shall want her," and accordingly it came to that. Nobody could have done what Job's wife did—none of the servants could have said that sad sentence so stingingly—or, if she meant it very kindly, none could have said it with such a fascinating air as Job's own wife, "Bless God and die," as it may be read, or "Curse God and die." Ah, Satan, thou hast ploughed with Job's heifer, but thou hast not succeeded; Job's strength lies in his God, not in his hair, or else thou mightest have shorn him as Samson was shorn! Perhaps the evil one had even inspected Job's personal sensibilities, and so selected that form of bodily affliction which he knew to be most dreaded by his victim. He brought upon him a disease which Job may have seen and shuddered at, in poor men outside the city gates.

Brethren, Satan knows quite as much in regard to *you*! You have a child, and Satan knows that you idolize it. "Ah," says he, "there is a place for my wounding him." Even the partner of your bosom may be made a quiver in which hell's arrows shall be stored till the time may come, and then she may prove the bow from which Satan will shoot them. Watch even your neighbour and her that lieth in your bosom, for you know not how Satan may get an advantage over you. Our habits, our joys, our sorrows, our retirements, our public positions, all may be made weapons of attack by this desperate foe of the Lord's people. We have snares everywhere; in our bed and at our table, in our house and in the street. There are gins and trap-falls in company; there are pits when we are alone. We may find temptations in the house of God as well as in the world; traps in our high estate, and deadly poisons in our abasement. We must not expect to be rid of temptations till we have crossed the Jordan, and then, thank God, we are beyond gunshot of the enemy. The last howling of the dog of hell will be heard as we descend into the chill waters of the black stream, but when we hear the hallelujah of the glorified, we shall have done with the black prince forever and ever.

3. Satan Considered, But There Was a Higher Consideration Which Overrode His Consideration.

In times of war, the sappers and miners of one party will make a mine, and it is a very common counteractive for the sappers and miners of the other party to counter-mine by undermining the first mine. This is just what God does with Satan. Satan is mining, and he thinks to light the fuse and to blow up God's building, but all the while God is undermining him, and He blows up Satan's mine before he can do any mischief. The devil is the greatest of all fools. He has more knowledge but less wisdom than any other creature, he is more subtle than all the beasts of the field, but it is well called subtlety, not wisdom. It is not true wisdom; it is only another shape of folly. All the while that Satan was tempting Job, he little knew

that he was answering God's purpose, for God was looking on and considering the whole of it, and holding the enemy as a man holds a horse by its bridle.

The Lord had considered exactly how far He would let Satan go.

He did not the first time permit him to touch his flesh—perhaps that was more than Job at that time could have borne. Have you never noticed that if you are in good strong bodily health you can bear losses and crosses, and even bereavements, with something like equanimity?⁶ Now that was the case with Job. Perhaps if the disease had come first and the rest had followed, it might have been a temptation too heavy for him. But God, Who knows just how far to let the enemy go, will say to him, “Thus far, and no farther.” By degrees he became accustomed to his poverty; in fact, the trial had lost all its sting the moment Job said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away” (Job 1:21). That enemy was slain—nay it was buried and this was the funeral oration, “Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21).

When the second trial came, the first trial had qualified Job to bear the second. It may be a more severe trial for a man in the possession of great worldly wealth suddenly to be deprived of the bodily power of enjoying it, than to lose all first, and then lose the health necessary to its enjoyment. Having already lost all, he might almost say, “I thank God that now I have nothing to enjoy, and therefore the loss of the power to enjoy it is not so wearisome. I have not to say, “How I wish I could go out in my fields, and see to my servants, for they are all dead. I do not wish to see my children—they are all dead and gone. I am thankful that they are; better so, than that they should see their poor father sit on a dunghill like this.” He might have been almost glad if his wife had gone too, for certainly she was not a very particular mercy when she was spared; and possibly, if he had had all his children about him, it might have been a harder trial than it was. The Lord who weighs mountains in scales, had meted out his servant's woe.

Did not the Lord also consider how He should sustain His servant under the trial?

Beloved, you do not know how blessedly our God poured the secret oil upon Job's fire of grace while the devil was throwing buckets of water on it. He saith to Himself, “If Satan shall do much, I will do more; if he takes away much, I will give more; if he tempts the man to curse, I will fill him so full of love to Me that he shall bless Me. I will help him; I will strengthen him; yea, I will uphold him with the right hand of My righteousness.” Christian, take those two thoughts and put them under your tongue as a wafer made with honey—you will never be tempted without express license from the throne where Jesus pleads, and, on the other hand, when He permits it, He will with the temptation make a way of escape, or give you grace to stand under it (1Co 10:13).

The Lord considered how to sanctify Job by this trial.

Job was a much better man at the end of the story than he was at the beginning. He was “a perfect and an upright man” at first (Job 1:18), but there was a little pride about him. We are poor creatures to criticise such a man as Job—but still there was in him just a sprinkling of self-righteousness. I think, and his friends brought it out, Eliphaz and Zophar said such irritating things that poor Job could not help replying in strong terms about himself that were rather too strong, one thinks; there was a little too much self-justification. He was not proud as some of us are, of a very little—he had much to be proud of, as the world would allow—but yet there was the tendency to be exalted with it; and though the devil did not know it, perhaps if he had left Job alone, that pride might have run to seed, and Job might have sinned. But he was in such a hurry, that he would not let the ill seed ripen, but hastened to cut it up, and so was the Lord's tool to bring Job into a more humble, and consequently a more safe and blessed state of mind.

Moreover, observe how Satan was a lacquey to the Almighty!

Job all this while was being enabled to earn a greater reward.

All his prosperity is not enough; God loves Job so much, that He intends to give him twice the property; He intends to give him his children again; He means to make him a more famous man than ever, a man whose name shall ring down the ages, a man who shall be talked of through all generations. He is not to be the man of Uz, but of the whole world. He is not to be heard of by a handful in one neighbourhood, but all men are to hear of Job's patience in the hour of trial. Who is to do this? Who is to fashion the trump of fame through which Job's name is to be blown? The devil goes to the forge, and works away with all his might—to make Job illustrious! Foolish devil! he is piling up a pedestal on which God will set His servant Job, that he may be looked upon with wonder by all ages.

To conclude, Job's afflictions and Job's patience have been a lasting blessing to the Church of God, and they have inflicted incredible disgrace upon Satan. If you want to make the devil angry, throw the story of Job in his teeth. If you desire to have your own confidence sustained, may God the Holy Ghost lead you into the patience of Job. Oh! how many saints have been comforted in their distress by this history of patience! How many have been saved out of the jaw of the lion, and from the paw of the bear by the dark experiences of the patriarch of Uz. Oh arch fiend, how art thou taken in thine own net! Thou hast thrown a stone which has fallen on thine own head. Thou madest a pit for Job, and hast fallen into it thyself; thou art taken in thine own craftiness. Jehovah has made fools of the wise and driven the diviners mad.

⁶ **equanimity** – equality; equivalent handling or response.

Brethren, let us commit ourselves in faith to the care and keeping of God—come poverty, come sickness, come death, we will in all things through Jesus Christ's blood be conquerors, and by the power of His Spirit we shall overcome at the last. I would God we were all trusting in Jesus. May those who have not trusted Him be led to begin this very morning, and God shall have all the praise in us all, evermore. Amen. ✎

Taken from the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 11, No. 623.