

JOB'S VINDICATION

THEN Job answered the LORD, and said,

²I know that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be restrained.

³Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that which I understood not, things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

⁴Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak; I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

⁵I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.

⁶wherefore I loathe my words, and repent in dust and ashes.

⁷And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. ⁸Now therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you; for him will I accept, that I deal not with you after your folly; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right,

as my servant Job hath. ⁹So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: and the LORD accepted Job. ¹⁰And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: and the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him concerning all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one a ring of gold. ¹²So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: and he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses. ¹³He had also seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴And he called the name of the first, Jemimah; and the name of the second, Keziah; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. ¹⁵And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. ¹⁶And after this Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, *even* four generations. ¹⁷So Job died, being old and full of days.

SATAN had said to God, *Doth Job fear God for nought? . . . Put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will renounce Thee to Thy face* (1: 9, 11). Job has lost all, but he has found God and is content. Even without the knowledge of

God's love that comes from Golgotha, he finds Him more than sufficient. The passionate cry for vindication has been forgotten, for it matters not what men may say, if he knows that his fellowship with God has been restored.

The vindication of some of God's saints must wait until they stand before His throne. Job, however, has been more than just an individual who through suffering and loss has reached the bliss of communion with God; he is also an object lesson from whom generations to come were to learn a lesson of God's dealings with men. He had therefore to be vindicated there and then. This comes in two stages.

Though nothing we have said about Job's friends has been too hard, they were for all that men who sought the truth, even though they wished to force it into their own moulds, so God was able to speak to them. It is not surprising that He chose Eliphaz (42: 7), for his distorting medium was more pardonable than that of the others. That it was Job who had to pray for them (42: 8), Job the outcast, the chief of sinners, was something that could break down even the common-sense of Zophar. It was clear that only a man accepted by God and righteousness in His sight could mediate for his fellow-men.

But what of Job's fellow-townsmen, the fickle mob that had thrust him out of their town as unclean and accursed, when the hand of Satan was upon him? There was only one answer they could understand, the only answer the mob will ever understand, and so *the Lord restored the fortunes of Job . . . and gave Job twice as much as he had before* (v. 10, R.S.V.). Success and prosperity form the language the world understands, so they all flocked back to the man they had abandoned in the hour of his bitterest need (42: 11). He might well have thanked God that they had treated him as they did, for had he known their comfort and care in his adversity, he might never have been thrown back on God and so have learnt to know Him in this new way.

Many have found the end of *Job* disappointing, for, so they say, it is ultimately no more than a vindication of the views that Job's friends had put forward all along. Even if this were true, what of it? It is not Job's words, but Job, who is vindicated; it is Job's friends rather than their theology that stands condemned. The force of 42: 7 is that however foolishly he may have said it, Job was looking for a God big enough to comprehend his experience. On the other hand, however wisely they may have put

it into words, his friends were upholding a God small enough to conform to their theories. Could the discussion have been carried on in a vacuum, it may well be that we should have been forced to adjudge the friends victors. But theological discussions cannot be carried on in a vacuum. We have to bow before what God has done in history, before what He has done to individual men and women, of whom Job was but one.

But that is not all. God is never concerned that some insist on misunderstanding Him. There was only one way in which He could vindicate Job that the mob would understand. If that way could be interpreted as a vindication of the theory that Job had by his sufferings so signally refuted, that was of no concern to God. Experience shows us that sinful man is happily capable of misinterpreting anything that God has said and done.

The doubling of all Job's possessions was intended to show that there was nothing fortuitous about it all; his contemporaries had to be made to acknowledge that God's hand was at work. Only his children were not doubled (42: 13). In the hour of Job's greatest desperation he had been driven to the hope of life beyond the grave. Now God says Amen to it. All earthly things are transient, and so his lost possessions could not be restored, but only replaced and doubled. But by giving him only ten new children God assured him that he would yet meet those he had lost beyond the grave.