

A.B. Simpson:

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42: 5, 6.)

The book of Job is the world's oldest poem and presents some of the profoundest spiritual teachings of the book of revelation. It is an inspired drama and its design is twofold: first, to unfold the principles of God's moral government in dealing with men; second, to show the inadequacy of human nature to stand the tests of life without a deeper and diviner spiritual life.

The leading figure of the drama is a man who stands above his fellow-men in all the best qualities of human character. By the testimony of God he was a good man, the best man on earth, a man who "feared God, and eschewed evil." He was undoubtedly a servant of God and we would call him a converted man. But he had not yet passed through the deeper experience of self-crucifixion which brings the soul into the divine nature and experience of true sanctification.

To this man God permitted the severest tests to come. The first part of the dramatic scene appears in the deep inquiries of his friends and counselors into the cause and explanation of his peculiar trial. Three men came to him, three eminent philosophers and moralists, representing all the best qualities of the wisdom of the world. Their very names are significant of the honor, the strength, the wealth, the beauty, and the wisdom of the world. Day after day through his protracted and distracting trial they sat by his side; they talked with him, vainly trying to comfort him. They still more vainly tried to instruct him in the principles of divine government and show him that he must be guilty of some great iniquity or God would not thus afflict him. Each of them had three turns and Job in turn answered each of them three times. But when it all ended none of them were wiser than at first. Job was utterly unsatisfied with their consolations and exhortations, and dismissed them with the honest and sarcastic words: "Miserable comforters are you all."

They represent the world's best philosophy and wisdom, and they prove the utter inadequacy of the human mind by all its searching to "find out God."

But trial develops yet another fact, and that is the failure of Job. The good man soon broke under his terrible continued affliction, and began to vindicate himself and reflect upon God for the injustice and severity of his affliction.

Then a fourth character appeared upon the scene. Elihu, whose name signifies his direct relation to God as His servant and messenger, came with an entirely new message, even with the inspired Word of God Himself. Twice he spoke and Job also answered him, but all his profound and deeply spiritual teaching fell in vain upon the ears of the tried and distracted sufferer. A stronger influence, a diviner touch was necessary before his heart would yield and his lesson be fully learned.

At last it came and it came only through the direct revelation of God Himself. After they had all spoken and Job had again and again reechoed and repeated his complaints and self-justification, God suddenly appeared upon the scene in a sublime vision of majesty and power, and spoke to him from the midst of the whirlwind. The message was in two sections interrupted by a brief pause in which Job broke down and sank in silence and submission before God's demand, "Shall he that contends with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproves God let him answer it." And Job replied: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yes, twice; but I will proceed no further." (Job 40: 2-5.)

But God proceeded with His majestic message through the next two chapters, unfolding to Job the majesty and glory of the natural creation, pointing to the forces of nature, the stars in their courses, the ordinances of heaven, the clouds and lightnings, the springs of the sea, the providence that supplies the wants of every living thing, the instincts of the birds, the mighty creatures that roam in the ocean and depths of the forest, and as the vision of God's majesty and glory passed before the mind of the humble and broken penitent, all his pride and self-vindication passed away, and he cried: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

This was at length the crisis of Job's spiritual life. This was the death of self and the beginning of the life of God and from this hour the whole story turns upon its axis and the whole life and experience of Job becomes transformed. The moment he condemned himself God began to justify him. The moment he sank in the dust God began to lift him up. The moment he ceased arguing and contending with his friends and began to pray for them, God turned his captivity and brought them to bow at his feet and ask his forgiveness and his prayers, and

from that hour even his temporal circumstances were changed, his trials passed, all that he had lost was restored to him twofold, and henceforth life flowed on upon a new plane of resurrection power, glory and blessing. Let us look, therefore, more closely at this turning point, this crisis of a life, this great example which God has held out to us in the story of His ancient servant.

One, the words of our text remind us of the value of a revelation of divine truth. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear." This describes the revelation which comes to the outward ear and the natural intelligence which it represents. In the drama of the book of Job, Elihu represents the revelation of God's Word which comes to the ear and to the mind. Now, it is needless to say that the revelation of God's will and purpose is absolutely necessary and is the foundation of all deeper spiritual revelations to the soul, but at the same time, the revelation of the truth is not known without the deeper revelation of God Himself to the inner spirit by the Holy Ghost. It requires a spiritual mind to understand the teaching of the Spirit. The cold, natural intellect cannot receive the things of God by the hearing of the ear alone. Therefore, many of the brightest and profoundest minds have failed to understand the deeper teachings of the Scriptures and have even become, by their higher criticism, enemies of the Bible and misinterpreters of the volume they have professed to elucidate and explain. The greatest weakness of Christianity today arises from the fact that so many of its followers have only heard of God by the hearing of the ear.

Two, our text teaches us the need of a deeper revelation of God Himself. "Now my eye sees You," he cried. It is not the truth but the God of truth. It is not the Book but its Author and Inspirer that we are now dealing with. The mission of the Holy Ghost is to reveal God through the truth and back of the truth to the earnest and inquiring soul. This was the experience that had come to Job and which broke his heart, humbled his pride, slew his self-sufficiency, and made room in his heart and life for God.

This has ever been the turning point of every great spiritual life. We are told that far off in Mesopotamia "the God of glory appeared unto . . . Abraham," and from that moment the whole story of faith began. It was easy for him to leave his country and his home. It was easy for him to go into an unknown future. There was One henceforth with him whom he personally knew and in whose appearance all else became as nothing. God had appeared unto him.

Later another figure appears on the scene at a still greater crisis in the history of redemption. It is the great lawgiver, Moses. But the secret of Moses' life is all given in a single sentence: "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." He had met God. He always saw Him, and the deepest cry of Moses' heart and life was uttered later when he prayed: "I beseech You, show me Your glory." "If Your presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Your people have found grace in Your sight? Is it not in that You go with us?"

The next great life that stands out in bold relief in Israel's story is David, and the one predominant and determining feature of his life was godliness. "I have set the Lord always before me," is the watchword of his whole experience. Isaiah's call came in that hour of which he says, "I saw ... the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," and then he passed through an experience precisely the same as that of Job.

The greatest character of Scripture, the mighty Paul, started upon his new career from the moment he saw a vision of the Lord Jesus, and from that hour there was one Face, one Form, one Presence, one Thought that dominated his life -- the vision, the presence, the will of his Master.

The greatest moment in every life is when Jesus Christ becomes actually present and intensely real and vivid in our consciousness. Beloved, has that moment come to you? Have you passed from the mere stage of intellectual knowledge of Christ to personal intimacy? Is it the historical Christ, or is it the Christ of today of whom you can say as one of the most devout of the German writers said: "It seems to me as if Jesus Christ had been crucified only yesterday."

Three, the effect of the vision of God on Job was marked and immediate. It brought about the death of self. The glare of that sunburst of divine glory blinded him to every other light and sight and especially to the sight of himself. All his vindications, justifications, self-complacencies were gone. In the light of God's glory he could only see himself as worthless and utterly vile, and he longed to get out of his own sight and never see himself again. It was not merely that he took back his words and repudiated his acts, but he hated and renounced himself. Self-denial is not giving up a few things, but it is letting self go and refusing any longer to know ourselves, to live for ourselves, or to expect any good from ourselves. This was the effect of the vision of God upon Isaiah. When he saw Jehovah in His glory he cried, "I am undone; . . . I am a man of unclean lips: my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." When Daniel saw this great vision he tells us, "There remained no

strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." This is the only way that self can ever die; a sight of Christ, and above all, the reception of Christ to live and reign in the will, the heart, life, will drive out every rival and especially that oldest and worst rival of all, our own will, our own self-confidence, self-righteousness, and self-love.

The second effect of the revelation of God was the uplifting of his heart to a higher plane of divine life. Immediately we find him praying for his enemies. If there is one miracle greater than another it is when human hate becomes transformed into heavenly love. There is nothing so hard as to really love the people who have exasperated, tried and tormented us, and especially those that have done this like Job's friends, in the name of religion. But the vision of God made Job equal to it. There came such a flood of divine life and love into his soul that colored everything henceforth with its own color. When the heart receives Christ it sees everything and everyone in the light of Christ, and it loves not as man, but as God loves.

The third effect of the revelation of God is that Job was vindicated by God Himself. Job did not need to be revenged upon the men who had wronged him, for God took them in hand and sent them to make amends themselves by humble acknowledgment of their error, by sacrificing to God, and by asking Job to pray for them. The best revenge that we can have upon the people that have done us wrong is to be the means of blessing them. When we die to self and become one with God, God makes even our enemies to be at peace with us, brings good out of evil, and turns the curse into a blessing. "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the waste places shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled. . . . And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden."

Finally God Himself restored to Job doubly all that he had lost before. He gave him back his health by a divine miracle and added to his years twice as many as he had before, so that Job lived after his restoration one hundred and forty years, and probably before his life ended he had reached at least two hundred years, older even than Abraham himself.

He gave him back his family, and it is particularly mentioned that the daughters of Job were the most beautiful women in the land, and their names are all significant of the highest qualities both of person and of heart. He gave him back his property so that he had twice as much in every kind of earthly ware as he had formerly enjoyed, and He blessed Job's later years more than those in the beginning.

All this is still true: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Not necessarily in this world shall it come to pass in the life of a saint that earthly prosperity shall be measured out to him in proportion to the spiritual blessing, but before the circle is completed, before the true life is finished, it will be made real, for this world is but a segment of the circle, but a chapter of the story. It is when He comes again that all the promises of blessing that come to the consecrated soul shall be fully realized and that the "all things" shall be completely added. Thus "every one that has forsaken houses . . . or lands for (Christ's) sake, shall receive" not double but a "hundredfold." Then shall it be true: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Then the lives that have died to self and sin shall sit with Him on His throne, shall share "the power of an endless life," and shall receive for every cross a crown, and for every weight of pain a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and for the little sacrifice of a surrendered life an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away."