



Sermons from Job

**14. The Turning of
Job's Captivity
By C. H. Spurgeon**

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Job 42:10.

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Since God is immutable he acts always upon the same principles, and hence his course of action in the olden times to a man of a certain sort will be a guide as to what others may expect who are of like character. God does not act by caprice, nor by fits and starts. He has his usual modes and ways. The psalmist David uses the expression, “Then will I teach transgressors *thy ways*,” as if God had well-known ways, habits, and modes of action; and so he has, or he would not be the unchangeable Jehovah. In that song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation, we read, “Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.” The Lord has ways as high above our ways as the heavens are above the earth, and these are not fickle and arbitrary. These ways, although very different if we view them superficially, are really always the same when you view them with understanding. The ways of the Lord are right, though transgressors fall therein by not discerning them; but the righteous understand the ways of the Lord, for to them he makes them known, and they perceive that grand general principles govern all the actions of God. If it were not so, the case of such a man as Job would be of no service to us. It could not be said that the things which happened aforetime happened unto us for an example, because if God did not act on fixed principles we could never tell how he would act in any fresh case, and that which happened to one man would be no rule whatever, and no encouragement whatever, to another. We are not all like Job, but we all have Job's God. Though we have neither risen to Job's wealth, nor will, probably, ever sink to Job's poverty, yet there is the same God above us if we be high, and the same God with his everlasting arms beneath us if we be brought low; and what the Lord did for Job he will do for us, not precisely in the same form, but in the same spirit, and with like design. If, therefore, we

are brought low tonight, let us be encouraged with the thought that God will turn again our captivity; and let us entertain the hope that after the time of trial shall be over, we shall be richer, especially in spiritual things, than ever we were before. There will come a turning point to the growing heat of affliction, and the fire shall cool. When the ebb has fallen to its lowest, the sea will return to its strength; when mid-winter has come, spring will be near, and when midnight has struck, then the dawning will not be far away. Perhaps, too, the signal of our happier days shall be the very same as that of the patient patriarch, and when we pray for our friends, blessings shall be poured into our own bosoms.

Our text has in it three points very clearly; firstly, *the Lord can soon turn his people's captivity*: "The Lord turned the captivity of Job." Secondly, *there is generally some point at which he does this*: in Job's case he turned his captivity when he prayed for his friends. And, thirdly, *believers shall never be losers by God*, for he gave Job twice as much as he had before.

First, then, THE LORD CAN SOON TURN HIS PEOPLE'S CAPTIVITY.

That is a very remarkable expression—"captivity." It does not say, "God turned his poverty," though Job was reduced to the extremity of penury, having lost all his property. We do not read that the Lord turned his sickness, though he was covered with sore boils. It does not say that he turned away the sting of bereavement, reproach, and calumny, although all those are included. But there is something more meant by the word *captivity*. A man may be very poor, and yet not in captivity, his soul may sing among the angels when his body is on a dunghill, and dogs are licking his sores. A man may be very sick, and yet not be in captivity; he may be roaming the broad fields of covenant mercy though he cannot rise from his bed; and his soul may never enjoy greater liberty than when his body is scarcely able to turn from side to side. Captivity is bondage of mind, the iron entering into the soul. I suspect that Job, under the severe mental trial which attended his bodily pains, was, as to his spirit, like a man bound hand and foot and fettered, and then taken away from his native country, banished from the place which he loved, deprived of the associations which had cheered him, and confined in darkness. I mean that, together with the trouble

and trial to which he was subjected, he had lost somewhat the presence of God; much of his joy and comfort had departed; the peace of his mind had gone, and the associations which he had formed with other believers were now broken: he was in all these respects like a lone captive. His three friends had condemned him as a hypocrite, and would not have association with him except to censure him, and thus he felt like one who had been carried into a far country, and banished both from God and man. He could only follow the occupation of a captive, that is, to be oppressed, to weep, to claim compassion, and to pour out a dolorous complaint. He hung his harp on the willows, and felt that he could not sing the Lord's song in a strange land. Poor Job! He is less to be pitied for his bereavements, poverty, and sickness than for his loss of that candle of the Lord which once shone about his head. That is the worst point of all when trouble penetrates to the heart. All the bullets in the battle, though they fly thick as hail, will not distress a soldier like one which finds a lodging in his flesh. "To take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them," is a grand and manly thing; but when that sea of trouble fills the cabin of the heart, puts out the fires of inward energy, washes the judgment from the wheel, and renders the pumps of resolution useless, the man becomes very nearly a wreck. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Touch a man in his bone, and in his flesh, and yet he may exult; but touch him in his mind—let the finger of God be laid upon his spirit—and then, indeed, he is in captivity. I think the term includes all the temporal distress into which Job came, but it chiefly denotes the bondage of spirit into which he was brought, as the combined result of his troubles, his sickness, the taunts of his friends, and the withdrawal of the divine smile. My point is that God can deliver us out of that captivity; he can both from the spiritual and the temporal captivity give us a joyful release.

The Lord can deliver us out of spiritual captivity, and that very speedily. I may be addressing some, to-night, Who feel everything except what they want to feel. They enjoy no sweetness in the means of grace, and yet for all the world they would not give them up. They used at one time to rejoice in the Lord; but now they cannot see his face and the utmost they can say is, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" It little matters that some live in perpetual

joy, the triumphs of others cannot cheer a man who is himself defeated. It is idle to tell a distressed soul that it ought to rejoice as others do. What one ought to do and what one can do are sometimes very different, for how to perform that which we would we find not. In vain do you pour your glad notes into a troubled ear. Singing songs to a sad heart is like pouring vinegar upon nitre, the elements are discordant, and cause a painful effervescence. There are true children of God who walk in darkness and see no light; yea, some who are the excellent of the earth, nevertheless are compelled to cry aloud, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Throughout all time some of these have been in the church, and there always will be such, let our perfect brethren condemn them as they please. The Lord will always leave his mourners, his church shall always have an afflicted and poor people in her midst. Let us all take warning, for we also may be tried and cast down ere our day is over; it may be that the brightest eye among us may yet be dimmed, and the boldest heart may yet be faint, and he that dwells nearest to his God at this moment may yet have to cry out in bitterness of soul, "O God, return unto me, and lift up the light of thy countenance upon me."

Therefore mark well this cheering truth, God can turn your captivity, and turn it at once. Some of God's children seem to think that to recover their former joy must occupy a long period of time. It is true, dear brother, that if you had to work your passage back to where you came from it would be a weary voyage. There would have to be most earnest searchings of heart and purgings of spirit, struggling with inbred lusts and outward temptations, and all that, if joy were always the result of inward condition. There must needs be a great deal of scrubbing and cleansing and furbishing up of the house, before you could invite your Lord to come, if he and you dwelt together on terms of law. But albeit, that all this cleansing and purifying will have to be done, it will be done far better when you have a sense of his love than it ever can be if you do it in order to make yourself fit for it. Do you not remember when first you sought him you wanted him to deal with you on the legal ground of making yourself better, and you prepared the house for him to come and dwell in it; but he would not come on such terms. He came to you just as you were, and when he came he himself drove out the

intruders which profaned the temple of your soul, and he dwelt with you, in order to perfect the cleansing. Now he will vouchsafe to you the conscious enjoyment of his presence on the same terms as at first, that is, on terms of free and sovereign grace. Did you not at that time admit the Saviour to your soul because you could not do without him? Was not that the reason? Is it not a good reason for receiving him again? Was there anything in you when you received him which could commend you to him? Say, were you not all over defilement, and full of sin and misery? And yet you opened the door, and said, "My Lord, come in, in thy free grace, come in, for I must have thee or I perish." My dear friend, dare you invite him now on other terms? Having begun in the Spirit, wouldst thou be made perfect in the flesh? Having begun to live by grace, wouldst thou go on to live by works? When thou wast a stranger, didst thou trust in his love, and now that thou art his friend, wilt thou appeal to the law? God forbid. O, brother, Jesus loves thee still, and in a moment he will restore thee. O, sister, Jesus would fain come back to thy heart again, and that in an instant. Hast thou never read that joyful exclamation of the spouse, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib?" Why, can he not do the same with you now, and quicken and enspirit you even in a moment? After all, you are not worse than you were when he first visited you; you are not in so sorry a plight after all, as your first natural state, for then you were dead in trespasses and sins altogether, and he quickened you, and now, though you say you feel dead, yet the very expression proves that there is some life lingering in you. Did I not hear you say,

***"Return, O Sacred Dove, return,
Sweet messenger of rest,
I hate the sins that made thee mourn,
And drove thee from my breast."***

Why, friend, those sighs and groans are sweet to the Lord, and they would not have been in thee if he had not put them there; they are sure tokens that his grace has not been altogether taken from thee. Knowest thou not, O child of God, that the grace of God is intended to meet all thy sins after conversion as well as before conversion? Dost thou not know that the Lord loved thee of old,

despite thy sins, and he loves thee still? Understandest thou not that the ground of thy salvation is not thy standing or thy character, but the standing of Christ before God, and the character and work of Christ in the presence of God? Believe thou firmly that still he loves thee, for so indeed he does. Cast thine eyes upon those dear wounds of his, and read his love still written there. Oh, unbelieving Thomas, do not put thy finger into thine own wounds, for that will not help thee, but place them in the wounds of Jesus. Come close to him, and thou shalt cry with ecstasy of spirit, "My Lord and my God." Well do I know, what it is to feel this wondrous power of God to turn our captivity. When one is constantly engaged in ministry, it sometimes happens that the mind wanders, the spirit flags, and the energy is damped, yet, all in a minute, the Lord can quicken us into vigorous activity; the heart catches fire and blazes gloriously, when the Holy Spirit applies the fire. We have heard a hymn sung, and we have said, "I cannot join in that as I could wish," and yet, on a sudden, a mighty rushing wind has borne us away with the song right into heaven. The Lord does not take days, months, weeks, or even hours, to do his work of revival in our souls. He made the world in six days, but he lit it up in an instant with one single word. He said, "light be," and light was, and cannot he do the same for us, and chase away our gloom before the clock ticks again? Do not despair, nay, do not even doubt your God. He can turn your captivity as the streams in the south.

Beloved, *he can do the same as to our temporal captivity*. We do not often say much about temporals when we are preaching; I fear we do not say enough about them, for it is wonderful how the Old Testament is taken up with the narration of God's dealings with his people as to temporal things. Many people imagine that God has a great deal to do with their prayer-closet, but nothing to do with their store-closet; it would be a dreadful thing for us if it were so. Indeed, my brethren, we ought to see as much the hand of our Lord on the table in the kitchen when it is loaded as we do at the communion table, for the same love that spreads the table when we commemorate our Saviour's dying love, spreads the table which enables us to maintain the bodily life without which we could not come to the other table at all. We must learn to see God in everything, and praise him for all that we have. Now, it may be I

address some friend who has been a great sufferer through pecuniary losses. Dear friend, the Lord can turn your captivity. When Job had lost everything, God readily gave him all back. “Yes,” say you, “but that was a very remarkable case.” I grant you that, but then we have to do with a remarkable God, who works wonders still. If you consider the matter you will see that it was quite as remarkable a thing that Job should lose all his property as it was that he should get it back again. If you had walked over Job’s farm at first, and seen the camels and the cattle, if you had gone into his house and seen the furniture and the grandeur of his state—if you had seen how those who passed him in the street bowed to him, for he was a highly respected man, and if you had gone to his children’s houses, and seen the comfort in which they lived, you would have said, “Why, this is one of the best-established men in all the land of Uz.” There was scarcely a man of such substance to be found in all that region, and if somebody had foretold that he would in one day lose all this property—all of it—and lose all his children, why you would have said, “Impossible! I have heard of great fortunes collapsing, but then they were built on speculations. They were only paper riches, made up of bills and the like; but in the case of this man there are oxen, sheep, camels, and land, and these cannot melt into thin air. Job has a good substantial estate, I cannot believe that ever he will come to poverty.” Why, when he went out into the gate where the magistrates sat to administer justice, they rose up and gave him the chief seat on the bench. He was a man whose flocks could not be counted, so great were his possessions—possessions of real property, not of merely nominal estate: and yet suddenly, marvellously, it all took to itself wings and disappeared. Surely, if God can scatter he can gather. If God could scatter such an estate as that, he could, with equal ease, bring it back again. But this is what we do not always see. We see the destructive power of God, but we are not very clear about the upbuilding power of God. Yet, my brethren, surely it is more consonant with the nature of God that he should give than take, and more like him that he should caress than chastise. Does he not always say that judgment is his strange work? I feel persuaded that it was strange work with God to take away all Job’s property from him and bring him into that deep distress; but when the Lord went about to enrich his servant Job

again, he went about that work, as we say, *con amore*—with heart and soul. He was doing then what he delights to do, for God’s happiness is never more clearly seen than when he is distributing the largesses of his love. Why can you not look at your own circumstances in the same light? It is more likely that God will bless you and restore to you, than it was ever likely that he would chasten you and take away from you. He can restore you all your wealth, and even more.

This may seem to be a very trite observation, commonplace, and such as everybody knows, but, beloved, the very things that everybody knows are those which we need to hear, if they are most suitable to our case. Those old things which we did not care about in our prosperity are most valued when we are cast down by the terrible blows of tribulation. Let me then repeat the truism, the Lord who takes away can as easily restore. “The Lord maketh sore, *and bindeth up*; he woundeth, *and his hands make whole*. He killeth, *and he maketh alive*.” Believe that he will put forth his right hand soon if the left has been long outstretched, and, if you can believe it, it will not be long before you will be able to say, he hath regarded the low estate of his servant. He hath lifted the poor from the dunghill and set him among princes, even the princes of his people. For the Lord putteth down the mighty from their seat, but he exalteth them that are of low degree. I leave with you this simple truth. The Lord can turn the captivity of his people. You may apply the truth to a thousand different things. You Sunday-school teachers, if you have had a captivity in your class, and no good has been done, God can change that. You ministers, if for a long time you have ploughed and sowed in vain, the Lord can turn your captivity there. You dear wives who have been praying for your husbands, you fathers who have been pleading for your children, and have seen no blessing yet, the Lord can turn your captivity in those respects. No captivity is so terrible but God can bring us back from it; no chain is so fastened but God can strike it off, and no prison-horse is so strong but God can break the bars and set his servants free.

I pass on to our second remark, which is this. THERE IS GENERALLY SOME POINT AT WHICH THE LORD INTERPOSES TO TURN THE CAPTIVITY OF HIS PEOPLE.

In Job's case, I have no doubt, the Lord turned his captivity, as far as the Lord was concerned, because *the grand experiment which had been tried on Job was now over.*

The suggestion of Satan was that Job was selfish in his piety—that he found honesty to be the best policy, and, therefore, he was honest—that godliness was gain, and therefore he was godly. “Hast thou not set a hedge about him and all that he hath?” said the old accuser of the brethren. The devil generally does one of two things. Sometimes he tells the righteous that there is no reward for their holiness, and then they say, “Surely, I have cleansed my heart in vain and washed my hands in innocency;” or else he tells them that they only obey the Lord because they have a selfish eye to the reward. Now, it would be a calamity if the devil could charge the Lord with paying his servants badly: it would have been an ill thing if the fiend had been able to say, “There is Job, a perfect and an upright man, but thou hast set no hedge about him. Thou hast given him no reward whatever.” That would have been an accusation against the goodness and justice of God; but, as the devil cannot say that, he takes the other course, and says—“Thou hast set a hedge about him and all that he has; he serves thee for gain and honour; he has a selfish motive in his integrity.” By God's permission the matter was tested. The devil had said, “Put forth now thy hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.” But Job had done no such thing. In his extremity he said, “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.” God puts his servants sometimes into these experiments that he may test them, that Satan himself may know how true-hearted God's grace has made them, and that the world may see how they can play the man. Good engineers, if they build a bridge are glad to have a train of enormous weight go over it. You remember when the first Great Exhibition was built they marched regiments of soldiers, with a steady tramp, over the girders, that they might be quite sure that they would be strong enough to bear any crowd of men; for the regular tramp of well disciplined soldiers is more trying to a building than anything else. So our wise and prudent Father sometimes marches the soldiery of trouble right over his people's supports, to let all men see that the grace of God can sustain every possible pressure and load. I am sure that if any of you had invented

some implement requiring strength you would be glad to have it tested, and the account of the successful trial published abroad. The gunsmith does not object to a charge being fired from the barrel at the proofhouse far greater than any strain which it ought ordinarily to bear; for he knows that it will endure the proof. "Do your worst or do your best; it is a good instrument; do what you like with it;" so the maker of a genuine article is accustomed to speak; and the Lord seems to say the same concerning his people. "My work of grace in them is mighty and thorough. Test it Satan; test it world; test it by bereavements, losses, and reproaches; it will endure every ordeal." And when it is tested, and bears it all, then the Lord turns the captivity of his people, for the experiment is complete.

Most probably there was, in Job's character, some fault from which his trial was meant to purge him. If he erred at all, probably it was in having a somewhat elevated idea of himself and a stern manner towards others. A little of the elder-brother spirit may, perhaps, have entered into him. A good deal that was sour came out of Job when his miserable comforters began to tease him—not a hundredth part as much as would come out of me, I warrant you, or, perhaps, out of you; but, still, it would not have come out if it had not been in. It must have been in him or otherwise all the provocation in the world would not have brought it out; and the Lord intended by his trials to let Job have a view of himself from another standpoint, and discover imperfections in his character which he would never have seen if he had not been brought into a tried condition. When through the light of trial, and the yet greater light of God's glorious presence, Job saw himself unveiled, he abhorred himself in dust and ashes. Probably Job had not humbled himself of late, but he did it then, and now, if any sort of selfishness lurked in him it was put away for Job began to pray for his cruel friends. It would take a good deal of grace to bring some men to pray for such friends as they were. To pray for one's real friends, I hope, comes natural to us; but to pray for that Bildad and the other two, after the abominable things they had spoken and insinuated—well, it showed that there was a large amount of sweetness and light in Job's character, and abounding grace deep down in his soul, or he would scarcely have interceded for such ungenerous trampers upon a fallen friend. Now, behold, Job has discovered his fault, and he

has put it away, and the grand old man bows his knee to pray for men who called him hypocrite—to pray for men who cut him to the very soul. He pleads with God that he would look in mercy upon men who had no mercy upon him, but had pitilessly heaped all kinds of epithets upon him, and stung him in his tenderest places, just when they ought to have had pity upon him. His misery alone ought to have stopped their mouths, but it seems as if that misery egged them on to say the most cruel things that could possibly have been conceived—the more cruel because they were, all of them, so undeserved. But now Job prays for his friends. You see the trial had reached its point. It had evidently been blessed to Job, and it had proved Satan to be a liar, and so now the fire of the trial goes out, and like precious metal the patriarch comes forth from the furnace brighter than ever.

Beloved friends, the point at which God may turn your captivity may not be the same as that at which he turned Job's, for yours may be a different character. I will try and indicate, briefly, when I think God may turn your trial.

Sometimes he does so *when that trial has discovered to you your especial sin*. You have been putting your finger upon divers faults, but you have not yet touched the spot in which your greatest evil is concentrated. God will now help you to know yourself. When you are in the furnace you will begin to search yourself, and you will cry, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me." You will find out three or four things, perhaps, in which you are faulty, and you will commit yourself to the Lord and say, "Give me grace, good Lord, to put away these evil things." Yes, but you have not come to the point yet, and only a greater trial will guide you to it. The anger of the Lord smokes against your house, not for this or that, but for another evil, and you have need to institute another search, for the images may be under the seat whereon a beloved Rachel sits. The evil in your soul may be just at the point where you think that you are best guarded against temptation. Search, therefore, and look, dear brother, for when the sin has been found out, and the Achan has been stoned, then the valley of Achor shall be a door of hope, and you shall go up to victory, the Lord going with you.

Perhaps, too, your turning point will be *when your spirit is broken*. We are by nature a good deal like horses that want breaking

in, or, to use a scriptural simile, we are as “bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke.” Well, the horse has to go through certain processes in its management until, at last, it is declared to be “thoroughly broken in,” and we need similar training. You and I are not yet quite broken in, I am afraid. We go very merrily along, and yield to the rein in certain forms of service; but if we were called to other sorts of work, or made to suffer, we should need the kicking strap put on, and require a sharper bit in our mouths. We should find that our spirit was not perfectly broken. It takes a long time of pain and sickness to bring some down to the dust of complete resignation to the divine will. There is a something still in which they stick out against God, and of many it is true, “Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.” We have been brayed in that mortar, and with that pestle day after day, and week after week, and yet we are still foolish. When our soul shall cheerfully say, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt,” then our captivity will be almost over, if not quite. While we cry, “It must not be so, I will not have it so,” and we struggle and rebel, we shall only have to feel that we are kicking against the pricks, and wounding our foot every time we kick; but when we give up all that struggling, and say, “Lord, I leave it entirely with thee, thy will be done”—then will the trial cease, because there will be no necessity for it any longer. That is with some the culmination and turning point of trouble. Their Gethsemane ends when, like the Lord Jesus, they cry, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

Sometimes, again, trial may cease *when you have learned the lesson which it was intended to teach you, as to some point of gospel truth*. I think I have sometimes said that many truths of the gospel are like letters written with sympathetic ink. If you have ever had a letter written with that preparation, when you look at it you cannot see anything whatever: it is quite illegible. The proper thing to do is to hold the writing up to the fire. As it warms at the fire the acid writing becomes manifest, and the letters are before you. Many of God’s promises need to be held before the scorching fires of adversity and personal trouble, and then we read the precious secret of the Spirit’s consolation. You cannot see the stars in the day time upon the surface of the earth, but if you go down into a well you

can, and when you go down a deep well of trouble it often happens that you see a beauty and lustre in the promise which nobody else can see, and when the Lord has brought you into a certain position in which you can see the glory of his grace as you never could have seen it anywhere else, then he will say, "It is enough; I have taught my child the lesson, and I will let alone."

I think, too, it may be with some of us that *God gives us trouble until we obtain a sympathetic spirit*. I should not like to have lived forty years in this world without ever having suffered sickness. "Oh," you say, "that would have been very desirable." I grant you it appears so. When I met with a man that never had an ache or a pain or a day's sickness in his life, I used to envy him, but I do not now because I feel very confident that he is a loser by his unvarying experience. How can a man sympathise with trouble that he never knew? How can he be tender in heart if he has never been touched with infirmity himself? If one is to be a comforter to others, he must know the sorrows and the sicknesses of others in his measure. It was essential to our Lord, and, certainly, what was essential to him is necessary to those who are to be shepherds of others, as he was. Now, it may be that by nature some of us are not very sympathetic; I do not think Job was: it is possible that though he was kind, and generous to the poor, yet he was rather hard, but his troubles taught him sympathy. And, perhaps, the Lord may send you trouble till you become softer in heart, so that afterwards you will be one who can speak a word in season to the weary. As you sit down by the bedside of the invalid, you will be able to say, "I know all the ins and outs of a sick man's feelings, for I have been sore sick myself." When God has wrought that in you, it may be he will turn your captivity.

In Job's case, the Lord turned his captivity *when he prayed for his friends*. Prayer for ourselves is blessed work, but for the child of God it is a higher exercise to become an intercessor, and to pray for others. Prayer for ourselves, good as it is, has just a touch of selfishness about it: prayer for others is delivered from that ingredient. Herein is love, the love which God the Holy Spirit delights to foster in the heart, when a man's prayers go up for others. And what a Christlike form of prayer it is when you are praying for those who have ill-treated you and despitefully used

you. Then are you like your master. Praying for yourselves, you are like those for whom Jesus died; but praying for your enemies, you are like the dying Jesus himself. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," has more of heaven in it than the songs of seraphs, and your prayer when offered for those who have treated you ill is somewhat akin to the expiring prayer of your Lord. Job was permitted to take a noble revenge, I am sure the only one he desired, when he became the means of bringing them back to God. God would not hear them, he said, for they had spoken so wrongly of his servant Job, and now Job is set to be a mediator, or intercessor on their behalf: thus was the contempt poured upon the patriarch turned into honour. If the Lord will only save the opposer's soul through your prayer, it will be a splendid way of returning bitter speeches. If many unkind insinuations have been thrown out, and wicked words said, if you can pray for those who used such words, and God hears you and brings them to Jesus, it will be such a triumph as an angel might envy. My brother, never use any other weapon of retaliation than the weapon of love. Avenge not thyself in anywise by uttering anything like a curse, or desiring any hurt or mischief to come to thy bitterest foe, but inasmuch as he curses, overwhelm him with blessings. Heap the hot coals of thy good wishes and earnest prayers upon his head, and if the Lord give thee to bring him to a state of salvation, he shall be praised, and thou shalt have happiness among the sons of men.

Perhaps some of you are in trouble now because you cannot be brought sincerely to pray for your enemies. It is a grievous fault when Christian men harbour resentments; it is always a sad sign when a man confesses, "I could not heartily pray for So-and-so." I would not like to live an hour at enmity with any man living, be he who he may; nor should any Christian man, I think. You should feel that however treacherous, dishonourable, unjust, and detestable the conduct of your enemy may have been to you, yet still it is forgiven, quite forgiven in your heart, and, as far as possible, forgotten, or wherein remembered, remembered with regret that it should have occurred, but with no resentment to the person who committed the wrong. When we get to that state, it is most probable that the Lord will smile upon us and turn our captivity.

The last word I have to say—the third word—is this, that

BELIEVERS SHALL NOT BE LOSERS FOR THEIR GOD. God, in the experiment, took from Job all that he had, but at the end he gave him back twice as much as he had—twice as many camels and oxen, and twice as many of everything, even of children. I heard a very sweet remark about the children the other day, for somebody said, “Yes, God did give him twice as many children, because his first family were still his. They were not lost but gone before.” So the Lord would have his people count their children that are gone to heaven, and reckon them as belonging to the family still, as the child did in Wordsworth’s pretty poem, “Master, we are seven.” And so Job could say of his sons and daughters, as well as of all the other items, that he had twice as many as before. True, the first family were all gone, but he had prayed for them in the days of their feasting, he had brought them together and offered sacrifice, and so he had a good hope about them, and he reckoned them as still his own. Tried brother, the Lord can restore to you the double in temporal things if he pleases. If he takes away he can as certainly give, and that right early. He certainly can do this in spiritual things; and if he takes away temporals and gives spirituals we are exceedingly great gainers. If a man should take away my silver and give me twice the weight in gold in return, should I not be thankful? And so, if the Lord takes away temporals and gives us spirituals, he thus gives us a hundred times more than he takes away.

Dear brethren, you shall never lose anything by what you suffer for God. If, for Christ’s sake, you are persecuted, you shall receive in this life your reward; but if not, rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven. You shall not lose anything by God’s afflicting you. You shall, for a time, be an apparent loser; but a real loser in the end you shall never be. When you get to heaven you will see that you were a priceless gainer by all the losses you endured. Shall you lose anything by what you give to God? Never. Depend on it, he will be no man’s debtor. There dwells not in earth or heaven any man who shall be creditor to the Most High. The best investment a man makes is that which he gives to the Lord from a right motive. Nothing is lost which is offered to the cause of God. The breaking of the alabaster box of precious ointment was not a wasteful thing, and he who should give to the Lord all that he had would have made a prudent use of his goods. “He that giveth to the

poor lendeth to the. Lord,” and he that giveth to the Lord’s church and to the Lord himself lays up his treasure in heaven, where it shall be his for ever.

Beloved, we serve a good Master, and if he chooses to try us for a little we will bear our trial cheerfully, for God will turn our captivity ere long.

In closing, I wish I could feel that this subject had something to do with you all, but it is not the case. Oh, no, there are some of you who have felt no captivity, but you have a dreadful captivity to come, and there is no hope of God’s ever turning that captivity when once you get into it. Without God, without Christ, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, you are in bondage until now, and there will ere long come upon you bondage that will never end. You cannot pray for your friends: you have never prayed for yourself. God would not hear you if you did pray for others, for, first of all, you must be yourself reconciled to him by the death of his Son. Oh, that you would mind these things and look to Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, for if you do he will accept you, for he has promised to cast out none who come to him. And then look at this: after all is right between God and your soul you need not fear what happens to you in the future, for, come sickness or health, come poverty or wealth, all is right, all is safe, all is well. You have put yourself into the hand of God, and wherever God may lift that hand you are still within it, and therefore always secure and always blessed; and, if not always consciously happy, yet you have always the right to be so, seeing you are true to God, and he delights in you. God bless you, and give you all salvation, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

