

as having listened for a long time to the arguments of his three friends who vainly sought to convince him that God, in afflicting him, was punishing him for his sins; and at last, when no conclusion had been reached, and all were unhappy, and dissatisfied both with themselves and one another, Elihu, the youngest of the company, rises to give his opinion. The question, *Why does God afflict me?* was even then an old one, as old as sin itself; and to this day people are not satisfied to accept God's solution of it—Heb. 12: 5, 11. Neither Job nor his friends had been able fully to answer it, and the latter, unable to convince Job, had heaped upon him harsh and unwarranted accusations. Elihu, however, seems to have spoken more in accordance with the mind of God, for we find in the end that when He rebukes all the others, Job included, He administers no rebuke to Elihu.

LESSON TALK.

Having stated in verse 13 the general principle that God does not render account to men for His actions, Elihu goes on to show in the verses chosen for the lesson:

1st.—That God deals with people directly through their spiritual nature, and why—14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

2nd.—That He deals with them also by means of bodily afflictions—19, 20, 21, 22.

3rd.—That if, with all this, He gives them some one able to interpret His dealings, then He deals with them graciously, in order to bring them to repentance—23, 24, 25, 26.

4th.—That this free grace is for all who repent—27, 28, 29, 30.

1st.

(14.) *God speakseth once, you twice*—that is, He speaks once; not by means of words addressed to the ear, but He in some way makes people understand what He wants them to do or not to do. He speaks thus to all old enough to know right from wrong; but very often they perceive it not, that is, do not recognise it as being God's voice.

(15.) One of the ways by which God has been known to teach men is by means of dreams. Give an instance from the Old Testament. Give one from the New. Another way is by visions. A dream is what comes to us when we are really asleep; a vision may be seen when either waking or sleeping, or when in a state called a trance. Give an example of vision from the Old Testament; one of trance, one of vision from the New.

(16.) *Openeth the eyes of men*—that is, He reveals, or uncovers the meaning of His acts, so that people have to understand that He is really dealing with them. *Searcheth their instruction*—fixes it firmly in their minds. Are they certain after that to obey? No; much oftener they scoff at God's warnings, and will not heed.

(17.) Why does God do all this for people? This verse tells us: He wishes to turn them from their sinful purposes—to make them give up their pride and incline them to seek Him. Is it God's duty to do this? No; He does it because He is merciful, and does not want any to perish—Ezek. 18: 2, and 33: 11.

(18.) *Keepeth back, &c.*—leads people to pursue a course by which they escape accidental death, and also the stroke of the murderer. Almost any teacher, were it desirable, could furnish examples of both.

2nd.

(19, 20, 21, 22.) From these four verses we learn that sickness of all kinds is another way by which God deals with us, to secure the same ends. *He is chastened also with pain*, &c.—that is, with ordinary or common illness. *Strong pain*—very severe illness, until appetite and strength are all gone, and the body is greatly emaciated.

All your pains, dear children, even the slightest,

are proofs of sin and warnings of death. With every one God sends a voice to say to you, "You must die!" Those awful visitations of God speak very loudly; and sometimes, while very sick, people hear and promise that if spared they will repent and forsake sin; but alas! too often when they recover, they forget all about it, and are even worse than before.

3rd.

(23, 24, 25, 26.) But all those means offered fail to cause men to repent, unless otherwise. Therefore God graciously provides messengers to interpret (explain) what He means by them, particularly by bodily afflictions. Now who are those messengers—interpreters? The first is the Great God Himself who—John 3: 16. The second is Christ, who—Gal. 1: 4. The third is the Holy Spirit, who is come to—John 16: 8; and who, if men will yield themselves to His guidance, will guide them—John 16: 13. The fourth are Christ's ministers whom He has told to—Mark 16: 15. The last is the Bible, God's holy word, which is—Ps. 119: 105.

Now, if people listen to God, believe in Christ and give themselves wholly to Him, He will graciously deliver them from going down to the pit (hell), because He has found a ransom for all such—Matt. 20: 28; and they shall be born again,—he made new creatures,—become as little children. Then it shall be with them as is said in verse 26,—they shall pray to God, and God will be favourable to them; and at length they shall see His face with joy—John 17: 24; and Christ will give them the reward of righteousness—Matt. 13: 43.

4th.

(27, 28, 29, 30.) *He looketh upon men*,—What?—Ps. 14: 2. *And if any say, &c.*—What will God do? See verse 28. *See the light*,—2nd Cor. 4: 6. *Lo, look, take notice!* God does all this often. Why?—*Bring back* (recover, redeem) his soul, and your soul, little boy, little girl, from the pit, and that you may be enlightened with the light of the living,—John 8: 12.

Apr. 13.—Prosperity Restored.—Job. 42: 1-10.

GOLDEN TEXT.—James 5: 11.

REMARKS.

Intervening between this and last Sabbath's lesson, we have the remainder of Elihu's speech, followed by God's reply—not to Elihu, nor yet to the three friends, but to Job. In this day's lesson we have Job's answer to God—an answer full of shame and self-abhorrence; of shame that he, who in the presence of the holy God was so ignorant and unholiness, should have deemed himself competent to explain mysteries which only God could reveal, and of self-abhorrence consequent upon the deeper view he had gained of the presumption and pride of his own heart.

LESSON TALK.

In this lesson we have four special topics: 1st.—Job's reply to the Lord—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and.—What the Lord said to Job's three friends—7.

2nd.—Job constituted a mediator in behalf of his friends—8, 9.

4th.—Results—10.

1st.

(1.) *Job answered the Lord*. Had he wished for an opportunity to do so—see ch. 13: 3, and 23: 34. Why did Job wish this? Because he knew his outward life, as well as his intentions, had been upright, and he felt sure that God would justify him. What great treasure did Job possess? Just what Paul says he possessed—Acts 23: 16.

(2.) *I know*. God had just told Job many of

the great things He did. Job's reply is substantially what Christ afterwards said to His disciples—will some scholar repeat it? *No thought can, &c.*—another reading is "*No thought of thine can be hindered*." In this verse Job acknowledges God's omnipotent power and perfect wisdom.

(3.) *Who is He, &c.* Job here repeats God's own question, ch. 38: 2, and adds—therefore—because Thou hast asked, I confess that I have uttered that I understood not, &c. Oh, how little wisdom Job now sees in all he has been saying!

(4.) Job again quotes God's words, ch. 38: 3; but with these appropriate differences: Job's utterance is a prayer, *I beseech thee*; God's is a command—*Give up thy being*; that is, make ready to reply, prepare yourself. Job says—*declare Thou unto me*; that is, reveal, make me understand; God says—*answer me*!

(5.) *I have heard of Thee*,—that is, only heard, consequently his ideas both of God and himself were very imperfect. *But now mine eyes testify*. This Job had not literally seen God, but he had come into direct personal intercourse with Him; God's voice had entered into his soul, enabling him to see (understand) what he did not before know.

(6.) *Wherefore* (for which reason, or because he had seen) *I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes*. *Abhor*—look upon myself with horror. *Repent in dust and ashes*—one of the strongest expressions of utter self-abasement and sorrow for sin. But had not Job all through this book insisted that he was upright? Was he not, as his friends urged, suffering the penalty of sin? He had, and what he says here does not contradict it, but only shows that all along he had been looking at his outward life, and what he knew had been his motives. Now God had caused him to see deeper—to see his heart all stained and polluted with sin as he had never seen it before. From this we may see that the best and most upright ones have no goodness that they can boast of, and that it only needs that God should open their eyes for them to cry out as Job did—*I abhor myself! I repent in dust and ashes*!

2nd.

(7.) *My wrath is kindled*.—The three friends had spoken hard, cruel things against Job in addition to their signal failure to convince him of sin in his life; and while the things they had said were in the main true, they did not apply to Job, nor properly explain God's dealing with him. They had misjudged the case, had grieved and troubled Job, and now God rebukes them sharply. Doubtless they had meant well; hence God was merciful to them, and directed them what to do in order to be forgiven.

3rd.

(8.) Go to my servant Job. Here Job is appointed to act as a priest, or mediator between his friends and God. Job had previously acted as priest in behalf of his own family—ch. 1: 5; now he is called to offer sacrifices for the sins of his friends. Here Job is seen to be a type of Christ, and it will be interesting and profitable for teachers to trace this thought much farther.

(9.) *And the Lord also accepted Job*. The word *also* is significant. Job had sinned as well as his friends. He had been strongly irritated, as many of his expressions show, and possibly had felt the risings of an unforgiving temper.

The three friends were told that Job should pray for them. No one can pray acceptably for one who has wronged him until he forgives. Job prayed acceptably, as we see by the fact that he *also* was accepted, that is, both they and he.

4th.

(10.) Turned the captivity of Job,—restored him to his power and dignity. When? *When he prayed for his friends*. Matt. 6: 14-15, Eph. 4: 32.