

perhaps He refers chiefly to Job's penitent confession, as recorded in Job xl. 3-4, xlii 1-6, closing with the well-known words,—“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” How does this testimony to Job prove the truth of Psalm li. 17—“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” Having testified His approbation of Job, God now calls him to the honorable work of intercession for others. To Job's three friends God thus spake;—“Therefore take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer for yourselves a burnt-offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept, lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath.”

These words exhibit, very strikingly, the ancient patriarchal priesthood, and show how God raised Job to honor in the sight of his friends. They had called him, whom God avowed as his *servant*, a hypocrite, a wicked man, and other hard names; and yet to this calumniated man they must go with offerings in their hands, in order that, as priest, he might pray for them. We may learn from this passage, as also from Job i. 5, that Job and his friends well knew that an atonement was necessary in order to make repentance acceptable to God, or intercession prevalent with Him.

By putting Job in this position, and calling him to this office, the Lord, doubtless, intended to bring Job to a right state of mind respecting his friends. It is clear that his temper had been somewhat ruffled toward them—he had thrown back their hard words with considerable violence. Such is generally the course and consequence of personal controversy on religious subjects; beginning (as one says) with “My dear brother,” and ending with “Sir,” or something worse. Now, God having set all matters right between Himself and Job, would do the same thing as regards Job and his mistaken friends. Forgiven of God, he must forgive them. The best proof we can give of our having really and freely forgiven those who have offended us, is our possessing a spirit of prayer for

them; and if we have fallen out with God's people, we should be anxious not to *stop short of this*. Job did this. He made no excuses—he delayed not. The victims bled, the prayer ascended, sins were confessed, and “the Lord accepted Job.”

And now mark what followed:—“The Lord turned again the captivity of Job;” and mark especially the *connection*—it was “*when he prayed for his friends*.” Are we not here taught the connection between enlarged blessings from God upon ourselves and a right state of heart toward others, especially a spirit of prayer for them? No doubt, by the indulgence of the evil passions of envy, malice and unforgiveness, the Holy Spirit is often grieved, and soul's prosperity hindered. If when we “stand praying, we do not forgive,” our prayers cannot enter heaven, and so answers will not come down. On the contrary, a loving, forgiving spirit will gush out in fervent prayer, which will issue in much soul prosperity.

Another important point is taught us by the incident in Job's history. We learn that, from his experience, God can constitute a new epoch even in a good man's life, so that his past attainments and possessions shall be cast into the shade. “God blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning.” This was true, in temporal possessions, family prosperity, and worldly honor. We may conclude also, in spiritual blessings, and in the influence he put forth on others for good. Let the latter be our aim and desire. God can so revive us, and renew our strength, that we shall start afresh in divine things, and bring forth more fruit in old age than even in our youth. This is the design of all His wise discipline and kind instructions. It is sometimes “by terrible things in righteousness” that God answers us; and it is through fire and “through water that we pass into a wealthy place.” All is well if we get near to God, are more like Jesus, and become more fully the willing instruments of the Holy Spirit.

#### BIBLE THOUGHTS.

MATT. xxviii. 7. “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee.”—Is not this one of the many illustrations which might be given of the *Shepherd leading His Sheep, and their following Him?*