

April 2. THE AFFLICTIONS OF JOB.

Lesson, Job 2 : 10.

Golden Text, Job 1 : 21

Mem. vs. 2 : 3.

Catechism Q., 53.

The lessons of this quarter are from Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. The first four are from the book of Job.

Both the person and the book of Job are shrouded in mystery. A few have held that the whole poem is a fiction to teach good lessons. It is almost universally agreed, however, that Job was a real person, of patriarchal days, probably between the times of Abraham, living in the land of Uz, probably that fine fertile table land, the modern Hauran, lying east of the Jordan and southward from Damascus, toward the desert.

The authorship of the book is entirely unknown. The opening and closing statements are in prose, all the rest is poetry, both in spirit and in form, and is printed in that way in the revised version. It has been held by many high authorities to be the finest literary work in existence.

The story is as follows: To a wealthy sheik or chieftain, just, generous, prosperous, honored and good, comes sore trouble. He is bereft of property, family, health. Three wise men tell him, as human wisdom often does, that all this evil is because of his great sin. He cannot believe it, he is consciously innocent; and yet the great question presses, as it has done in all ages: Why do the good suffer? How can the afflictions of the righteous and the prosperity of the wicked be reconciled with the government of a wise and living God? It is "the story of a soul in its conflicts with sorrow and doubt, amid the mysteries of Providence, its searchings after light and salvation, and its way into blessedness and peace." He is sore tempted to doubt, but, confident in his own innocence, yet trusting in God's righteousness, and feeling assured that both himself and God will be vindicated "when the mists have rolled away," he rises triumphant above all doubt. "The Lord gave and the Lord hath away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

1. Satan's sneer, vs. 1-5. *Sons of God*—The angels, His "ministering spirits." *Satan also*—"The adversary." Though fallen, and in his malignant hate seeking only to ruin man, he can only do as he is permitted and must "report" himself. *Whence*—What have you been doing? *To and fro*—Seeking to lead men astray, 1 Pet. v : 8. *My servant Job*—Satan had before sneeringly said that Job's goodness was a mere selfish thing, and paid him well, chap. 1 : 8. God permitted him to test Job, and now again points Satan to his steadfastness. It is only selfishness, still sneers Satan, vs. 4-5.

2. God's permission, vs. 6-8. *Thine hand*—Satan's hand in men's ills, but only so far as God permits. *Sore boils*—A loathsome form of leprosy.

3. Job's trust, vs. 9-10. *Curse God*—In a moment of weakness his wife yields to the pressure of sorrow, and Satan uses her to tempt Job to blasphemy, as he did Eve. *Foolish*—What folly to mistrust God.

3. Job's trust, vs. 9-10. *Curse God*—In a moment of weakness she yields to the pressure of sorrow, and Satan uses her to tempt Job to blasphemy, as he made use of Eve to tempt Adam. *Foolish*—What folly to mistrust God.

1. Satan still hates and accuses the good.

2. When he fails he tries again.

3. When God permits any of his people to fall into Satan's hand, he keeps him in His own hand.

4. Trust God whatever befall.

April 9. AFFLICTIONS SANCTIFIED.

Lesson, Job 9 : 17-27.

Golden Text, Heb. 12 : 6.

Memory vs., 17-19.

Catechism Q., 54.

How long Job's troubles lasted, or how long there was between each stroke that came upon him, or how long before the three friends came, we cannot tell.

Grieved because of his trouble, and more grieved because they thought it the punishment of some hidden sin, they come to visit him, and the present lesson is the first address of the eldest friend. Read carefully the previous chapters.

1. Good in God's chastisement, vs. 17-18. *Happy*—Paul said "we glory in tribulation," but as a rule men complain when the rod comes and long for its removal. *Despise not*—Nor long for the removal of chastisement. *Sore*—How sore at times. *Bindeth up*—Never fret over the sores, rather get them bound up.

2. Deliverance from trouble, vs. 19-23. *Deliver*—No trouble so great but that He can deliver. *Seven*—The perfect number, representing the greatest troubles, yet that of them which touches thee is not real evil. All shall be for thee, because God is for thee. *Tongue*—What a scourge the tongue sometimes is, but he who is conscience clear in God's sight need not heed that scourge. *Stones*—Inanimate nature is on thy side. All of God's creation is in league with thee if thou art His, and the evil one, while he may try thee sore, cannot really harm thee.

As with Peter, Satan desired to have Job that he might sift him as wheat, but the sifting "only served to take more of the chaff out of him."

3. The final reward, vs. 24-27. *Peace*—Thou wilt keep in perfect peace whose heart is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee. *Corn*—Blessing all through life, sometimes the sunshine, sometimes the shower, all doing their part toward thy growth and ripening in the Christian character, and at length, when God's good time comes, gathered home.

While we cannot take all the speeches of all Job's friends as God's truth, yet there is much of truth and wisdom in them, and in none perhaps more than in the words of the lesson. Here the Temanite spake more wisely than he knew. He intended his words as a partial rebuke, to shew that Job must have been guilty of some sin, and that it was good for him that God had taken this method of recalling him from sin, but we are taught that it was to test and prove the grand character that lay in its wretchedness on that heap of ashes and refuse.

1. This statement of Eliphaz is true as a general principle. God is good and righteous, and good must be the reward of good.

2. Goodness is not always rewarded on the spot, otherwise there would be no suffering on the part of the righteous. There would be no room for faith, but "Behold, we count them happy which endure."

3. There are other reasons for trouble than merely a penalty for sin. Job's case is an illustration of this, and a still greater one is that of Christ. He, though perfect, suffered. True it was for us He suffered, but His temptations were by the same agency, and, so far as the tempter was concerned, with the same end in view.

4. In the end, when all things have their completion, the ills will have proved but stepping-stones in raising God's people to the highest good.