

Sermon to the Saints which are at Topeka, Kansas -- Sunday, October 1, 2023

***“Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters. For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.” (Job 3:23-26)***

This is a most sober subject. If you are a wicked soul listening to these words – hovering about like a carrion-bird looking for a way to feed on the flesh of the humble souls of Christ, you’ll get no peace in this sermon. Take heed to these words of caution from my lips this morning. Take very great care that you don’t, in some thoughtless and graceless fashion presume to disesteem ... have some thoughts against ... contemn ... think little or nothing of ... one of these precious little ones gathered here in this house this morning because you think you might have a sensitive nerve to pierce into their tender hearts. Take heed of your malicious self. Because including at this very moment, ***“in heaven their angels do always behold the face of [God] which is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:10).*** You might find yourself very suddenly in the most grievous of temporal circumstances.

When heaviness comes in upon this body, we are not left without remedy. We are not left to scratch around for platitudes and associations among the creation to numb our hearts and spirits. We are not in that sad lot of souls who, when they are put in darkness will ***“compass [themselves] about with sparks”*** to ***“walk in the light of”*** them (Isaiah 50:11) and lean upon their own understanding (Proverbs 3:5). This is that sad description Paul makes of the unregenerate who experience the death of one for whom they (in this life) had great affection, as those sorrowing souls ***“which have no hope.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13)*** These are forced to cope through meaningless rituals that in truth deny God, Christ, and the resurrection of the human body from the dead. This is why Christ so plainly instructed us on the matter:

***“And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, **Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.**” (Matthew 8:21-22)***

We are given the gracious gift to be able to trust in the name of the LORD and stay upon our God. That is, to every thing under the sun that can befall one of the saints, there is a soul-remedy unique to that condition that can be found in the words of this blessed book of Scripture. This should not be surprising to anyone who is graciously given an accurate glimpse of the God with whom we have to do. He dwells in eternity ... He is the God of providence ... He appointed the specific affliction you wrestle with ... He wrote (by the movement of the Holy Ghost through members of the human race) the Scriptures. Indeed, Christ is this Word. So, we should never imagine that it would fall short in providing answers to our actual life experiences.

But this is not to say that the answers to our griefs ... the soul-satisfying resolution that abates the sharpest of afflictions ... comes on our timeline. That period of time between when sore afflictions arise and when we are given a clear and proper lens – and thus a substantive resolution in our spirits – is where a lot of heavy work is done. I think an examination of this passage from

Job will be of value in building up the skills of those in this body who will assuredly face these times while they travel in this wilderness. These skills will be most acutely valuable when the Church goes to war with a world fully enflamed by His Majesty the Devil, and the exceedingly wicked Antichrist – as an integral part of the Day of the Lord.

There may be some in this house who are not particularly familiar with the patriarch Job – because of age or other natural limits that have been put upon their absorption of the Bible up to this point in their lives. So, I’m going to put a little bit of context to the passage above. It says that Job was **“the greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:3)**, which expositors have suggested meant that he was great in wealth and influence. Some have held that he was one of the Kings of Edom ... others have intimated that while a private person, he was of such great wisdom, wealth, and influence that he designed and oversaw the construction of the Egyptian pyramids. There are references in the book that suggest strongly that he was a judge (e.g., Job 31:21), demonstrating that his greatness included political notoriety in the community. When expositors piece together the scriptural indicators of Job’s financial assets, they conclude that he would be the equivalent of a billionaire<sup>1</sup> in today’s economy based on the identification of his assets. In addition to his wealth, he was the father of ten children – seven sons and three daughters. Then in a single expression of God’s providence, Job lost all he had:

***“¶ And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house: And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” (Job 1:13-19)***

To this loss of all his wealth and the lives of his ten children, Job was dealt an additional blow at the desperate plea of Satan who (as we are taught) seeks to sift us as wheat (Luke 22:31):

---

<sup>1</sup> Exposition of Albert Barnes (1798 – 1870) says “a fair estimate his property might be considered as worth from thirty to forty thousand pounds sterling — equivalent to some \$200,000 (circa 1880’s).” An inflation calculator estimates that a value of \$200,000.00 in 1880 would equate to \$6,020,117.65 in 2023.

***“¶ So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.” (Job 2:7-8)***

The severity of the changes that Job faced was among the most extreme that a human could face in this life. I take caution to use hyperbole, because that severity is not really what the book of Job is about. Certainly it was a most grievous affliction, but the things that God brings upon a righteous soul is what that individual saint requires for his or her spiritual perfection. When the Apostle James is moved to write about this patriarch, he doesn't harp on the severity of the afflictions – though they are most clearly relevant to Job's spiritual development. Rather, the focus is on how the grace of God was patently sufficient for the trembling little saint:

***“Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” (James 5:11)***

But to examine the severity of Job's affliction, and God's work related to it, is helpful to every sanctified soul that is put into a sore affliction. Because Job's affliction was expressed in every category of his life – including parenthood – that a responsible adult must give consideration to in our own daily lives. The financial assets to attend to the household and to contribute to the needs of our co-elect. The physical health to be capable of the work necessary to serve the Lord and minister to His people. The blessing and duty related to bringing up those children given us from God ***“in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).***

Once Job had received the brunt of the satanic assault on his property, his children, and his physical health, he was presented with additional affliction coming from the place where he expected to find ***“a word [spoken] in season to him that is weary” (Isaiah 50:4).*** Instead, when his wife – who herself was enduring the great affliction of the loss of her ten children – spoke, she assaulted Job's faith with foolish words: ***“Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.” (Job 2:9).*** Job endured this from the woman whose greatest duty was to be his help – bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh – but yet did not ***“sin with his lips” (Job 2:10).*** He remained in his state of destitution and disrepair, waiting for his three friends to come from their places and sit with him and talk with him and strengthen him. These three further aggravated the suffering of this elect soul – ***“miserable comforters are ye all.” (Job 16:2).***

Now, that's the context from the book of Job. He's not received any help from any person who he would rightly expect to be willing and able to help him with the deep spiritual matters that the Lord God had put upon him<sup>2</sup>. When we have affliction, platitudes do only so much before they

---

<sup>2</sup> Here is another example where Job expresses his frustration with the words of his three friends as meaningless: ***“Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.” (Job 6:6-7)*** This means that he is unable to receive anything that gives him comfort because they are only providing bland, meaningless platitudes rather than strong, relevant (and therefore comforting) words. In Job's daily activities, he hated the simplistic and childish and unlearned engagements among people, but that is now all he's getting from his friends who have presented themselves as learned in the things of God.

become caustic to the wound. We have an actual duty to our co-elect to be learned in Scripture to speak to the deep matters that address deep wounds. I don't mean profound and philosophical – I mean plain and relevant words from the Lord. Words that will be in your mouth because you have made them your daily meat. Like the mother bird masticates the food before delivering it to the baby chick so it can be digested by that weak and dependent creature – we should have the words of this blessed record masticated and prepared to serve up to that weak soul in deep affliction. That's part of our duty to each other in this body.

Having set the context, let us look at these words of Job to see what relevant comfort we can give to one another when we are required by God to face such deep matters. There are a number of good things to be culled from this one passage, but the two I would like to examine more today are:

1. The darkness that we are sometimes placed into under severe affliction.
2. The acute grief a righteous parent will face at the death a child who dies in unrepentant sin.

***“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?” (Isaiah 50:10)***

As a small aside, I would recommend to every soul here to read all of Isaiah 50. It's 11 verses long, but if you have only a few moments you can focus chiefly on the second and third oracle from that chapter and read just verses 4-11. It is wholesome to see the discussion we're having about afflictions poured out onto the righteous and our duty to help each other when we face them. Isaiah is discussing the impending destruction of Israel, but gives words of comfort to those elect Jews who will no doubt feel the grievousness of the providence that God is bringing upon them related to both the destruction of the nation as well as the hatred they will receive from their countrymen for preaching that prophetic truth. It should have a familiar ring for you. It is certainly a condition that becomes quite acute in the days that Christ described as part of His second advent, and you can hardly read the Revelation without seeing plainly the condition the righteous Jews of ancient Israel were facing. It's instructive.

When Job expresses this darkness, he does so with a rhetorical question, ***“why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?”*** After discussing and discounting a couple of options for what is intended in these words, expositor Joseph Caryl lands on what he believes is the import, drawing reference to a similar passage in Isaiah that makes reference to the church feeling their way to be as Job has expressed, to wit:

***“¶ Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the***

***young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:27-31)***

Caryl: “Yet that place [Isa.40:27] is not to be understood of a hiding from the eye of God’s inspection, as if the Church had any suspicion that the Lord did not know, or did not see how matters went with them, or in what condition they were; but it is to be understood of the eye of God’s compassion; there is a seeing eye, or a contemplating eye, and a compassionating or succouring eye. So the meaning of that complaint, is only this, **‘why sayest thou my way is hidden from the Lord’**, that is, why doest thou speak as if God did not regard thee in thy troubles, as if God had no pity nor compassion on thee, no bowels toward thee ... Therefore this text [Job 3:23] is not to be understood of Job’s way in respect of God, but of the hiding of God’s way, or the hidden dealings of God toward Job. My way is hid saith Job, that, I cannot understand, nor interpret, nor expound the meaning of God’s dealing with me. I am not able to give an interpretation of it, I know not what this thing meaneth: My way is hid.”

This should be a familiar sense to any elect soul who has been placed by providence into a severe affliction. Darkness with respect to what the Lord has appointed to you in this affliction. Particularly darkness of the sort where you have developed an expectation that the Lord is your brother ... your kindred redeemer ... your friend ... your advocate. And now, as Job elsewhere expresses it, it seems from circumstances that God has withdrawn His kindnesses from you as though He is at war, to wit:

***“Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war are against me.” (Job 10:16-17)***

&

***“¶ How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy? Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?” (Job 13:23-25)***

The Lord is declared to be – and is therefore intimately known by us to be – our **“all in all” (Ephesians 1:23)** Our Rock, our Fortress, our Strength, our Comforter, our Peace, our Life, our King eternal ... not our enemy! Why, then, are we inexplicably thrown into the darkness and put into affliction until we reach the point where we are genuinely ... deeply ... viscerally afraid that we are cast off? In such a state of heart and mind and spirit, well does Job express the weight of it saying: **“my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters”**. Well also, does Job acknowledge:

***“Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening. Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out,***

***and they overturn the earth. With him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are his.*** (Job 12:14-16)

This book regarding the patriarch – in my view above every other in the canon – is worth continual study if you would be prepared for affliction and primed for the lesson of patience in that affliction grounded in an understanding of God’s blessed attributes. It is certainly not the only source in the Bible for this lesson, but it is a most comprehensive one. To close this part of my sermon, I want to consider a particularly helpful passage (for this purpose) outside of Job.

***“And [Moses] said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And [God] said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.”*** (Exodus 33:18-23)

Moses wanted to see the glory of God in all the wondrous works of election ... reprobation ... providence. Those here have, in varying degrees, taken a solid hold upon the doctrines of grace and have no doubt seen the glory of God in them. Like Moses, we have a yearning to see the glory of God in those doctrines *and* in His providence. It moves us as individuals. It moves this church as a body. It will be our eternal joy in heaven, so it is our continual desire on earth. And we are given to see it, though ***“now we see through a glass, darkly”*** (1 Corinthians 13:12), indicating that there is more shadow and darkness in our view of these glorious things than there are pure and dazzling glimpses.

This underlined portion of the passage quoted from Exodus reflects what is happening for that elect soul when in these periods of darkness. The glory of God is marching through His providence, and we are not allowed to see His face in that work. That is, we don’t get to see plainly and perfectly that God is going into action. We don’t get to have direct knowledge of what work He is about. Rather, we are put into a dark and uncomfortable – but evidently safe and protected – place while that work is roiling about us. We’re in the cleft of a rock formation. That is not a comfortable place to be. It’s hard ... it’s cold ... it’s strait, like the gate that those few who have the gift of grace are allowed to pass through (Matthew 7:14). And it’s dark! No light is coming in from outside that rocky cleft. His hand is covering it, so that we cannot see what’s going on behind that hand!

But, when the work is done, and the time of darkness is past – THEN we are given the understanding of what He has been about. We see His ***“back parts”*** so that we have clear knowledge that He was there. Like Job, when he was given to understand what things – horrible, horrible things by human measure – had come to pass he saw it was the Lord and declared ***“the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”*** (Job 1:21). Our

afflictions are from the Lord God, and they are a work that is an expression of His glory. Any other view of it is simply not scriptural and gives His glory to another, which thing God will not allow (Isaiah 42:8).

\*\*\*\*\*

It is without dispute that a soul who is sensible of his own sinfulness – and who has received the gift of faith and (therefore) repentance – will have a sincere desire that if it be the will of God, all eternally-culpable souls might likewise receive faith and repent.

**“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” (Acts 26:28-29)**

This is not a desire for or an opinion in favor of universal salvation as a doctrine of scripture. We know that such a suggestion is open blasphemy against the King. Rather, it is a weight upon our spirits that the grace of God would come upon our own unworthy selves but leave so many who we have rather close human engagement with reprobate. As Paul rhetorically asked the presumptuous souls at Corinth, ***“who maketh thee to differ from another?” (1 Corinthians 4:7)***. It is the very sensibleness of our redeemed spirits to the knowledge of eternity and the graces of God that causes us say with brother Isaac Watts:

While all our hearts and all our songs join to admire the feast,  
each of us cries, with thankful tongue, "Lord, why was I a guest?  
Why was I made to hear thy voice, and enter while there's room,  
when thousands make a wretched choice, and rather starve than come?"

Gill: ***“And Paul said, I would to God: This prayer of the apostle’s shows his affection for the souls of men, and his great desire for their conversion, and also his sense of the power and grace of God, as necessary to it: that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am; that is, his wish was that not only Agrippa, but that all that were present, were not only within a little, or in some low degree, but entirely, in the highest and fullest sense, Christians, as he was; that they knew as much of Christ, and had as much faith in him, and love to him, as he had, and were as ready to serve and obey him: he does not wish that Agrippa and the rest that heard him were as he had been, a bigot for traditions and ceremonies, that trusted in his own righteousness, did many things contrary to the name of Jesus, was a blasphemer of him, a persecutor of his saints, and an injurious person; but as he now was ... as a Christian, and in a private capacity: his sense is, he wished that they were as he, regenerated by the Spirit of God, new creatures in Christ, called by the grace of God with an holy calling, believers in Christ, lovers of him, pardoned by his blood, justified by his righteousness, sanctified by his grace, children of God, and heirs of eternal life:”***

We ***“would to God”*** – that is, if it be the will of God that while these with whom we have to do and to whom we hold forth our profession of faith would be granted that same faith before they

pass from this life and go into that dismal state of **“shame and everlasting contempt”** (Daniel 12:2). Is this not the very thing that moves this body of believers in removing a member who has evidenced a disorderly walk ... that he be recovered from the snare of the Devil and that his **“spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”** (1 Corinthian 5:5)? Is it not our knowledge of the terror of the Lord that moves us daily to persuade men (2 Corinthians 5:11)?

And if the saints of God would hope thus for saving grace to go, God willing, to men generally, what of those with whom we have some greater engagement or relationship? Paul was evidently desirous for the salvation of Israel – even while he knew of Christ’s commandments and was witness to the abject darkness that was actively falling upon that people:

**“¶ Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”** (Romans 10:1-2)

The object of Paul’s tender desire is a subject that occupied many of the prophets and apostles because they understand the Jewish people as examples of Christ’s first fruits. The salvation of that people – in accordance with what His Word faithfully reports – is wrapped up in the fidelity of God. A promise was made to Abraham. The fulfillment of that promise is the assurance that the promises made to those Christians who are spiritually Israel will likewise be fulfilled. That is the intimacy with which any clear-headed elect soul sees the tenderness of Paul toward that people. We share in that intimacy for purposes of my point that there is a more fervent desire that those with whom we have close knit relations would be recipients of the gift of faith.

**“¶ For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”** (3 John 1:3-4)

This passage is making reference to the joyful news regarding **“Gaius, whom I love in the truth.”** (3 John 1:1), reflecting the love that John had toward this elect soul – and that we have each for the other in this body. It is the co-elect that John here refers to as an example of **“my children”** over whom he rejoices to hear **“walk in truth”**. But the strength of the language utilized cannot be ignored. It demonstrates that uniquely powerful bond that forms between a righteous parent and the child – and informs our understanding of the passage I opened this sermon with. Here are words from Albert Barnes in part of his exposition of these words:

Barnes: *“John, the aged apostle, says that he had no higher happiness than to learn, respecting those who regarded him as their spiritual father, that they were steadfast in their adherence to the doctrines of religion. The same thing may be said now of all Christian parents respecting their own children. The highest joy that a Christian parent can have is to know that his children, whether at home or abroad, adhere to the truths of religion, and live in accordance with the requirements of the gospel of Christ. If a child wished to confer the highest possible happiness on his parents when with them, it would be by becoming a decided Christian; if, when abroad, in foreign lands*



*or his own, he wished to convey intelligence to them that would most thrill their hearts with joy, it would be to announce to them that he had given his heart to God. There is no joy in a family like that when children are converted; there is no news that comes from abroad that diffuses so much happiness through the domestic circle as the intelligence that a child is truly converted []. There is nothing that would give more peace to the dying pillow of the Christian parent, than to be able to leave the world with the assurance that his children would always walk in truth."*

These are really good – and exquisitely true words. Every parent in this place has wrestled (and do wrestle) with the soul-vexing question about each one of their children. It is not a zero-sum analysis where if one shows the evidence of grace, then another that does not can be magically disregarded. When a child grows to adulthood and we see the delightful effects of grace at work, it is a cause for great and continual rejoicing and praise to God for that joyful state. When a child grows to adulthood and denies Christ, it is a cause for heart grief in consideration that one who received such continual light and truth and life-giving guidance from God through parents and brethren would choose darkness and lies and death. And while we have the plainest knowledge that all such matters come from the Creator and are therefore good – we also know that the matter is not fully and finally resolved until the soul of that child leaves the human body at death. Until then the sincere and gracious spirit of that parent knows that the time of love may bring the child again, as Christ's report of the prodigal son declares: ***"this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."*** (Luke 15:24)

***"¶ And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually."*** (Job 1:4-5)

Returning, then, to Job for purposes of closing the analysis on this deep matter, it is evident that a great fear rested upon this righteous man regarding his children. Young adults present a unique challenge to their parents. They have the strength and folly of youth still running rampant in them, and they are often structurally rid of their parents' carefully crafted guard rails. This is a toxic mix, even with regard to those who have grace and therefore joyfully remain in the Church body. The struggle is real.

Job, moved with the knowledge of this reality and strength of a parent's duty to guide, got after it. He knew what dangers existed in the youthful pursuit of ***"the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things"*** and that if it was left unchecked in would ***"choke the word, [making it] unfruitful."*** (Mark 4:19) If the child died, having put himself far away from Christ and having cursed God in his heart and having not been sanctified and demonstrated active and living repentance – the hope of eternity for that child is lost. It's lost, my friends! Forever lost.

Job, being **“perfect [i.e., spiritually matured] and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1)** lived in that reverential fear. I submit – from these words and from my own considered experience – that it is the greatest fear of any parent who knows and loves God. Who knows and loves their duty toward their children whom the Lord has given them. Even while they know and love the truth, none of it is in their hands to dispose of the question. It is a fear that is grounded in a clear knowledge of God’s sovereignty in matters of the souls of men – both His judgment and His mercy. King David prayed and fasted ceaselessly while the child was sick – until he knew of the final execution of God’s will on the matter:

**“But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?” (2 Samuel 12:19-22)**

A parent who knows of the prerogative of God to dispose of the souls of all men – and particularly the souls of the children that He has given – will earnestly desire for the child to be given grace and will fear the awesome finality of that power in execution. They will feel the weight of that power in their spirits when judgment falls. That should be no surprise. We are, of course, not to have inordinate affection toward those who are lost, but it will be a great burden. Grace sufficient for sustaining the weight of it will be given, so there is no need for despair. But Job’s words – **“the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me”** – accurately reflect the reality of the fear while they are alive and the weight of grief when they pass in an unrepentant state.

I would not leave you with the notion that the death of others who have abandoned the cause of God and truth brings no such grief, because where there is closeness in life there is some level of grief in death. None of it justifies an elect soul in murmuring against God or making any argument other than what Job declared; **“shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10)** My hope here is that increased understanding of what Scripture says regarding such acute pains will bring us to this blessed reality:

**“¶ Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter 4:12-13)**

May the Lord be with you all. I love you. Amen.