

THE TURNING OF JOB'S CAPTIVITY

NO. 1262

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends:
also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”*
Job 42:10.

SINCE God is immutable, He acts always upon the same principles and, therefore, 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 *Your 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 15th chapter of Revelation, we read, “Just and true are Your ways, You 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 before 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 are brought high and the same God with His everlasting arms beneath us if we are 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 same design. If, therefore, we are brought low tonight, let us be encouraged with the thought that God will turn our captivity around 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—when we pray for our friends, blessings shall be poured into our own bosoms.

Our text has in it three points very clearly. First, *the Lord can soon turn His people's captivity*—“The Lord turned the captivity of Job.” Second, *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, third, *Believers shall never be losers by God*, for He gave Job twice as much as he had given him before.

I. First, then, THE LORD CAN SOON TURN HIS PEOPLE'S CAPTIVITY. That is a very remarkable expression—“captivity.” It does not say, “God turned Job's *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 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. 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 judgement 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 deliver us from both the spiritual and the temporal captivity and give us a joyful release.

The Lord can deliver us out of spiritual captivity and that very speedily. I may be addressing some, tonight, 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 to, at one time, 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 gunpowder—the elements are discordant and cause a painful effervescence. There are true children of God who walk in darkness and see no light. Yes, some who are the excellent of the earth, nevertheless are compelled to cry aloud, "My God, my God, why have You 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 have 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 before 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 Your countenance upon me." Therefore mark well this cheering Truth of God—God can turn your captivity and turn it at once!

Some of God's children seem to think that to recover their former joy has to take 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 searching of heart and purging of spirit, struggling with inbred lusts and outward temptations and all that, if joy were always the result of *inward* condition. There must 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 Savior 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 Your Free Grace, come in, for I must have You or I perish." My dear Friend, dare you invite Him, now, on any other terms? Having begun in the Spirit, would you be made perfect in the flesh? Having begun to live by Grace, would you go on to live by *works*? When you were a stranger, did you trust in His love and now that you are His friend, will you appeal to the Law? God forbid! Oh, Brother, Jesus loves you, still, and in a *moment* He will restore you!

Oh, Sister, Jesus would gladly come back to your heart, again, and that in an instant! Have you 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 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! But 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 You mourn,
And drove You from my breast."*

Why, Friend, those sighs and groans are sweet to the Lord and they would not have been in you if He had not put them there! They are sure tokens that His Grace has not been altogether taken from you! Do you not know, O child of God, that the Grace of God is intended to meet all your sins after conversion as well as before conversion? Do you not know that the Lord loved you of old, despite your sins and He loves you still? Don't you understand that the ground of your salvation is not *your* standing, or *your* character, but the standing of Christ before God and the Character and work of Christ in the Presence of God? Believe firmly that He still loves you, for so, indeed, He does! Cast your eyes upon those dear wounds of His and read His love still written there. Oh, unbelieving Thomas, do not put your finger into your *own* wounds, for that will not help you! Place them in the wounds of Jesus! Come close to Him and you shall 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 dampened. 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, all of 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, no, 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 pantry. It would be a dreadful thing for us if it were so. Indeed, my Brothers and Sisters, 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 Savior'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 it all back to him. "Yes," you say, "but that was a very remarkable case." I grant you

that, but then we have to do with a remarkable God who still works wonders! 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 the first, and seen the camels and the cattle. If you had gone into his house and seen the furniture and the grandeur of his estate—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 he will ever come to poverty." Remember, 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, marvelously, 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 *building* power of God. Yet, my Brothers and Sisters, surely it is more consonant with the Nature of God that He should give than take, and more like He that He should caress than chastise. Does He not always say that judgement 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 liberality 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 is ever likely that He will chasten you and take away from you. He can restore 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 makes sore *and binds up*. He wounds *and His hands make whole*. He kills *and He makes 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 has regarded the low estate of His servant. He has lifted the poor from the dunghill and set him among princes, even the princes of His people. For the Lord puts down the mighty from their seat, but He exalts them that are of low degree. I leave you with this simple Truth of God. 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 plowed and sowed in vain, the Lord can turn your captivity! 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 is so strong but God can break the bars and set His servants free!

II. 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. "Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?" 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 innocence." 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 Satan had been able to say, "There is Job, a perfect and an upright man, but You have set no hedge about him. You have 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—"You have set a hedge about him and all that he has; he serves You for gain and honor. He has a selfish motive in his integrity."

By God's permission the matter was tested. The devil had said, "Put forth, now, Your hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." But Job did no such thing. In his extremity he said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has 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 soldiers 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 proof house 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 guarantee you, or, perhaps, out of you. But, still, it would not have come out if it had not been in him. 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 stumpers 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 a 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 most tender 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 revealed to you your special sin*. You have been putting your finger upon many 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 why You contend 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, dear Sister, 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 need 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 you should crush a fool in mortar among wheat with your pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." We have been mixed 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 You will," then our captivity will be almost over! 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 You. Your 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 You will."

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 a fire. As it warms at the fire, the 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 luster 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 could never have seen it anywhere else, then He will say, "It is enough. I have taught My child the lesson and I will let him go." 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 40 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 sympathize 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 sorely sick myself." When God has worked 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 Christ-like 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 honor! If the Lord will only save the opposers' souls 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 Brothers and Sisters, never use any other weapon of retaliation than the weapon of love! Avenge not yourself in any way by uttering anything like a curse, or desiring any hurt or mischief to come to your bitterest foe. But inasmuch as he curses, overwhelm him with blessings! Heap the hot coals of your good wishes and earnest prayers upon his head and if the Lord uses you to bring him to a state of salvation, He shall be praised and you shall 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 Christians harbor 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, I think. You should, by the Grace of God, feel that however treacherous, dishonorable, 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 in which 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.

III. The last word I have to say—the third word—is 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 still belonging to the family, 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 sacrifices 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 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 Brothers and Sisters, 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 on earth or Heaven any man who shall be a 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 would give to the Lord all that he had would have made a prudent use of his goods. "He that gives to the poor lends to the Lord." And he that gives to the Lord's Church and to the Lord, Himself, lays up his treasure in Heaven where it shall be his forever. Beloved, we serve a good Master and if He chooses to try us for a little while, we will bear our trial cheerfully, for God will turn our captivity before 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 and strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, you are in bondage until now and there will, before 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! 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 hands of *God* and wherever God may lift those hands you are still within them and, therefore, you are 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.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 18.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—7, 48, 30.

Adapted from *The C.H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.