

Text: "For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat."
(Job xxxiv.3).

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GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

These words were spoken by Elihu to Job, and no doubt Job heard the words of Elihu as he had never heard any man's words before in his whole life. The Holy Ghost circumcised Job's ear, and conveyed the words of Elihu with demonstration and power into Job's heart. To have the truth of God brought by God's Spirit into the heart, to have it made to sink right down to the very bottom of our souls, is a blessed thing. It is a most blessed thing to be a poor sensible sinner as Job was, and to be similarly concerned about being right with God. In our approaches to God, who is terrible in His holiness and majesty, it is blessed to have the same garment of humility covering our spirits as was manifest in Job. It is a blessed thing to be made to go before God spiritually as Shimei went before David naturally: "Thy servant doth know that I have sinned:.... I am come down to meet my lord the king" (II Sam. xix.2)); and to go before God as Ben-hadad's servants went before Ahab - "with sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads" - showing our readiness and willingness to be put to death (I Kings xx.31), as we deserve.

O for more humility in our approaches to God, a deeper sense of His majesty, justice, and holiness, arising from a solemn sense of our own sinfulness - not merely with the lips, but with real brokenness of heart! There is not half enough humility in these days. Some of you may be able to come before God in the spirit of adoption, and to say without dissimulation: "My blessed God, my dear covenant God and Father, my dear Redeemer." At the same time, even when favoured with this holy boldness, this holy familiarity in the presence of God, you will find the deepest sense of your sinfulness.

Under the secret teaching of the Spirit in the heart, some poor, sensible, broken-hearted sinners are called to pass through guilt, temptation, and fear, and are chastened in measure like this blessed man Job: "for the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat." How I used to try these words when I was a young believer, when the Lord first took me in hand, convinced me of my lost and ruined state, and when frailty of constitution was, like Apollyon, flashing before my eyes. He used to say: "you won't live much longer; you will die a young man; it will be at the most only a year or two, and eternity is nigh at hand." How I used to sit in chapel and listen to

the preacher; how my heart used to try the words! And when any of the people of God called while I was under my parents' roof, and got into conversation about the things of God, how my ears tried the words! I heard as the mouth tastes meat.

And, with believers in Christ, though they know God as their God, and have faith to believe that they are redeemed, yet at the same time they are filled with great shame on account of their many sins. They are brought to look upon Christ "whom they have pierced" (Zech.xii. 10).

How very much of this shame and deep humility we see in the Bible saints whose experiences are recorded by the Holy Ghost! Look at David, just at one particular time, when Absalom stole the hearts of his people, and had "sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron" (II Sam. xv.10). We are told that "the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom" (verse 12). Hence David and his company were in imminent peril now. "And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation" (verse 25).

My dear friends, unless you and I are brought before God in a similar way, with holy fear and reverence, and with deep shame for our own undeservedness, to fall into God's hands beseeching Him to succour us by His free mercy through Christ Jesus, - we have no spiritual evidence at all that we have ever been brought into any experience of Elihu's words, or that we have tried gracious words with our ears as the mouth tastes meat.

Now we will come a little closer to our subject. When Job had heard the words of his three friends, there was little in them but law. I shall not take up this evening, though it might be done with profit, in going into the many fears that Job passed through. How attentively did the dear man listen to the speeches of his friends, and how his ear tried their words as the mouth tastes meat. In several previous chapters you will find that Job has spoken the very words which Elihu afterwards quotes; and thus, you see, God was preparing him for the blessed words of Elihu.

Elihu, to my mind, was a wonderful character. A good man once said to me that he believed Elihu was Christ Himself, and some have said that Melchisedec was Christ. It is a mercy

to be kept from extravagant notions. I am persuaded that Elihu was not the Lord Jesus Christ, but he was an eminent type of Christ.

God suffered the devil to lay his hands upon Job's property, his children, and then to cover his body with boils, bringing him down from his exalted position in society - thus preparing him for a blessed reception of grace. Through Elihu God said to Job: "I am with thee for time and for eternity, for life, for death, for health, for affliction. I am thy all and in all. I am thy God." Oh, then, He will strengthen him! What a blessed word is this: "Strengthen". When God manifests Himself to the soul in a time of weakness, how love is strengthened! How slavish, tormenting fear is taken away! When God speaks an encouraging word, it give us peace. In all the chastenings and trials which God brings upon His people, He is preparing them for the good things of His grace through the finished work of His dear Son.

Just notice two of the blessed words which Elihu spoke to Job: "Truly my words shall not be false" (Job xxxvi.4); "He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppresion" (verse 15).

I will ask you a question or two:

- (i) Have you reason to believe that God has spoken to you in His wrath?
- (ii) Has He spoken to you by the manifestation of His love?
- (iii) Has He spoken to you in covenant relationship?

Two questions further arise out of questions (ii) and (iii):

- (a) Do you know when it took place?
- (b) Can you take me to the spot where it took place?

I know where it took place with me. O, the blessed God! I have seen Him, and have exclaimed: "Thou art my Father; Thou art my God! I shall see Thy face, blessed Christ, in glory! I feel the relationship; the Spirit is poured into my heart."

O that God would give us a spiritual word that we may try His words "as the mouth tasteth meat"!
