**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**JOB-005. KNOWLEDGE AND PEACE by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee."*

*Job 22:21*

In the sense in which the speaker meant them, these words are not true. They mean little more than It pays to be religious. What kind of notion of acquaintance with God Eliphaz may have had, one scarcely knows, but at any rate, the whole meaning of the text on his lips is poor and selfish.

The peace promised is evidently only outward tranquillity and freedom from trouble, and the good that is to come to Job is plainly mere worldly prosperity. This strain of thought is expressed even more clearly in that extraordinary bit of bathos, which with solemn irony the great dramatist who wrote this book makes this Eliphaz utter immediately after the text, The Almighty shall be thy defence and--thou shalt have plenty of silver! It has not been left for commercial Englishmen to recommend religion on the ground that it produces successful merchants and makes the best of both worlds.

These friends of Job's all err in believing that suffering is always and only the measure of sin, and that you can tell a man's great guilt by observing his great sorrows. And so they have two main subjects on which they preach at their poor friend, pouring vitriol into his wounds: first, how wicked he must be to be so haunted by sorrows; second, how surely he will be delivered if he will only be religious after their pattern, that is, speak platitudes of conventional devotion and say, I submit.

This is the meaning of our text as it stands. But we may surely find a higher sense in which it is true and take that to heart.

**I. What is acquainting oneself with God?**

The first thing to note is that this acquaintance depends on us. So then there must have been a previous objective manifestation on His part. Of course there must be a God to know, and there must be a way of knowing Him. For us Jesus Christ is the Revealer. What men know of God apart from Him is dim, shadowy, indistinct; it lacks certainty, and so is not knowledge. I venture to say that there is nothing between cultivated men and the loss of certain knowledge of God and conviction of His Being, but the historical revelation of Jesus Christ. The Christ reveals the inmost character of God, and that not in words but in deeds. Without Him no man knows God; No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.

So then the objective revelation having been made, we must on our part embrace that revelation as ours. The act of so accepting begins with the familiar act of faith, which includes both an exercise of the understanding, as it embraces the facts of Christ's revelation of the Father, and of the will as it casts itself upon and submits to Him. But that exercise of faith is but the point which has to be drawn out into a golden line, woven into the whole length of a life. And it is in the continuity of that line that the average Christian so sadly fails, and because of that failure his acquaintance with God is so distant. How little time or thought we give to the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ! We must be on intimate terms with Him. To know God, as to know a man, we must live with Him, must summer and winter with Him, must bring Him into the pettinesses of daily life, must let our love set to Him, must be in sympathy with Him, our wills being tuned to make harmony with His, our whole nature being in accord with His. That is work more than enough for a lifetime, enough to task it, enough to bless it.

**II. The peace of acquaintance with God.**

Eliphaz meant nothing more than mere earthly tranquillity and exemption from trouble, but his words are true in a far loftier region.

Knowledge of God as He really is brings peace, because His heart is full of love. We do but need to know the actual state of the heart of God towards us to be lapped and folded in peace that nothing outside of God and ourselves can destroy. If we lived under the constant benediction of the deepest truth in the universe, God is love, our peace would be full. That is enough, if we believe it to bring peace. The thought of God which alarms and terrifies cannot be a true thought. But, alas! in proportion as we know ourselves, it becomes difficult to believe that God is love. The stings of conscience hiss prophecies to us of that in God which cannot but be antagonistic to that in us which conscience condemns. Only when our thought of God is drawn from the revelation of Him in Jesus Christ, does it become possible for any man to grasp in one act of his consciousness the conviction, I am a sinner, and the conquering conviction, God is Love, and only Love to me. So the old exhortation, Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace, comes to be in Christian language: Behold God in Jesus, and thou shalt possess the peace of God to keep thy heart and mind.

Knowledge of God gives peace, because in it we find the satisfaction of our whole nature. Thereby we are freed from the unrest of tumultuous passions and storms of self-will. The internecine war between the better and the worse selves within ceases to rage, and when we have become God's friends, that in us which is meant to rule rules, and that in us which is meant to serve serves, and the inner kingdom is no longer torn asunder but is harmonised with itself.

Knowledge of God brings peace amid all changes, for he who has God for his continual Companion draws little of his supplies from without, and can be tranquil when the seas roar and are troubled and the mountains are cast into the midst of the sea. He bears all his treasures with him, and need fear no loss of any real good. And at last the angel of peace will lead us through the momentary darkness and guide us, after a passing shadow on our path, into the land of peace wherein we trusted, while yet in the land of warfare. Jesus still whispers the ancient salutation with which He greeted the company in the upper room on the evening of the day of resurrection, as He comes to His servants here, and it will be His welcome to them when He receives them above.

**III. The true good from acquaintance with God.**

As we have already said, Eliphaz was only thinking, on Old Testament lines, that prosperity in material things was the theocratic reward of allegiance to Jehovah. He was rubbing vitriol into Job's sores, and avowedly regarding him as a fear-inspiring instance of the converse principle. But we have a better meaning breathed into his words, since Jesus has taught us what is the true good for a man all the days of his life. Acquaintance with God is, not merely procures, good. To know Him, to clasp Him to our hearts as our Friend, our Infinite Lover, our Source of all peace and joy, to mould our wills to His and let Him dominate our whole selves, to seek our wellbeing in Him alone--what else or more can a soul need to be filled with all good? Acquaintance with God brings Him in all His sufficiency to inhabit else empty hearts. It changes the worst, according to the judgment of sense, into the best, transforming sorrow into loving discipline, interpreting its meaning, fitting us to bear it, and securing to us its blessings. To him that is a friend of God,

All is right that seems most wrong

If it be His sweet will.

To be acquainted with God is the quintessence of good. This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.