

Dear God and Father, make us strong when pain and sorrows come upon us. Do not let us forget that You send them in love. Move us even in times like this to show our thankfulness that through all such trials You work everlasting blessings for us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. The LORD said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to your face." And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and there came a messenger to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you." While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you." Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

In Christ Jesus, through whom our gratitude toward God finds expression in good and evil days, dear fellow redeemed:

What would you consider to be the worst day of your life? Not many of us could probably find a worse day than what Job experienced in our text. He received three reports informing him that he lost his oxen, donkeys, sheep and camels and his servants tending them. Then came the fourth and most devastating report, while his

sons and daughters were feasting in their eldest brother's home, a wind storm collapsed the building they were in and killed them all.

We could well imagine that at each of the first three reports, Job may have thought to himself: *"Wait until my family hears about this?"* He would plan to seek their comfort and help in the face of such devastating news. But then he hears they too have been taken from him. But we are told that Job remained faithful in the face of these horrific reports and did not charge God with any wrongdoing. How would we fare under such circumstances, would we be able to say with all sincerity: "Blessed be the name of the Lord!" as did Job? Let us consider for ourselves how in the worst of times, we too can say: **Thankfully God Never Does Anything Wrong.**

I

It is a common myth even held by unsuspecting Christians that while God permits and **allows** bad things to happen to Christians He does **not send** the bad things Himself. No, as hard as it is to hear, our Lord will send *"bad"* things upon us. What we are called upon to believe, however, is that our Lord will use all such difficult and painful things for our blessing.

If you wish to deny this, consider the exchange Satan had with God at the beginning of our text: "Does Job fear God for no reason? ...You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But **stretch out Your hand** and touch all that he has, and he will curse You to your face.' And the LORD said to Satan, 'Behold, all that he has is in your hand.'" You could argue that Satan performed the bad things not God. But then we read: "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them."

At the next strike upon Job, he suffers from a disease that causes him to break out in loathesome sores from head to toe. Job's wife suggests that Job "Curse God and die." To this Job responds in faith: "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" Thereby Job recognized the divine source of these "bad" things which befell him.

We might think that this may have been the way God worked in the Old Testament, not in the New. Consider St. Paul and the thorn in the flesh from which he sought to be delivered. Paul makes this observation: "to keep me from becoming conceited because the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh." The devil did not give this thorn so Paul would not become conceited, but rather his gracious Lord did. Yes, a messenger from Satan, but still a blessing. Crosses are laid upon us lovingly by our

Lord to test and try our faith in His everlasting love for us.

II

So while we recognize that our Lord uses "*bad*" things in this life to work blessings for us, we thankfully praise Him that all He does is right and good, never wrong. Very likely the nine lepers in our Gospel lesson concluded that God had done them wrong by striking them with leprosy in the first place. The Samaritan had a different understanding and therefore returned to Jesus to thank and praise God for his deliverance.

Job responded to this worst day of his life in this way, first saying: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong." But we do observe in the life of Job that his faith was severely tested after the loathsome disease struck him. He comes very close to cursing God accusing Him of wrongdoing when his friends visit and try to separate Job from the love of God for him in the promised Christ.

How are you doing in your worship life of thanksgiving? Are you able to give thanks to your Lord even for the "*bad*" that happen in your lives? Even when you pray repeatedly for deliverance from those "*bad*" things and see no deliverance as you desire? Not so easy, is it? However as we know our loving God in His Son our Savior, we know that He deserves our praise for that which He gives us the good and the bad and for that which He takes away the bad and the good.

Remember how Jesus asked His Father to take away the cup of His bitter wrath so that He would not have to drink of it on Good Friday? But the Father would not take it away. Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath against you, me and all sinners of all time. Look at what good the Father accomplished by not taking the bad away from Jesus, but gave it to Him to the full. All your sins have been paid for and are thus forgiven. Jesus' righteousness, including faithfully thanking His Father for insisting that He drink it all for us, is now credited to us. Our worship of God on account of His love for us in His Son, our praise begun here in this life will go on for all eternity in heaven.

God hides in our suffering as Christians. God in Christ became man, suffering all, even the cross that we might live. He shows us that what looks bad in the eyes of the world is the highest good for us. God works in a paradoxical way under apparent opposites: His strength lies hidden under apparent weakness; His wisdom under apparent folly; His love under what appears as His hatred, the future glory of the Christian under his present sufferings. This divinely

prescribed way of living under the cross leads us to despair of our righteousness. We recognize that anything accomplishing such a good thing in us is a dear cross, given by God for our eternal good.

Job found out that both “*good*” and “*bad*” come graciously from God’s hand, but God intended all of it for his blessing. Job’s story ends with God making him twice the man he had been when he was the greatest man in the East. God doubled everything that Job had lost, except for his children. Job wasn’t given fourteen new children, only seven, the same number as those who died. But that *was* double, because the first ones weren’t lost; they were simply waiting. Bearing the cross means following the Savior who bore it first, all the way to death and back, and knowing even if the cross ends in death, “I will not die but live and will proclaim the works of the LORD”.

Job recognized this as God’s gracious work in his life and did not curse but praised God with thanksgiving. So did the Samaritan leper. So do you in your lives of difficulties. Your thanksgiving goes on in face of the good and bad as you are given the strength to take up your cross and follow Jesus. Your strength is found in your full and free forgiveness and everlasting life - yours now for His sake. Amen.