



The Sunday called Septuagesima, or the
third Sunday before Lent.

The Collect.

O LORD, we beseech thee favourably to hear the prayers of thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by thy goodness, for the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

1 But Job answered and said, 2 How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? 3 How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? 4 To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee? 5 Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof. 6 Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. 7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. 8 He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. 9 He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. 10 He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. 11 The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof. 12 He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. 13 By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. 14 Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand? (Job 26:1-14)

The long discourse of Job begins in this chapter and extends through chapter 31.

Job has had enough of the nonsensical ramblings of Bildad and his two cohorts, and launches out in words and expressions that reveal his developing sense of God and His purposes. In a court of law, an eyewitness is the very best of all witnesses; but, if an eyewitness cannot be found, then a material witness whose knowledge of the matter supports the case would be highly desirable. Neither Bildad, Zophar, and or Eliphaz are eyewitnesses, nor are they material witnesses since they have no intimate knowledge of God as Job has. Allow me to use an illustration from a source of great reliability in response to God's question to Job in Chap 38:4 – *"Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth?" Two men – Joe and Charlie – were arguing about Genesis 1:1. Joe said he believed the record of creation just as it was written. Charlie, on the other hand, was an infidel, and went to great length in giving his own theory of how the world began and then developed from a primordial cell through reptiles, monkeys, and up to man. When he was all through, Joe looked at him and asked, "Were you there, Charlie?" It was a good question! "Of course, I was not there," said Charlie. Joe had the answer. He said, "Well, God was there. He was the only One there and I'll take the word of an 'eye-witness' rather than the guesses of those who go only by "they say."" "Were you there?" What presumption for the creature to question the Word of the Creator! (Dr. M.R. DeHaan, *BREAD FOR EACH DAY*).*

There meaningful gems of great beauty in this Chapter of Job, and perhaps far more than we, at present, can understand; but those clear gems stand out as diamonds on black velvet. Job interrupts Bildad with this longer discourse. It is easy to understand how Job feels if we will only remember the times when we have known beyond doubt the truth of an issue, but have listened to a friend ramble on with inaccuracies and misstatements. After a time, our silence cannot be maintained. or, perhaps, we have tried to explain to a child why some greatly desired sweet will not be good for him or her just before bedtime. The evidence of our faith is manifested in our actions of love. 2 How hast thou helped him that is without power? how savest thou the arm that hath no strength? Job asks Mr. Bildad, "If you are so strong in your convictions, let us have evidence in the things you have done to help the widow, the orphan, or the beggar by the way?" *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* (James 1:27) What we see missing most from the aggressive counsels of the three friends is that ONE proof of loving God – LOVE itself! *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* (John 13:34-35) I do not believe Christ introduces this 'new' commandment as a new corollary to godliness, but felt the necessity to more forcefully affirm it. If lack love, we must make effort to love – even the unlovely. When we perform the requisites of love toward others, it is often discovered that the love becomes real and not affected.

Job wonders if Bildad has truly counseled others weak in wisdom. If arguments of right are uttered out of a hateful heart, it ceases to be counseling and becomes nagging. 3 How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom? and how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is? 4 To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee? Did you know that words are uttered with certain spirit? Holy Words have the credibility of the Holy Spirit; yet, wicked words of cursing and profanity carry in their bosom the spirit of the wicked one. Even seemingly righteous words may carry a wrong connotation if uttered in malice.

5 Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof. 6 Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. Do you believe that God is

not present in Hell? Do you know that God is 'omnipresent' every place and at every time. *If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.* (Psalms 139:8) It is true that God is fully aware of all the sufferings of Hell and its inhabitants, but the eyes of men are blind to this place. We do not even need to be in Hell to stand naked before God for all who are not clothed in the righteousness of Christ stand naked in the sins before Him.

Next follows one of the most powerful verses, in my view, of the whole Book of Job: **7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.** Several years ago, I was teaching this chapter in a youth Bible study. When we read this verse, I asked (really referring to the latter part of the verse), "What does this mean?" A young football player said, "Does it refer to the North Polar cap that is not supported by a landmass?" I had never considered that possibility, but perhaps it does mean that. The second part of the verse is a proven scientific fact even though there remains some on the fringe who may still consider that the earth is flat! For the first 5,500 years of man's existence, he did not know what God has clearly stated – that He "**hangeth the earth upon nothing.**" We have all seen moonshots of the beautiful blue planet (earth) that hangs in space upon nothing. God told us 3,500 years ago in this verse what science could not know until "*Columbus sailed the ocean blue.*"

Water is heavier than air, isn't it? Yet, God is able to cause millions of tons of water to be held in the air by clouds. **8 He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them.** The cloud that holds so many tons of water stays aloft and is not ruptured in losing all of its moisture before the time of God's choosing. The intricate meteorological balance required to maintain water in clouds is based on forces unknown to man until very recent days, but devised by God in eternity past. What did Caesar, Archbishop Cranmer, or Napoleon know of the "*adiabatic lapse rate*?" (*The rate of decrease of atmospheric temperature with increase in altitude*). Since warm air is able to contain more moisture than cold air, as the air mass cools with altitude, the moisture begins to condense and fall from the clouds as rain. God, who developed laws of nature and science is truly a greater scientist than those queer little men wearing white frock coats and boasting that they know more than God. Of course, they are forced to retract their little theories not long after that propound them if they differ from God's account in Holy Scripture.

God hides His Throne with thick clouds though He remains, Himself, invisible to man. Do you ever feel uncomfortable in knowing that God is ALWAYS present and aware of our thoughts, words, and deeds? That would fall into the "food for thought" category! **9 He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.**

10 He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. That word, compassed, means to describe a circle, or sphere, about the waters. Remember that photo, again, of the bright blue planet. See how the waters of the sea conform to that compass which the Lord has placed upon it? His tides obey the limits that God has placed upon them as well.

11 The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof. The "pillars of heaven" is a poetic reference to the great mountains that tremble at the rebuke of God. Earthquakes and ground-slides are subject to His command. Job uses a sophisticated and modern technique of personification to say that the pillars of heaven are astonished at His reproof. Surely, they seem so when they are shaken by great movements of the earth.

Job continues with his praise of the Mighty God in whom he has trusted. The poetry of Job may be the most beautiful ever written. ***12 He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud.*** How is the sea divided? Just as counties and cities by great highways. Do you remember that there are 'paths' in the sea? Matthew Fontaine Maury, Pathfinder of the Sea, has plotted and mapped these paths in the sea (Gulfstream and other tropical streams) that prevent Great Britain from becoming another Iceland. Aquatic life exists in these "rivers of the sea" which cannot exist fifty feet away outside these streams in the sea. The temperature may vary as much as 70 degrees Fahrenheit from the inside to the outside of these streams. The computations Naval Charts of Maury reduced shipping time by days and weeks, and are still used by naval ships at sea. He was the proponent and first Director of the US Naval Observatory and the father of the US Naval Academy at Annapolis. He was inspired in his research by the 8th Psalm: "*.....whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.*" (Psalms 8:8)

Captain Edward J. Smith, Captain of the Titanic, felt his vessel to be unsinkable, but it surely was not for it sank to the bottom of the North Atlantic in the early morning hours of April 15, 1912. "*...by his understanding he smiteth through the proud*)

13 By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. God is the Master Artist. He has many Masterpieces to His credit. You are one of those Masterpieces – unique, beautiful, intricate, and designed to live with Him forever if you have received Him in your heart. He painted the sunrise, and will paint the sunset at day's end. I once read of a mother who took her little daughter out to the garden one beautiful spring day. The sun was just rising with a myriad of gold's, purples, and greys. The mother said to her daughter, "Suzie, look at beautiful sunrise – isn't God a wonderful artist?" Why, yes, He is, mother," answered Suzie, "and just to think, He did it with His left hand." "Why, Suzie," responded the mother, "why would you know He did it with His left hand?" "Because," said Suzie, "Jesus is sitting on His right hand just as we say in church every Sunday!" Have you ever considered that there are more than seven billion human beings on earth today and that there have been untold billions who have lived upon the planet in the centuries and millennia past? Yet, each person is completely unique and different from every other. If DaVinci or Michelangelo were called upon to paint only three hundred different faces, it is unlikely that either of these great artists could accomplish the challenge. But God has painted, presently, more than seven billion such faces; and, not only faces, but each with different DNA, mental facilities, and other personal characteristics. This, alone, is enough to convince of the certainty of God and His great Power. And, yes, God made the dragon constellation crooked, but I believe He made the serpent of the Garden crooked as well once he was found guilty of his great temptation of Eve.

14 Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand? We only have a faint and rudimentary knowledge of the fullness of God's Person, yet we are told enough to know our responsibility and duty to Him. We only know the fringe elements of God's power, and we hear only the portion of Him that we can digest. The power behind the thunder is lightning, yet the thunder is an expression of the release of that great power. God thunders in nature and in our spirits, yet do we hear Him? Just as the old black spiritual goes: *My Lord he calls me, he calls me by the thunder; the trumpet sounds within-a my soul.*" (Steal Away to Jesus) How is the foolish heart able to deny that Thunder? *Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are*

clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. (Romans 1:19-22)