

He shows the effect that follows from this in the hearts of others when he then says, "On his day," which is the day of his ruin, "the youngest men will be astonished," i.e. the youngest members of the people will be stunned with great wonder, not able to comprehend how such great glory of a sinner has suddenly been reduced to nothing. As for the elders he then says, "horror will invade the first men," fearing that the same thing might happen to them. He seems to have introduced this to answer to what Job had said above, "Whether his sons are noble or base, he will not understand, yet his flesh, while he lives, will grieve." (14:21) From this Job seemed to have refuted the threats of his friends or their promises of things which would happen after his death. But here Baldath answers that great tragedies of this kind which happen after death, although the dead man does not know about them, are still inflicted by God—with such punishments—for the correction of others.

Since he had premised some punishments of a sinner proper to the journey of the present life, but others which are proper to the end of the journey, death and the things which happen after death, he therefore adds as an epilogue, "These are the tents of the evil man" which refers to his progress in the course of this present life, because travelers use tents. However as to the ultimate end which is like the end of movement, he then says, "Such is the home of him who has no knowledge of God," either by unbelief or by disobedience.

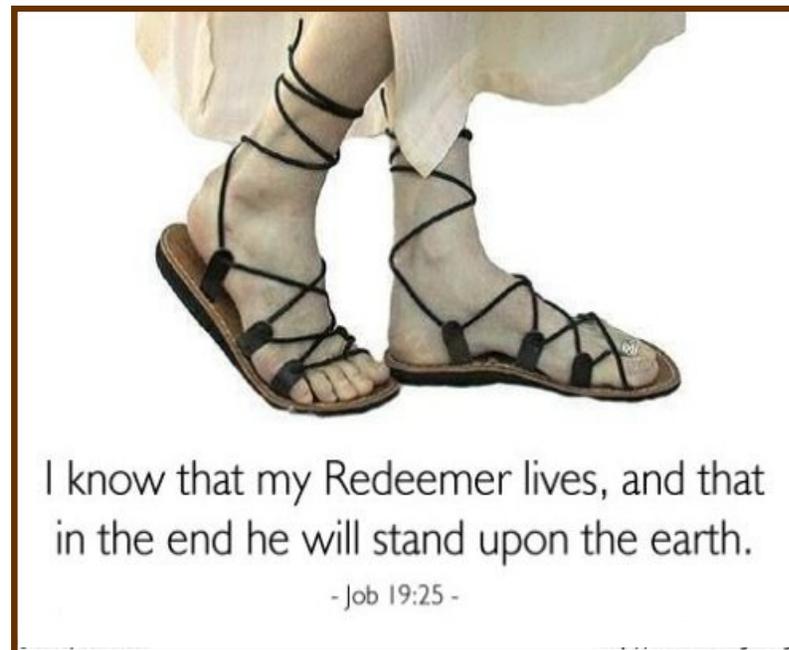
END OF JOB CHAPTER 18



FOR MORE PAMPHLETS ON BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.pamphletstoinspire.com

Job

Chapter Eighteen:



I know that my Redeemer lives, and that
in the end he will stand upon the earth.

- Job 19:25 -

The Inexorable Fate of the Wicked

The commentary on the Book of Job, is by Saint Thomas Aquinas and was translated by Brian Mulladay and 3edited by rev. Joseph Kenny, O.P.

The book shows how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using probable arguments.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: THE INEXORABLE FATE OF THE WICKED

The First Lesson: The Response of Baldath

1 Then Baldath of Shuah answered and said: 2 To what end will you just toss out words? Understand first, and then we will speak. 3 Why have you taken us to be asses and deprecate us in your presence? 4 Why do you lose your soul in your anger? Because of you, should the land disappear and will the cliffs be displaced? 5 Will not the light of evil men go out and will his fire sparkle? 6 The light will grow dark in the tent of that man and the lamp above him will be extinguished. 7 The steps of his power will be circumscribed and his own counsel will cast him down. 8 For he has put his feet in the snare and he walked forward into the mesh. 9 The foot of that man will be bound in a snare, and his thirst will burn against him. 10 A snare is hidden for him in the earth and a trap is set for him on the path. 11 From all sides dread will terrify him and they will wrap around his feet.

Since Baldath of Shuah could not understand what blessed Job meant with his intellect, he thought that what he himself did not understand was spoken without basis even by the speaker, and so in the beginning of his answer he says, "To what end will you just toss out words?" Here he blames Job for three things: first, the ineffectual character of his speech, as though the words Job had spoken had no efficacious proof of anything, which is shown in the fact that he says, "To what end." Second, he blames him for the vain multiplication of words, as though these words of Job lacked the weight of serious consideration, which is shown in the fact that he says, "words." Third he criticizes him for the disordered connection of his words, which is shown when he says, "will you just toss out words?" For one is said to toss out words who scatters them inordinately, although one can also interpret this third thing as a display of bragging. These three faults occur in the speech of someone who has a weak intellect; and so a confrontation with one lacking intelligence is useless, and so he continues, "Understand first, and then we will speak," as if to say: From the fact that you speak inefficaciously, lightly and inordinately it is clear that you have weak intelligence, and so I insist first that you apply yourself to understand and afterwards we can converse with each other. Then he blames him for presumption since he had not deemed them to be wise when he had said, "I will find no wise man among you." (17:10) So to answer this he then says, "Why have you taken us to be asses and deprecate us in your presence?" For the man who lacks wisdom seems contemptible and like beasts of burden, because the honor and crown of man consists in wisdom. Consequently he finds him at fault about his anger because he had said, "Anger misted over my vision." (17:7) He had taken this in the wrong way believing that it was the sort of anger that had taken away from him the light of wisdom, not listening to what he had said after this, "The just will preserve his course." (17:9) So he then says, "Why do you lose your soul in your anger?" For one loses his soul in anger who because of anger departs from wisdom and justice which are the principle goods of the soul.

When a man has died, frequently everything which was his goes to ruin. He shows this is a consequence beginning first with those things produced from the earth, some of which have been planted still remain as seedlings after he dies. Expressing this he says, "Behold! May his roots be dried up," so that if he had sowed or planted anything it may be destroyed and does not bear fruit. However as to those which have already produced fruit, he says, "and may his harvest above be ruined." One can refer this to any business he has just begun or at that which is already almost finished. He then proceeds to the renown which remains about a man after his death, by which some men desire to live in the memories of men and to also have glory after death. Thus as to the removal of the sinner from the memories of men he then says, "Let the memory of that man perish from the earth." As for the end of his celebrated fame he then says, "may his name not be celebrated in the streets," which he says exactly to the point because one's name is only celebrated by a crowd which is usually found in the streets. Thus when his memory and the public renown of his name end, the brightness of his glory will be changed into the darkness of perpetual oblivion, and expressing this he says, "It will expel him from the light into darkness," that is from earthly glory to oblivion. When his fame ceases and his body been consumed by death, nothing of him will remain any longer in the world, because Baldath and his companions were of the opinion that the soul did not remain after death. "And it will transfer him from this world," so that nothing of him remains in the world. But since parents also live in their children he rejects this saying, "His seed will not exist," because his sons will be dead, "nor offspring in his people," since neither grandsons nor great-grandsons will remain, nor even his relatives, and so he then says, "nor any remain in his territory," neither those related by blood nor members of his household by whom his memory may be kept.

In the foregoing Baldath had premised the punishments of sinners found in exterior adversities, but here he begins to pursue the punishments pertaining to the persons. One must note that sins themselves implicate the sinner in exterior adversities, and so he pursued exterior adversities as though predicting them with some certitude. But corporeal punishments do not seem to be directly caused by the sins themselves except perhaps some especially gluttony and lust in which someone sins in his own body, therefore he does not pursue corporeal punishments by denouncing him but more in threatening him. He begins with the corporal punishments which precede death, and because nourishment preserves the life of the body, he first invokes the removal of nourishment from him, by which man first begins to be weakened. Regarding this he says, "His strength will be robbed by hunger." Then when he lacks nourishment, his life is also taken away, and regarding this he says, "and let fasting invade his ribs," by which he means the weakening of the vital operations, the principle one of which is the heart which is contained under the ribs. The goods of the body which hunger begins to weaken are totally consumed by death. The principal goods of the body are beauty and strength, and so he then says, "may his skin lose its beauty," because beauty regards exterior appearance," and "may the arms of that man," in which strength is especially found, "be consumed by a premature," i.e. early, "death", before the end of the natural span of life. The dead man is taken out of his house, and regarding this he says, "May trust be torn away violently from his tent," because he did not place his hope in God, but in the vulgar display and the glory of his house, of which he is deprived after death. Thrown out of his house, he is shut up in the tomb where he is totally exterminated in death. Respecting this he says, "and may destruction trample him like a king," because death like a king in the fullness of his power grinds him into dust. When he has been taken from his house, the dead man's domestics remain with whom he had society in this life, and as to this he then says, "May the companions of the one who no longer lives," that is, of the dead man who now takes no more part in human affairs, "inhabit his tent." When the master dies the members of the household mourn and show signs of sadness, either wearing black and poor garments, or by offensive odors and he expresses this when he says, "let sulphur be sprinkled in his tent." In this text, one understands all those things which can be signs of sadness, just as good odors are used for a sign of rejoicing.

With these premises in which he had noted weakness of intellect, presumption and fury in the person of Job, he arrives as the consequence at his principal proposition towards which the controversy was directed which is that the adversities of this present life are punishments of sin. Job had said against this, "I have not sinned, and my eye lingers on bitter things." (17:2) Since Baldath could not use arguments for the assertion of his opinion, he wanted to establish his opinion as most firm from common opinion, and so he compared it to the things which cannot be moved, like the earth and cliffs. So he says, "Because of you should the land disappear and would the cliffs be displaced?" implying: This opinion that adversities happen in return for sins is firm as earth and cliffs. Will it be able to be removed because of your arguments to prove your innocence?

He then expands his idea more fully, relating one by one the evils which happen to sinners. Among these he places first the end of their prosperous successes which he compares to the light because "He who walks in the light do not stumble." (John 11:9) Thus those seem to walk in the light for whom all their undertakings succeed prosperously as they would like. He speaks about the loss of this light, of prosperity, saying, "Will not the light of evil men go out," will not their prosperity cease? Just as corporeal light comes from the flame of fire, so also the lustre of his prosperity comes from the affection of a man when one attains what he desires, and so he then says, "nor will his fire sparkle?" For fire is commonly used to symbolize the fervor of love, as we read in the Song of Songs, "His lamps are fire and torches." (8:6) We should note that the prosperity of man's success comes from two causes. Sometimes it comes from human providence, for example, when a man prudently and carefully orders each and every thing. As to this cause he says of the end of this prosperity, "The light will grow dark in the tent of that man?" because both he and his household will lack prudence in their decisions. Sometimes however, the prosperity of a man's success comes from a higher cause, from divine providence. He describes the cause of the end of this prosperity saying, "the lamp from above him will be extinguished," not that it does not shine on him, but that it throw light on the evil man. He fittingly describes the providence of man a "light" for it is borrowed from another, but the providence of God as a "lamp" because it gives light in itself. He has premised that light of divine providence from the fact that a man loses the light of reason, he seems to merit to not be protected by the light of divine providence.

After he has treated prosperity lost he then speaks about adversity, concerning which he first places the impediments to action and effort. Man struggles to attain the effect of his action in two ways: in one way by his own courage, and against this he says, "The steps of his power will be extinguished," because courageous assertion cannot advance further. In another way man tries to attain something by wisdom, and regarding this he says, "and his own counsels will cast him down," when what he thought was useful becomes harmful to him. He says that the cause of these impediments comes from his sin, "For he puts his feet in the snare." For just as one who willingly puts his foot in a snare wants to be captured, so one who willingly occupies himself with sin disposes himself to have his progress impeded as Scripture says, "His own iniquities have ensnared the evil man." (Prov. 5:22) As there are a variety of meshes in a net, so also in sin there are many different sins which entangle a man in various ways. So he then says, "and he walked forward into the mesh," when he goes from one kind of sin to another or from one mode of sinning to another. Since he willingly put himself in danger and does not stop advancing but always proceeds further on, as a result he will sometimes feel himself impeded and so he then says, "The foot of that man will be bound in a snare," that is the forward motion of his will and his act will be blocked by some obstacle.

These sorts of evil things arise from three causes for those progressing in sin. First on the part of the sinner himself in whom the desire for sins increase more the more he sins. Regarding this he continues, "and his thirst will burn against him," because sometimes the sinner considers something to be harmful to him from reason, but the burning desire for sin compels him to act against his thinking. Second, the cause of the harm is sometimes from the things themselves in which he sins, as Scripture says, "Riches are amassed to the evil of the one possessing them." (Qoheleth 5:12) Harmful things of this sort come sometimes from things already obtained, and regarding this Baldath says, "A snare is hidden for him in the earth," because in fact some danger lies hidden in earthly things themselves by which the feet of the sinner are caught. But sometimes harmful things of this sort arise when a man is en route to acquiring things, and expressing this he says, "and a trap is set for him on the path," because before the sinner obtains what he seeks the dangers already lie in wait on the way itself. Third, harmful things like this are caused on the part of some men whose plots and attacks are feared, and so he then says, "From all sides dread will terrify him," since, as Scripture says, "When the evil man is timid, he has been given for the condemnation of everyone." (Wisdom 17:10) When however man is wary against everyone, it is necessary that his acts should be impeded in many things, and so he then says, "and they will wrap around his feet," so he cannot go forward freely in any direction.

The Second Lesson: The Pains of the Sinner

12 His strength will be robbed by hunger and let fasting invade his ribs. 13 May his skin lose its beauty and may the arms of that man be consumed by a premature death. 14 May trust be torn away violently from his tent and may destruction trample him like a king. 15 May the companions of the one who no longer lives inhabit his tent, let sulphur be sprinkled in his tent. 16 Behold, may his roots be dried up and may his harvest above be ruined. 17 Let the memory of that man perish from the earth and may his name not be celebrated in the streets. 18 It will expel him from the light into darkness, and it will transfer him from the earth. 19 His seed will not exist or offspring in his people nor any remain in his territory. 20 On his day, the youngest men will be astonished and horror will invade the first men. 21 These are the tents of the evil man. Such is the house of him who has no knowledge of God.