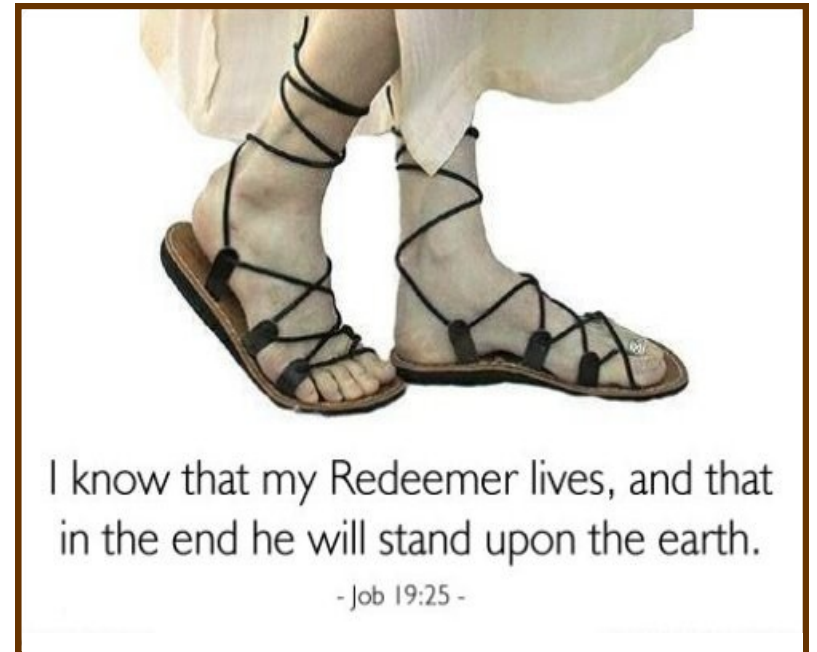


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Job

Chapter Forty Two:



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

- Job 19:25 -

Job's Repentance

The commentary on the Book of Job, is by Saint Thomas Aquinas and was translated by Brian Mulladay and edited by Rev. Joseph Kenny, O.P. The book shows how human affairs are ruled by divine providence using probable arguments.

CHAPTER FORTY TWO: JOB'S REPENTANCE

1 Then Job answered the Lord and said: 2 I know that you can do everything and no thought is hidden from you. 3 Who is the man who foolishly hides his plan without your knowledge? So I have spoken foolishly about things which far exceed my knowledge. 4 Listen, and I will speak, I will question you and answer me. 5 My ear heard you; now however my eye sees you. 6 Therefore I reproach myself and I do penance in dust and ashes.

After the Lord reproved Job for his intemperate speech which seemed to smack of pride because he asserted that he was just so much that it seemed to some people to lead to the derogation of divine justice, Job humbly answers considering himself convinced. First, he confesses the divine excellence with respect to power, and so the text says, "Job answered the Lord and said: I know that you can do everything;" also as to knowledge and so he says, "and no thought is hidden from you." By the first of these he confesses that God could remove the adversity brought on by the devil, whom the Lord described using the image of Behemoth and Leviathan. By the second he recognizes that some proud thought did stir him interiorly, and he recognizes that this did not escape God's notice. Therefore, in consequence, he assails those who deny divine providence saying, "Who is the man who foolishly hides his plan without your knowledge?" who is so presumptuous and stupid to say that a human counsel can be hidden from God without God knowing it?

From the consideration of the divine excellence he proceeds to consider his own fault when he says, "So I have spoken foolishly," in not showing due reverence for divine excellence in my words, "about things which far exceed by knowledge," in discussing divine judgments. Because, "I have spoken foolishly" in what remains I will speak wisely, and so he says, "Listen and I will speak," and confess my fault. Because "I have spoken about things which exceed my knowledge," from now on I do not dare to speak about those things, but only to ask you about them and so he says, "I will ask you," by asking, seeking and knocking, (Matt. 7:7) "and answer me," by instructing me interiorly. He shows why he has so changed saying, "My ear heard you," once when I was speaking foolishly;" now, however, my eye sees you," that is, I know you more fully than before, just as things which are seen with the eyes are more certain than what is heard with the ear. He truly has grown both from his suffering and from divine revelation. The more one considers the justice of God, the more he sees his own fault, and so he says, "Therefore I reproach myself," when I consider my own fault. Since it does not suffice to confess one's own fault unless one makes satisfaction, he continues, "I do penance in dust and ashes," as a sign of the frailty of corporeal nature. For humble satisfaction befits the expiation of pride of thought.

Since Job also had been scourged in his own body, he is given length of days to increase his prosperity, and so the text goes on, "But Job lived after his trials one hundred and forty years." So that we may understand that he lived the whole time in prosperity the text says, "and he saw his children and his children's children up to the fourth generation." We are to understand that this prosperity lasted until his death, and so the text says, "and he died an old man," which expresses his duration of life, "and full of days," which expresses the prosperity of his life. He indicated his adversity already when he said, "Therefore, I had empty months." (7:3) So his long life indicates his abundance both of the goods of fortune and the goods of grace, which led him to the future glory which endures for ever and ever. Amen.

END OF JOB CHAPTER 42

These were insufficient to restore him, but the Lord assisted him with his own hand that from these small things he might progress to greater ones, and so the text says, "But the Lord blessed the last days of Job," by lengthening them, "more than his first days," that is, more than his former prosperity. For he is "powerful to do more than we can ask or understand," (Eph. 3:20) as Ephesians says. Job had already desired to return to his condition "as in the months of old," (29:2) but the Lord restored him to greater things and even double what he had before, as has been said already, (v. 10) and so the text says, "He gave his fourteen thousand sheep," because before he was said, "to have seven thousand sheep;" (1:3) and six thousand camels, "since before he had "three thousand camels." (1:3) Since before he had also "five hundred yoke of oxen," here he receives double and has "one thousand yoke of oxen." Before he had "five hundred asses," (1:13) so here he receives double, "and one thousand asses."

Now Job had lost not only his possessions, but also his children who are restored to him, but not double what he had before, for the text says, "He had seven sons and three daughters." There can be two reasons for this. One pertains to the future life, because the sons which he had, were not completely lost to him but were saved in the future life to live with him. The other reason concerns the present life, for if the number of sons had been also doubled after the rest of the things were doubled, the fortune of his house would not seem to have increased, because each one of his children would have the same quantity of goods as before. Therefore, it was more just that his children should increase in value rather than number. This is insinuated in a hidden way in the daughters whom we read were very beautiful. Their beauty is expressed in their name, and so the text continues, "And he called the name of the first, 'Day,' because of her brightness, "and the name of second 'Cassia'," which is a species of aromatic tree, because of its sweet smell, "and the name of the third 'Horn-of-Rouge,' which is a dye which women use to adorn their eyes. As the Book of Kings says, "She painted her eyes with rouge and adorned her head." (IV Kings 9:30). Women keep rouge in a horn so that they have it ready when it is needed, and so he called her "Horn of Rouge" to indicate the surpassing beauty of her eyes. So the text continues and discusses their beauty, "There was no one found among women as beautiful as the daughters of Job in the whole land." By this we are also given to understand that his sons were preeminent in virtue, for the text continues, "and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers," to indicate the fittingness of the virtue of both.

EPILOGUE

7 After the Lord spoke these words to Job, he spoke to Eliphaz the Temanite: My fury is enkindled against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken correctly in my presence like my servant, Job. 8 Therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams. Go to my servant, Job, and offer holocausts for yourselves. Job, my servant, will pray for you. I will consider his face so that your foolishness will not be imputed to you. For you have not spoken rightly in my presence like my servant, Job. 9 Eliphaz the Temanite, Baldath the Shuite and Sophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord had told them and the Lord supported the person of Job. 10 The Lord also was turned by the penance of Job when he prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as before. 11 Then all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before came to him and they ate bread with him in his house and they shook their heads over him. They consoled him about all the evil which the Lord had brought upon him and they each gave him one sheep and one gold ear ring. 12 But the Lord blessed the last days of Job more than his first days. He gave him fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen and one thousand asses. 13 He had seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first "Day" and the name of the second "Cassia" and the name of the third "Horn-of-Rouge". 15 There was no one found among women as beautiful as the daughters of Job in the whole land, and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. 16 But Job lived after his trials one hundred and forty years and he saw his children and children's children up to the fourth generation and he died an old man and full of days.

Since God had reproved both Eliud and Job in his discourse, (38:2,3) now in the third place he reproves his friends and especially Eliphaz among them. It is clear that Eliphaz is the most important from the fact that he began to speak first. So the text says, "After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, he spoke to Eliphaz the Temanite: My fury is enkindled against you and your two friends," Baldath and Sophar. Consider here that Eliud had sinned from inexperience whereas Job from levity, so neither had sinned gravely. Therefore, the Lord is not said to be angry with them, but he is exceedingly angry with Job's three friends because they had sinned gravely in asserting perverse doctrines as we saw already. (13:4) So he says, "for you have not spoken correctly in my presence," that is, with truths of faith, "like my servant Job," who did not withdraw from the truth of faith. To expiate grave sins the ancients used to offer sacrifice, and so he says, "Therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams," because they were elders of the people. Seven is the number of totality and so seven sacrifices can expiate for grave sins. But because those who lack faith ought to be reconciled to God through the faithful, he says, "Go to my servant Job," so that you may be reconciled to me by his mediation, "and offer holocausts for yourselves," so that you who have sinned may make satisfaction. But your satisfaction requires the patronage of a faithful man, and so he says, "Job, my servant, will pray for you," for he is worthy to be heard because of his faith, and so he says, "I will consider his face", by heeding his prayer, "so that your foolishness" your faithless teaching," will not be imputed to you." He explains this saying, "For you have not spoken rightly in my presence like my servant Job."

After they had received the hope of pardon, they fulfilled what he had commanded them, and so the text goes on, "Eliphaz the Temanite, Baldath of Shuhite, and Sophar the Naamathite went and did as the Lord had told them." So they were made worthy through their obedience and humility and Job's prayer for them was heard. Therefore the text next says, "and the Lord supported the person of Job," in what he prayed for his friends. Not only the humility of the friends but also his own humility lent efficacy to his prayer, and so the text continues, "The Lord also was turned," from fury to clemency, "by the penance of Job, when he prayed for his friends." For it was fitting that one who had humbly done penance for such a light sin, should also obtain pardon for others who sinned gravely.

A person's penance is more useful for himself than for others. Therefore, if the prayer and penance of Job merited the removal of divine indignation from the friends, it was even more fitting that he should be freed from adversity. Although Job did not put his hope in recovering earthly prosperity but in attaining future happiness, the Lord still also restored him abundantly to temporal prosperity, as Matthew says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all else will be given to you." (6:33) This was fitting in time according to the state of the Old Testament in which temporal goods were promised, so that in this way by the prosperity which he recovered, he would give an example to others that they might convert to God. It was also fitting to the person of Job himself, whose reputation had been sullied among other people because of the many adversities which had come upon him. Therefore, to restore his good reputation, God led him back to a state of even greater prosperity. So the text continues, "And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." The principal adversity of Job was being deserted by his friends, (19:13) and therefore he places the remedy for this adversity first when he says, "Then all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before came to him," which indicates the remembrance of his past friendship," and they ate bread with him in his house," which describes the return to the old familiarity, "and they shook their head over him," in compassion for his affliction. Since they should not only offer compassion for the afflicted but also a cure for his afflictions, they first provided a cure for his interior pain with consoling words, and so the text says, "They consoled him about all the evil which the Lord had brought upon him." Second, they showed him the remedy of assistance against his external want. Since he had both lost his animals in the fields and household furniture in the destruction of his house, they helped him in both. For the text says next, "and they each one gave him one sheep," as to animals, "and one gold ring" as to furniture