

Perplexed yet preserved

*Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me.
Job 29:2*

We find Job in this chapter, as he continues his final answer to his three miserable comforters, wishing for a return to the past, when he was respected and his integrity was acknowledged by the community. He looks upon those days as the days of God's preservation. In comparison, it is clear that in the present time he has been forsaken by his friends and remaining family. He therefore equates this condition as also being forsaken by God, and, from our text, assumes that God is no longer preserving him. His ensuing description of the former days almost smacks of boasting, but perhaps in light of the attacks from his friends, he feels a need to remind them (or himself?) of former blessings that he felt were apparent signs of God's blessing. In some ways it may be viewed as resembling the final few chapters of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Yet now in his current days, without knowing the reason for his dilemma, Job is perplexed.

Since we get to read the first two chapters, we might be tempted to join Job's "friends" and rebuke him for his complaint and assumption. Or perhaps we wish we could jump into the action and tell Job to hold on a little longer. Yet, we need not look far in our own experience to find times when we may have been guilty of similar assumptions. We too can compare difficult circumstances to past times that we viewed as blessed from the Lord and also stand perplexed. These times may rightly make us examine ourselves for a cause of lost blessing or chastening. Yet, sometimes we may simply find no clear reason for our perplexing circumstance.

In such cases, let us not assume with Job that the Lord has ceased from preserving us. The fact that we are still functioning, even with our questions and wonderings, is evidence of His preservation. We still have His word and the promise of His Spirit. We still have the privilege of prayer in the name of our Lord Jesus, and, in fact, such circumstances typically enhance our prayer life. And, just as we see Job throughout this book bob his head above the top of the water, in which he feels he's drowning, and make a sublime remark, such as "I know that my Redeemer liveth," we also can be perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, and cast down but not destroyed (II Corinthians 4:8-9). Let us continue to trust the grace and mercy of Him that is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24).