

Two songs by Pastor Fred W. Phelps:

*“O thou high exalted Savior, can it be that thou art mine? Hast thy love so fixed and changeless pitched on me to call me thine? Has Thy Father’s sovereign mercy, from eternal ages past, Placed me in that pale of favor put beyond the judgment blast? Oh such consolation bringing, what can fetch my soul away? This the Lord, has promised to me. Then what power can say me nay! Come then years of retribution, for the debts of fallen man. Mine were paid by substitution at my bleeding Surety’s hand. Come then, years of bliss and glory for His sheep, elect secure. He who chose, and called and saved them certifies they shall endure! O my soul, thy counsel taking, What more blessed than this could be? That my God, all else forsaking, finds His highest joy in Thee!”*

*“O Jesus, But for Thee alone, how lost would be my case; with naught to plead but guilty as one with Adam’s ruined race. But, lo, Thy life of righteousness, Doth mine become instead. For sovereign grace imputes it so, And quickens from the dead. And now Thy death has satisfied the debt that once I owed. Complete! Complete! the ransom’s paid; redemption by thy blood. When stars begin to fail and fall; And quakes the earth do rend; Then Thou, O Christ, wilt be my all; My Savior and my Friend.”*

The above prose was composed by Pastor Phelps some sixty (60) years ago, and has been the source of unending comfort during all those years. To the child of God (i.e., God’s Elect) nothing comforts in life or death like the plain, simple words of Scripture — honestly applied.

***“Rightly dividing the word of truth.”(2 Tim. 2:15)***

Martin Luther, a genius, and a profound scholar of the Bible, was author of scores of Bible-based books, tracks, treatises, etc. His lengthy debate with Erasmus of Rotterdam (“Free Will A Slave”) was thought by many to this day to have been his grandest work of all. (See, “De Servio Arbitrio.”) Yet, to Martin Luther, his grandest work by far, was “Luther’s Small Catechism, With Explanation.” Why? You ask? Because the Holy Ghost uses words that are plain, simple, powerful; e.g.:

***“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomesoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”(Matt. 11:25-30)***

See also, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know ... I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him ... Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And*

*whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise let us go hence.”* (John 14:1-31.) The indispensable value of the divine comfort to the servant of God may be further seen by the experience of Paul in Corinth; to wit:

**“Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf. For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end. As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.”** (2 Cor. 1:2-14)

The God of all comfort bless you. I love you. Amen.

# **“For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.” (Job 5:23).**

These words, spoken by Eliphaz the Temanite as part of his response to Job's first speech, provide rich soil in which the comforts of Saints might grow. It is tucked into some of the greatest language in all of Scripture regarding the blessings of God in the afflictions of His Elect, to wit:

***“Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue: neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.”(Job 5:17-24)***

The subject matter of this sermon is the peace of God. That *“peace of God, which passeth all understanding, [which] shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* The two clauses making up this verse express in different and beautiful figures substantially the same message of comfort for the suffering servant of God, to wit: (a) *“For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field:”* and (b) *“and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.”* Taking the first of these allegories, to be *“in league”* implies two distinct benefits. First, those with whom you are in league will not be your enemy or bring hostilities to you. In this sense, the wicked presume to be in league with death and hell, to wit:

***“Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves.”(Isa. 28:15)***

The second benefit to being in league is to gain some protections from the outward assaults of other enemies. In both of these senses, the Saints are said to *“be in league with the stones of the field.”* (Job 5:23a). To gain better comforts from these words, it is good to know more of these stones and what they import.

In simple terms they represent: (1) stones over which a man would stumble or be turned out of the way; (2) stones that naturally make it impossible to bring production from a crop field; (3) stones utilized to build up a wall for separation; and (4) stones utilized as landmarks. For those with whom the stones are in league, we find great blessings from our Father.

In the first sense, to the wicked, our blessed Saviour is *“a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.”* (1 Pet. 2:8), but of the Elect it is said:

***“For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.”  
(Psa. 91:11)***

The second and third of these stone metaphors merge in the language of our God's mercies in calling out His peculiar people and making them a choice vineyard, to wit:

***“Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes,” (Isa. 5:1-2)***

Herein you find the people of God in league with the stones of the field, they being plucked from the vineyard and used to build up a wall for protection against the assaults of the wicked one. Finally, in the fourth sense, these stones represent the ancient landmarks that represent the covenanted inheritance granted us by our Father before the world began.

Like Naboth's answer to wicked Ahab, to wit: *“The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.”* (1 Kings 21:3) We, finding ourselves in league with the stones heed the solemn commandment:

***“Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.” (Prov. 22:28)***

Similar comforts can be had in consideration of the second clause of our text, to wit: *“and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.”* (Job 5:23b). As part of the description of the peace to come to Israel in the last days, it is written:

***“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”  
(Isa. 11:6-9)***

Similarly, and in a figure, we find ourselves wrestling with wicked men who are called beasts. Consider, e.g., *“If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus,”* (1 Cor. 15:32); *“One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies.”* (Tit. 1:12); *“But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;”* (2 Pet. 2:12); and *“But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.”* (Jude 10.) But, by the mercies and graces of God, these beasts are made to be at peace with us, to wit:

***“When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” (Prov. 16:7)***

Take comfort in these blessed promises, my friends.

I love you. Amen.