

DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Third Week - Seventh Day

THE FRIENDS OF JOB

"Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place--Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great" (Job 2:11-13).

Such a man as Job had many friends. Before long the report of the extraordinary succession of calamities that had befallen one so renowned for all his possessions and so eminent for his virtues spread through all that region. It reached the ears of three of the most valued and important of his friends, and although their homes were distant from his and from each other's, they agreed to pay him a visit of condolence, joining one another on the journey to the place of his abode. Their demeanor first engages our attention.

They came to the land of Uz and drew near to the place of their friend's abode. Then they looked ahead to spot him and, though they knew his condition from the reports they had received, they hardly recognized him. The reality of his condition far exceeded their expectation. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were beyond measure grieved and astonished, and *"they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven."* We are further informed that they did not intrude themselves upon the sacred privacy of Job's grief by greetings and condolences. Their conduct was such as would in our age be called "gentlemanly," that is, showing tender regard for the feelings of others, shrinking with instinctive dread from giving offense or pain.

Job's friends also *"sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him."* This is one of those beautiful touches so true to natural feeling and which abound in the Bible. Young, in his well-known *Paraphrase of the Book of Job*, has properly described this conduct of the friends as "a debt of reverence to distress so great."

Regarding the statement about sitting upon the ground seven days and seven nights in silence, we must admit that is not to be too stringently interpreted. Rightly understood, it does not

preclude them from sleeping, eating, going about, and evening offering some slight expressions of sorrow and comfort. Rather, the three friends constantly returned to Job and spent as much of their time with him as they possibly could, but beholding his distress of mind they made no attempt to enter into conversation, argument, or discussion with him. This is quite sufficient to meet the demands of the text; and we see it in other instances of the inspired penmen.

For example, it is said that the disciples of our blessed Savior were "continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke 24:53). This clearly means that they frequented the temple with minimum intermissions. Luke also describes the aged Anna as one who "departed not from the temple but served God night and day" (Luke 2:37). Certainly this means that Anna spent the greater part of her time there, not that she was there without interruption. And we may refer to the very parallel instance to be found in St. Paul's address to the Ephesian elders, wherein he calls them to witness that for the space of three years successively he "ceased not to warn every one night and day, with tears" (Acts 20:31). Now we cannot suppose he preached for three full years non-stop; for as an eminent commentator somewhat quaintly remarked, that would have been a very long sermon indeed. The meaning is no more than that Paul was constant during the three-year span to warn and exhort the people.