

Job, XXIII - 16.

These were the words of an ancient servant of God, under a sense of his troubles and misfortunes, and the deep concern which he felt in regard to his future destiny.

His afflictions of body, mind, and estate, had softened his heart, depressed his moral nature, while the mysterious dispensations of Divine Providence, had rendered his future prospect, exceedingly gloomy and distressing.

Hence he exclaims in the language of the text - "For God &c" -

This subject will lead me to consider, what may be implied by tenderness of heart, and the means by which it is brought into exercise.

1. Tenderness of heart sometimes implies a constitutional adaptation to the exercise of acute sensibility - In this respect, it may exist with or without the influences of religion, and is frequently displayed by the untutored savage, as well as the Christian believer.

2. Tenderness of heart also refers to the softening emotions which we realize under the afflicting dispensations, and the effect is either salutary, transient, or fatal.

3. Tenderness of heart in the last place, implies the exercise of those moral feelings which we possess as subjects of God's moral government, capable of spiritual happiness in this life and a glorious immortality in a brighter & better world.

~~II~~ We now proceed to consider the Means by which the heart is made soft, tender, and Sympathetic in the Threefold Sense just described.

1. In the first place, a Constitutional tenderness, is implanted in our nature, by the Author of our existence - He has evidently wrought in the Constitution of some persons, a more amiable and affectionate disposition than is found in others - Thus He maketh the heart soft as the God of Nature

2. This natural Sensibility, is calculated to render persons much more amiable, interesting, and useful - - Some persons are ashamed of Sympathy.

3. This natural tenderness affords no argument in favor of fatalism.

4. There are circumstances calculated to soften the hardest heart - - -

II. The heart is sometimes made soft, by the afflictive dispensations of Divine Providence. To this the text directly refers —

In the midst of health & prosperity, mankind are apt to become ungrateful, hard-hearted, & forgetful of God — — — The worldly minded young man — — —

III. The heart is made soft and tender in the last place, by the renovating influence of divine grace. This is distinctly promised — "A new heart will I give you."

1. The first melting influence will produce a genuine sorrow for sin.

2. When the heart is renewed by grace divine, it will be inspired with love to God and his people — —

3. When our affections have been purified, we shall become compassionate toward our fellow beings.

4. What a happy land &c — — —