

Oh that I were as in months past (Quality: Good)

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Preacher: Barker, Charles (1913-1987)

[0 : 0 0] Job chapter 29 the second and the two following verses Job chapter 29 the second and the two following verses oh that I were as in months past as in the days when God preserved me when his candle shined upon my head and when by his light I walked through darkness as I was in the days of my youth when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle we read at the beginning of Job that in the eyes of God he was a perfect man and one would have thought the way in which he was blessed with this world's goods and with his family and being perfect in the eyes of God that he would have continued in these comforts down to his dying day but what a difference a few months makes how we may be in the spirit enjoying the things of the spirit and in a few moments those things be taken from us how we can have great riches many comforts upon this earth and in a few months to be stripped of them all and we have a very solemn warning with regard to Job and that is with regard to those gifts which the Lord gives us that they are only loaned to us that we cannot claim them or call them our own for any length of time how the Lord can take them away so suddenly and as Job as the Lord and Satan spoke to each other as thou considered my servant

Job a servant of the Lord and here we hear him saying oh that I were as in months past when Job was brought into this place we can understand the poor man's feelings can't we his health had gone his wealth had gone his family had gone his friends had gone but it wasn't those that he wanted although he'd been stripped of them that wasn't what he wanted oh that I weren't as in months past as in the days when God preserved me it was God that he wanted not the things of this present life I say what a lesson there is to be learned from this those of us who profess to know something of this God we cannot claim anything and hold anything for any length of time but there is only one thing that is so important above all the things of time and that is this knowledge of the only true God when God preserved him when God preserved him from making too much of those things which the Lord had given him

I don't believe that those things which God had given Job were preferential in Job's mind to his God Job loved his God and God loved his Job but here we see the work of Satan here we see the permissive will of God not only with regard to teaching Job but also teaching Satan and above all teaching us because this word is left on record for our instruction and also it speaks here as we purposely taken this fourth verse as I was in the days of my youth how you young friends have to be very careful with regard to the plans of this life we can see everything before us as we were in our youth this world seemed to be so wonderful didn't it it seemed as if we could make progress everything seemed to come our way and we were so easily taken up with the pleasures of it the comforts of it and everything connected with this life in our youth but how the Lord dealt with us how we would have nothing to do with him but he dealt with us in a most strange way and when the Lord deals with his people he deals with them in a very strange way a way which you would never think he shows them the vanity and the emptiness of those things which we so long for and desire and then leads us to something which is far better than anything this world can give

I believe I can speak perhaps more than any other with regard to the things of this world and the way in which they attract the way in which we can fall so easily but I can also speak of the mercy of God now Job you see he was able to look back oh that I were as in months past so he was soon brought down it wasn't a matter of years it was months that he was stripped of all that which man looks to as being of some great importance but in the previous chapter he speaks with regard to wisdom wisdom and the wisdom of God is so superior to that of man and the wisdom of God is to show us that there's something far more important than this life and then to show us in such a way that we seek after something which is far more important than this life and he gives us a touch of it those who he calls by his grace and they rejoice in it and like dear old

Job as he had all the things of this life and a good hope that he got the life to come he thought he was going to die in his nest but that was not God's ways that was Job's way but almost in a moment the Lord afflicted him stripped him of all his glory stripped him of all his wisdom and as he was looked to by others and esteemed his very esteem was taken from him and he was brought down as a poor afflicted worm so dependent upon the help of his God but what a place to be brought to be utterly dependent upon the help of your God until you're brought there you won't know whether you've got a

[8 : 48] God or not you've got to be brought there to know whether you've got a God to be made absolutely dependent upon him now it won't be necessary for the Lord to strip every one of us and deal with every one of us in exactly the same way as he dealt with Job but he will bring us to that same spot as where Job was brought and that is to be absolutely dependent upon him it says thy hold dependent on me things nor entertain a thought thy worthless schemes with mine to mix but venture to be ignored and then the hymn writer goes on to say what is it to keep close to him what is it to have that dependence upon him he says keep close to me thou helpless sheep and that's where the lord brings his people into that helpless condition that helpless sheep what a beautiful picture is set before us there how different to perhaps the way we would look at

Job but there he was a helpless sheep before that great shepherd and there was this cry still within his heart oh that I were as in months past as in the days when God preserved me or how his wife told him to curse God and die but he was preserved he was preserved from rebelling and this is not nature nature would rebel at the way in which the Lord dealt with him he would have rebelled and said well is this God is this religion I want nothing to do with it here I was with all the compass of this life I had a good hope in this life and a good hope for the life to come and now not only am I stripped of everything else in this life but I'm stripped of that communion that I had with my God place to be brought isn't it when one has known the sweet communion of God when one has walked with God when one has talked with God when one has looked upon this

God as being their God oh that I were as in months past but what a favour that Job could look back to his past some of us as we look back to our past we tremble don't we we can see things in our past that Job apparently couldn't see all he could see was the goodness of his God toward him under that blessed time that he had with his God but some of us as we look back to our past how different was our pathway to Job but have we not the same God we hope that Job had that same merciful God that God who has dealt with us as he dealt with Job and as he dealt with Satan now he was dealing with Job in a blessed way not only is it a great blessing to be shown the emptiness of this world the vanity of it when we see multitudes as far as we can tell rushing into hell so taken up with everything upon this life no thought for God no thought for eternity no thought when he guards their end all they think about is this life and the things on it dear Job although he had much in this life there was something far more important to him than that and that was his

God now as we then measure ourselves against God's word what is most important to you is it this world or is it your God it's one or the other it's a question which needs a lot of grace to answer and we need to be very honest with regard to these things because if this world is more important to us than our God we're in a very solemn position and especially as we're dying mortals and know not what a moment may bring forth but if it's this God it matters not what we may lose upon this earth what the Lord may take from us he never takes away our all said one himself he gives us still and poor

Job he still had life within his soul didn't he his poor old body it seemed as if the life was running out of that with his affliction but his soul was lively he was able to look back under a measure of faith to the time when God preserved him and if only he could feel that preserving power now even in his present position he would have been happy he felt at that moment if we could speak for Job that everything could be given up so easily oh if only we could look back to that time when God preserved us now it seems that we're coming to the end we're all ready to give up but oh that I were as in days past as in the days when God preserved me by that blessed faith so that I could trust this God when his candle shined upon my head his candle not a great light but a candle a glimmer there is no evidence in God's word that the

[15 : 31] Lord leads his people through in the brightness of his countenance it is as we read in the Corinthians through a glass darkly they see these things but oh to have a glimmer of light a candle as it were upon our head a light to shine upon the road that leads us to the Lamb now to look back then to that time when light was given when you could see the hand of God in your affairs when you felt and knew that you were preserved by God some of us can go back and say this preserved in Jesus when my feet made haste to hell and there should I have been that he's done all things well were not his love so firm and free he soon would take it Lord from me he would and here we can prove the faithfulness of God if ever a man walked that pathway we did but how we can see the way in which the

Lord does work although we may have gone as it were head long into hell apart from the grace of God yet dear Job he was preserved he still had that faith preserved in him and he still looked back upon that time when that light was given don't despise a glimmer of hope however small that hope may be it may be but a glimmer but to have it is a great blessing don't expect the Lord to shine upon your pathway in such a way that you can have clear evidences of the pathway to heaven where you can look to the future and say yes I to the end shall endure assure us the earnest is given because we can't we don't know what's before us and we're ever dependent upon the Lord but there are those times of assurance when in deep distress we've been able to say yes we shall endure but only as the Lord preserves us only as the

Lord keeps us and only as the Lord goes before us when his candle shined upon my head when the Lord could see me as it were when I stood out above the multitude when the Lord saw me so different to anyone else he could see his servant Job when his candle was upon my head not only did that have an effect you see upon Job it had effect upon the Lord the Lord could see him and whatever condition Job was brought into the Lord knew it and the Lord watched over Job every moment of his life beginning to end and the Lord still watches over his people from beginning to end it's like a candle that he can see them in this dark evil world and he can see that little faith he can see that little hope he can see that little prayer he can see them groping along in that little light when the candle when the candle shined upon my head and when by his light

I walked through darkness all the darkness of this world the darkness of evil and when we knew nothing of this candle upon our head the Lord did how he as it were separated his people how he gave them that mark and that evidence that not only could they be seen by him but they are seen by the world and how we need to be very careful with regard to this the way in which we walk in darkness we are surrounded by the evils of darkness we are watched by the world we have a profession of religion and people watch us and they compare us perhaps with other so called Christians and they can see perhaps a difference and as we speak to them they realise that there is a difference between us and the so called

Christian world but if we are truly a Christian in the true sense of the word it's not something of our own making it's something which the Lord has done for us the term Christian is used so lightly today that anyone who is a citizen of this land of ours is a Christian because it was and is still called the Christian nation but there's nothing in a name it's what that name really means and to be a Christian it's to be one who is taught by the Lord the same as Job was one whose the Lord puts a candle as it were upon their head that he sees them the world sees them and they see this God and they are able to walk through darkness some of the dark places some of the Lord's people have been in when we come to consider John

[21 : 16] Newton to the lengths that he went to and yet how he was able to pen those beautiful lines amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me John Newton could tell much but he gone to his God and he did didn't he how he was raised up and how dear Job how he longed for that that his name might be written in the rock that it might be engraved with a pen but little did he know that all his experience would not be upon a rock where it would be subject to the weather and the elements where it would eventually be destroyed but written in God's word those desires which Job had you know were desires from the Lord and the Lord satisfies the desires of every living thing when the

Lord's people have living desires they are desires which the Lord gives them he puts those desires within their heart and even this desire oh that I were as in months past why why because the Lord's people the Lord has favoured them and as they look back upon those times when the Lord favoured them and then they are brought into a time of darkness a time when it appears and I stress that word appears because it only appears that the Lord has forgotten them the Lord is no more gracious toward them but this God is exactly the same to Job his love was the same to Job in Job's prosperity the same as it was in Job's adversity and the love of God to his people is always the same it's constant whether in times of prosperity or times of adversity the love of God is always the same to his people but

Job says oh that I was not that God was oh that I was as in months past and then he speaks about his God and when this candle shined upon his head and when by his light I walked through darkness as I was in the days of my youth when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle the secret of God everything connected with God is a secret to our fallen nature with all the evidences that man has with all the proof that man has with regard to God and the creation it's still a secret men today are spending millions and millions of pounds trying to find out the secret of God and they're wasting their time wasting their money where the secret of

God is revealed to his people one doesn't have to be intelligent naturally speaking to know the secret of God how the Lord chooses the most unlikely characters the dying thief was one the secret of God was revealed to him those women Mary Magdalene the secret of God was revealed to her those wretched characters poor legion with all this sin the secret of God was revealed to him not many wise not many noval chosen but to know something of the secret of God to know something of his power to know something of what he can do to know that he has a people these are all secrets to those who know him not but Job knew something of the secret the secret of God was upon my tabernacle it was upon him the Lord had chosen him out and he knew it he has secret communion with his

God God has secret communion with him is yours a secret religion it's fashionable today to let everybody see your religion and to speak about it to have an outward religion not an inward but a secret religion is it and to have this secret of God is that which goes on within the heart it's not that which is seen by men men like to put on a big show don't they and how they distort their faces and how they dress a certain way to be seen and heard of men it's not the way of God God deals secretly within the heart and as the Lord deals secretly with his people so there's that secret going out after them and this was a secret desire of Job which has been exposed it's no longer a secret because it is the pathway of all the

[26 : 53] Lord's people oh that I were as in months past can you go back to a time when the secret of the Lord was upon your head when you walked with your God when you felt such sweet communion with his God he was everything to you when you thought that you would die in your nest when you never gave it a thought that your hope would be taken that you would be brought into doubt even with regard to your standing before God because of your sinnership as you came under the tempter's power when you were ready to give everything up but how the Lord preserved you now the Lord preserved you and however low you're brought whatever doubts you're brought into yet there is this remaining all the time oh that I were as in months past when faith was strong when I could defy the greatest enemy of

God when I could stand firm in those things which the Lord had taught me but now I tremble now I feel this weakness now doubt is brought upon my pathway because of my wretched nature I look back and I it seems as if all these things were against me why the old patriarch felt the same thing didn't he he was stripped of his children it seems as if everything was going against him but when he saw the wagons what a difference it made how he said it's enough it's enough and when the Lord comes and gives you some visible token of his love and his mercy towards you you'll say it's enough the Lord are in you his loving kindness towards you you'll say it's enough we come to the Lord we plead Lord give us another token Lord give me another confirmation

Lord give me another proof you seem to be so far off and it seems as if your senses are so great and instead of getting better you're like the woman with the issue of blood you spend all that you can and you rather grow worse oh that I were as in days past when I wasn't as weak as I am now can't you hear that dear woman with the issue of blood saying that why before her very life as it were was flowing from her because there's life in the blood and there she was in a weak condition but by faith the Lord enabled her to push through all the obstacles the secret of the Lord was with her there was something secret going on with that woman although she was so weak she was strong in faith she was able to push through all those multitudes and all those things in her way and at last she got to where she wanted is your faith as strong as that woman's if so you'll get where you want and where was that she wanted to get to

Jesus she wanted to touch him she wanted to attract him she wanted to draw his attention to her state and her condition and who gave her that energy and that desire by the Lord himself and the Lord knew everything about her the Lord knew where she was why because there was a candle upon her head he could see her in that multitude he knew what was going on he knew who touched him but how that poor woman how she came trembling and confessed oh that I were as in months past when we had such faith when we could press through all the doubts all the fears all the obstacles when we could walk so comfortably and with joy in the commands of the

Lord how we could follow the Lord believing in what the Lord had done for our souls oh that I were as in months past as in the days when God preserved me when his candle shined upon my head and when by his light I walked through darkness when these very devils that we'd been mixing with and how we were able to tell them perhaps a little of what the Lord was doing and how the Lord had appeared for us and how we were able as it were to find comfort in a time of trial and tribulation and how we could bless the Lord and praise the Lord and how we went in the joy of the Lord but what a change has taken place to be stripped of all these things all these comforts and it would appear almost all of his faith it seemed all his friends well they were bigots really weren't they they were trusting in something regarding their flesh if we look at it closely his friends knew very much very little with regard to the ways of

[32 : 33] God by experience they had a good head knowledge of it or they knew that which was right they had a certain amount of natural wisdom but the reality of these things is secret to the Lord and we should be stripped of trusting in our nearest and dearest and we should have to trust in the Lord and the Lord alone when you come to a dying bed your nearest and dearest won't be any good to you then even that one who you walk so closely with upon the face of this earth and perhaps has such sweet communion with will be no use to you then but to have this experience oh that I were as in days passed that the Lord would come the Lord would reveal himself to me yet again now as I was then in the days of my youth what a blessing it was to Job to be able to look back upon his youth with a certain amount of pleasure and the way in which the

Lord was with him not many could do this not many bear the yoke in their youth but it's a great blessing to know anything of the Lord in our youth even those pricks of conscience those pricks that we found it very hard to kick against and yet kick we did and then the Lord gradually brought us into the knowledge and the secret of God but in his youth as he was able to look back to it or was he referring to the youth of his calling in the early days of his experience it's nice when we can look back to the youth of the new birth when we were born as it were quickened into divine life to look back to that time when the things were made so clear to us things are much clearer when we are young things we can see in such a different way when we are young we are able to do things so much easier when we are young and so it is spiritually as one is brought into the light of the blessed gospel as they are brought into the reality the youth of experience the youth of hope the youth of blessing and when they are able as it were to feed upon the pure milk of the word as yet they have been brought into trial their faith hasn't been tested not like poor

Job's but they are able to look back to that time of their youth when the Lord first began in their souls what a blessed time that was when they were raised as it were up above all their sin above all the childhood and the teaching of the law and when they saw a precious Christ that first experience of the hope within as I was in the days of my youth when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle he was reminded that this body was merely a tabernacle not a temple the tabernacle was moved it was taken down the temple was a permanent building and we want to remember this that we have a tabernacle and that tabernacle is like the tabernacle that the children of

Israel had through the wilderness it went where they went but there were some precious things in that tabernacle things which God had ordained the commands of God had been fulfilled in that tabernacle and so it is spiritually within the child of God this body of sin and death is a tabernacle the commands of God are fulfilled his purposes his secrets are revealed but until the temple came you see there was that veil in the temple but how that was rent and then that entering into the holy of holies and when the child of God as he's brought into that temple that building not made with hands eternal in the heavens when that will be rent the veil of the temple will be rent and when that spirit will enter into the holiest of holies never again to depart death we know that Christ is the only way of salvation but death is the only way of entering into the fullness of it now then

Job doubtless as he was taught by God in the early days and went back to look back upon it death was not that fearful monster that it is to the world he was able to find comfort and hope in his death he looked perhaps in his misery with anticipation to his death when he would leave this tabernacle but as I was in the days of my youth when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle and then he goes on about his children being with him and how he received comfort from his children the last time went on his children were no longer a comfort or how poor old Jacob how he had to suffer because of his children and how many of the Lord's dear people have had to suffer because of their children but it's all part of the way in which the Lord is leading his people and how some of those children which have been the greatest rebels have been brought down and proved to be the greatest comfort to some of the

[38 : 53] Lord's people how it was in the case of Warburton with his son how he was a rebel how he kicked against religion and everything connected with it but how he in his latter days he was such a comfort to his father and therefore the secret of these things is only known to the Lord all we can see is the immediate circumstances those things which are around us and we come to a conclusion don't we before we should and it's wrong for us to come to any conclusion however clear it may appear to us until the Lord reveals it let us hear the conclusion of the whole matters of the preacher and that's what we want is the conclusion of the whole matter and not to come to some conclusion half way through well now here is Job then how he's looking back oh that I were as in months past it's a good prayer it's a good place to be brought but how we as we go on through Job we find that his latter day was far better than the beginning how he wanted to go back to the beginning was Job misguided here was his wisdom lacking something there's something wrong isn't there if we want to go back to the beginning of that spiritual birth it's nice when we can go back and see the evidence but if it's true and if we have the substance of it surely it's the end we should be anticipating not having a desire to go back to the beginning of it although isn't it not by going back to the beginning at the very end of it becomes more precious as the Lord by his help and by his grace reveals to us the reality of our beginning because if the beginning is right the end must be right but if the beginning is wrong well then the end will be wrong and so it is good wisdom sound wisdom to go back to the beginning and to beg of the

Lord to show us with regard to our beginning whether it was right however convinced we may have been with regard to it and some of us were fairly convinced with regard to our beginning but though that I were as in months past because that even the beginning the comfort the sweetness the reality of it the blessedness of it is not felt today as it was then and not only that there is this concern we're so much farther upon the road so much nearer the end aren't we so far away from the beginning almost near the end now and so we come and say Lord was the beginning right was my beginning right was I really called by grace am I one that's just been brought up in a religious circle and had I been brought up under the so called Roman church would I have been a

Romanist or a Buddhist or some other sect have I got some clear evidence that the Lord has called me by his grace and revealed his secret in me oh that I were as in days past in months past when the candle of God was upon my head and I could see as it were those things that the Lord had clearly done although the light was not as clear as I would have liked yet there was that evidence and then how he speaks of those who looked upon him and revered him but now they looked upon him with shame the longer we go on in our profession the few will become our friends have you proved that in the early days you might have many friends but as you go on you'll find your friends will become less and less the older you get you'll find your friends will become less there'll be those perhaps who you've walked with who are now in glory and therefore they're less in that respect and as you've been taught by the Lord and as the secret of the Lord has been revealed to you you'll find it's not so easy to make friends with the world it's not so easy to make friends with the neighbours is it which perhaps you did at one time it's not so easy to make friends of others who know not this God and therefore you have less friends and there's very few today who know anything of the experience of the

Lord's people very few as many make a profession but very few know the possession of it and this is the concern as to whether we have the possession of it and there will be this constant desire within our heart Lord take me back to the beginning oh that I work as in days past give me as it were that light again that I might retrace my life that quickening power those evidences those comforts those blessings that union that communion that I had in those days so much has happened since so many sins have covered up those blessed times my faith seems to have almost disappeared but I still have this little bit of faith Lord oh that I work as in months past as in the days when God preserved me

Lord don't let me fall give me that grace to endure unto the end you know the Lord did didn't he how the Lord continued to preserve Job and how he brought him right down to the end and how Job was able to rejoice in those things and the Lord even in a providential way gave Job made up to Job all that he lost the children of God don't lose a thing upon this earth whatever the Lord may take away from them he'll make it up to them in some other way if he takes away your providences he'll make it up to you in grace and I'm sure you'd rather have it made up to you in grace than in providence but even in providence the Lord makes it up to his people it's a great providence isn't it to know something of this God as it's a great providence to know something of this

[46 : 10] God when others have not been led this way but it's more blessed to know him by experience is there experience in providence because if there's experience in your providence that's grace you see people have providence without experience but if you have providence and experience well then that's grace the experience of God there's experiences where you experience the power of God where you experience your heart going out after God and in his providences although his providences were stripped from him he wanted his God more than the things of this present life so may the Lord then so give us an insight into these secret things that it might be our desire to seek after the things of God more than the things of time we must leave it may the

Lord have his blessing Amen be part of Thank you.