

A Guide To The Reader

Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.

Job 13

13.1-2. The friends in what they have spoken so far have conveyed nothing new to Job. It is basic theology, common to all who rightly have a monotheistic view of God. All their words are missing the point that Job is not pleading his own righteousness but God's provision of a sinner's righteousness by the shedding of blood of an innocent victim, foreshadowing Christ.

13.3. He has been moved by the Spirit of God Himself to desire more than head knowledge, more than a knowledge about God, but a knowledge of God Himself, which is far different. Then, as now, "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit" (Galatians 4.29). Before the fall the Lord walked in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day with Adam and Eve. But this close fellowship was broken by their rebellion. When the Lord seeks to renew such a fellowship deep in the spirit of Job (but not visibly), because of his sin he finds it intolerable. "Let me alone; for my days are vanity. What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him? And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment? How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone...?" (7.16-19) "And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? (14.3).

Refining the dross from the lives of true believers is a difficult process to go through, especially if the intimate comfort of the Saviour is withdrawn. The Father's comfort was withdrawn from Christ at Calvary while He bore wrath to atone for our sins, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27.46); He has been there before us and in our admittedly lesser, but very real, experiences we may seek His presence. So Job desires actual fellowship, an audience with God. He is very bold, for He desires to reason with Him. But it is not unreasonable for a man to retain his conscience inviolate before the God who gave it, against the insinuations of men. "I will maintain mine own ways before him" (verse 15). While Job is not perfect He knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that in the matter of atonement for sin, and therefore with a covering from the wrath of God, He may appear before Him safely.

13. 4-5. It is unlikely that these men were accustomed to being called liars. When Eliphaz responds in chapter 15 something of his simmering exasperation may be felt:- "thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity" (15.5). Job accuses them, despite their status as leaders, of being professionally incompetent "physicians of no value" in the realm of spiritual help. "Deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3.13) as the New Testament puts it of a later generation acting on similar if not identical principles.

13.6. What follows are reasonings and pleadings. The two are intertwined a little, but generally reasonings to verse 18 and pleadings for the remainder of the chapter. Reasonings and pleadings form much of our approach to the living God in Christ; reasonings and pleadings form much of our approach to men by the gospel. The acceptance of the gospel is in essence what he is pleading for here.

13.7-8. His reasoning begins with their right or authority to take God's part. In Romans 3.5-8 Paul proves that the ways of the righteous God are not prospered by unrighteous men else it would be true, if pressed to its logical conclusion, "let us do evil that good may come" which God forbid. The wicked insinuations of the friends cannot prepare the soil of Job's heart to receive their message and proves it an untrue theology. "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matthew 7.16). If God accepts no man's person (Galatians 2.6) even if they are in authority, is it not arrogance in the friends to contend for God? When untrue theology is allied with personal insult and abuse to seek to gain the point this is no conduit for the Holy Spirit's working.

"Will ye accept his person?" The question is much rather "will God accept theirs?" They take too much upon themselves who argue their theology forcefully yet have not the saving faith which comes only through the blood of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

13.9. Now the one who is to speak for God must expect to be searched in his innermost being, convicted of sin and cleansed before embarking on such a course if so called. Anything less is mockery and deceit.

13.10-11. So now Job proceeds to let them see what insinuations are like when the boot is on the other foot. Do they secretly accept persons, that is, deal unfairly with some through favouritism? He is not saying that they do; only, how would they like to be accused of it, if they knew it to be untrue? Should not God's greatness make them reticent to speak critical words and should they not dread it in case the same searching of conscience be turned upon themselves?

13.12. In later years, perhaps interpreting this passage, Isaiah wrote (44.20) "He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" referring to the making of an idol and the kindling of a fire from the same timber, cedar, cypress or oak (44.13-20). Ashes are dry; all that remain of some living object after the destruction by fire. The friends' remembrances of Job's life, his industry, his friendship are dry without the juice of life. They speak as those who forget the real live Job and what made him what he was. They have no Holy Spirit in them, being mere clay or dust.

13.13-14. If these are their credentials Job wants none of them. He knows he is safe under the blood of the sacrifices, just with God and so is encouraged (by the Spirit, it may be added, though he, perhaps, knows it not) to let come on him what will. He will take his life in his hand. He will venture out in faith on the basis of the Lord's prior dealings with him, and we shall see as the next few chapters unfold that new revelation is vouchsafed to him, a new understanding is given. To bite oneself is to inflict self-hurt; Job is prepared to risk that.

13.15. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Here is faith's summit. Even if the Lord slay him, that is to bring a premature death upon him in judgment for his stepping out of line, Job would still trust that the righteous God would not have dealt unrighteously with him and would still have some purpose for him. This verse could be considered as the first inklings of everlasting life which will soon come to the fore, if we interpret it as meaning "I will trust him after I am slain as well as before".

"But I will maintain mine own ways before him." A man does rightly not to violate his own conscience. Of course, a person's conscience may be fallen like the rest of him; but the image of God is not totally defaced and the Lord does speak through a man's conscience. If a person knows he/she is in the right, he should not plead guilty to escape the bother, the trauma even, of investigation and trial. Certainly not, when it is God who is doing the searching. Men may twist evidence to suit themselves and their corrupt ways; but when it is God we are dealing with we need not fear. God will remove whatever of dross attaches to our conscience; but if it is essentially unsullied in the matter at issue He will note that.

13.16. "He also shall be my salvation." The exalted tone of verse 15 continues here. Faith and belief are firm, hand in hand. He trusts and believes and therefore speaks (Psalm 116.10). Salvation speaks of deliverance, of rescue. In this life and for eternity. Job has reached this affirmation, and though it gets submerged a little by thoughts which run counter to the truth, it will keep resurfacing until the great affirmation in 19.25-26, "I know that my redeemer liveth...and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

A hypocrite is an actor, maybe a consummate actor, but, however good, is still playing a part. The part he plays is not his real life. We are to be judged not on our "performance" but on the inner reality of our soul, the fountain of all we like to do, or say or desire.

13.17-18. He invites the comforters to digest what he has said, its significance rather than the mere words on which his argument is based. He has spoken of faith, salvation and perhaps eternal life. These are mighty things. He has declared them logically as the Holy Spirit has enabled him to formulate them in an orderly way, for God is a God of order, and reason.

13.19. In accordance with verse 6 Job moves from reasonings to pleadings and invites his friends to plead with him not against him. Job has such an impulse within him that he feels that if he doesn't cease speculating and instead have an actual audience with God and plead his case in His presence he must expire from inward pressure.

13.20-22. At this point Job is calling for a change of attitude in his friends. It does not happen until the Lord intervenes as recorded in chapter 42. Only the Lord can break the stony heart or open the eyes to the understanding of spiritual things. If they can't deal respectfully with him, he desires that, friends though they have been in the past, they should go home. He desires that a new attitude should be in contrast to their former aggressiveness (their hand seemed to him to be against him) and oppression (their continual affirmation that his intense suffering was linked to hidden gross sin). Then there might be meaningful two-way conversation to mutual benefit.

13.23-25. As justification for his desire for a changed approach he asks some pertinent questions concerning their former approach and explains the detrimental effects it had had upon him. Firstly (verse 23), instead of speaking in generalities he asks them to substantiate their accusations. Spell out his sins in specific detail; categorize them instead of making unsubstantiated statements. Secondly (verse 24), he asks them why from being his closest friends they have turned into opponents. Thirdly (verse 25), he asks why they take advantage of his weakness and decay to bring such weighty pressure upon him. Verse 23 is elaborated by verse 26; 24 by 27; and 25 by 28.

13.26-28. The reason Job gives for desiring them to be specific rather than making vague allegations is not so much that they have written, but that they might subsequently write calumniating things against him after his death as evidence of their own correctness. As for the iniquities of his youth, they are common to all men, the friends not excepted as they very well know, and, in Job's case, have long since been forgiven.

Their change of attitude from friendship towards him to hostility is described by three pictures. He is made a public ridicule; they are like inspectors or detectives leaving no stone unturned in an attempt to uncover some sin; they are making plaster casts of his footprints which would ordinarily have soon have vanished; that is, lighting upon his momentary and fleeting sins and making them a permanent stain upon his character when clearly these could not be the reason for so great affliction.

The falling leaf is decayed and finished; decaying flesh is about to die; the moth eaten garment will never again be worn. Why bother with them further? Why spend so much labour on things unsubstantial and about to pass away?