

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 15

15.1-3. The elevated meditative prayer of Job as recorded in chapter 14 together with his other statements of chapters 12 & 13 is dismissed by Eliphaz (doubtless representing all the others) as vain knowledge, wind and unprofitable talk. "As then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now" (Galatians 4.29), However, there is reason to understand from the outcome recorded in chapter 42 that the state of Eliphaz and the friends at this point is that of the elect before salvation. As unsaved at this juncture, he and they argue on the side of the unredeemed.

15.4. It is an appalling thing to Eliphaz that Job should utter such words as, for example, 13.14, "Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand?" This God-fearer with man-made solemnity, but not the freedom of a child of God, is in high dudgeon that Job should cast off fear and restrain prayer before God. Actually, Job's prayer is in no way inhibited nor confined nor does the Lord fail to answer it, as we have seen in His opening of Job's eyes ever so slightly (at this stage) to the resurrection of the body.

15.5-6. If the Lord says, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant" (Luke 19.22) that is greatly to be feared. But if as here and in Matthew 26.65, where it is recorded of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, "He hath spoken blasphemy...behold now ye have heard his blasphemy" it is merely the perception of sinful men, though claiming to be God-fearers, it is to be dismissed as way off the mark, while the imprecation is not to be at all dreaded. Indeed, as the Saviour declared, it may be heightened to such a pitch that "whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. All these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16.2-3).

15.7. "Art thou the first man that was born?" Eliphaz is declaring that Job must not plead for nor look for special revelation. The traditions and knowledge that sufficed earlier generations should suffice him as it sufficed them. But at that time scripture was still being revealed and formulated. There had been no incrypturation of the doctrine of the resurrection of the body at this time (if the book of Job is indeed the earliest book) though doubtless it had been revealed to Seth (probably through Adam) and many of his spiritual descendants.

Everything that we need to know for salvation and the heavenly walk is now revealed to us in a completed Bible. It could indeed be justly alleged of us, if we want to know what scripture does not reveal, that the consolations of God are too small for us. As recipients of the completed scriptures from Genesis to Revelation (without the apocrypha which is uninspired) there may be things yet to be revealed to us because we do not wholly know what is already

revealed in the same scriptures. As David prayed (Psalm 61.7) “O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him.” As we meditate in the scriptures, a mercy and truth of which we have previously been unaware may be graciously revealed unto us. But we are not to desire knowledge of that which the scriptures do not reveal. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” (Deuteronomy 29.29).

15.8. “Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?” Both sides accuse the other of thinking they alone had the truth. You recall Job’s own words concerning the comforters, “no doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you” (12.2). If we finally have to agree to differ with anyone, then everything will ultimately turn on the truth, the everlasting validity, of that in which we put our trust. We know, of course, that Job was on the surer foundation here

15.9. “What knowest thou, that we know not?” In terms of creation and providence the one side had as much access to the truth as the other, though each side may not have appropriated it as they might. But in terms of the knowledge of the way of salvation, this (through his understanding of the significance of the burnt offerings which he willingly brought) Job did possess which the God-fearing friends did not. They were living in the darkness of a merely moral law of uprightness.

15.10. We know from Genesis 36.10-12 that Eliphaz is the son of Esau and the father of the Temanites and the Amalekites. From Genesis 36.17 we see that he had a brother Reuel, who had a son named Zerah. His son (36.33) Jobab (very likely our Job, there is no better explanation of his origin) became, it would appear, the chief duke (he reigned) of Edom based on his home town of Bozrah. He was succeeded by a Temanite. Job (if Jobab be the same) is two generations younger than Eliphaz, so we can understand the force of his words, “with us are both the grayheaded and very aged men, much elder than thy father”. Eliphaz may mean that they are still alive by saying, “with us,” or that, though they are dead, the family tradition is preserved among them.

Tradition (which means that which is handed on or handed down) is fine if it is right in the first place and has not been subtly changed by succeeding generations. As Jesus showed, the great tendency of tradition is to become a substitute for the words of the living God. “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?...ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matthew 15.3,6).

15.11. “Are the consolations of God small with thee?” The comforts of God are not simply adequate but superabounding. They are multiplied a hundredfold and out of all proportion to our misery to lift us while in it and sometimes from it. Led by the Spirit on our behalf, on behalf of all later generations, Job knows there is something more than what has hitherto been fully revealed; or, if fully revealed to one and another, not yet written down, inscripturated. It was not yet his experience, nor had he come across it in any holy writings anywhere. So it was legitimate for him under the Spirit’s guidance to move tentatively forward; “there is hope of a tree...” (14.7). It is not legitimate for us to desire that which the scriptures have not revealed, as we have seen. But Eliphaz was resting in that which could not satisfy the soul and so he was jealous of such spiritual seeking.

Jesus says to our generation of believers, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14.16). While His comfort may be felt, it is mediated by bringing the scriptures of truth home to our hearts. Such consolations are not small with us.

15.11-13. The four questions, commencing with “are the consolations of God small with thee?” are, in fact, hostile questions implying, as always, that there is a secret evil in Job’s heart. To Eliphaz, who frames the questions in this biased way, it seems consistent that Job has one secret, gross and hidden sin which will manifest itself naturally in all these different ways implied by the nature of his questions. Even the fifth question “what is man?...” (15.14) is framed in a hostile way.

15.14-15. Eliphaz has a right view of the corrupt nature of natural man, born of a woman, successor to Eve who was the first to sin. And, of course Job has no dispute with this. No wonder he begins his reply in 16.2 with, “I have heard many such things.” This is common ground. The language of Eliphaz, is far too generalised when he declares, “Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints.” Unbeknown to himself, has the Lord not put his trust in Job before Satan, that Job would not curse God even in this sorest of trials? Yet there is, of course, truth in the statement as John 2.23-25 illustrates, “...many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man”. The implication is that these were not real believers. It seems that the truth is that the Lord who knows the heart distinguishes clearly between real saints and false believers. God trusted Job; and as to Paul, he writes (1 Timothy 1.12), I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry”. Even though an imputed faithfulness (counted, reckoned) there is a real trust spoken of here.

Eliphaz speaks also of “saints” in 5.1. Psalm 89 also has two mentions of them. In verse 5 “and the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints” and verse 7, “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints”. In each case the reference seems to be to God fearers; the use of the word by the Holy Spirit probably indicates full believers in the truest and best sense of faith in Christ. Saints are sinners saved by grace and remain sinners.

15.16. David says of God, “thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32.5). This speaks expressively of his understanding of the sinfulness of his sin, and of that sin which is ensconced in our depraved nature. It is indeed a vivid expression that man “drinketh iniquity like water.” It is his life-sustaining element; frequently indulged in and in great quantity. But Job is redeemed and in Christ not Adam. The matter is true but, once again, the implication is not.

Satan and the fallen angels have stained heavenly places. Mankind has defiled the earth. Job has played his part in that defilement, but his sins have been blotted out.

15.17-18. John declares, “that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life...that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have

fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1.1,3).

It is good to share and to instruct in the things we have seen and heard and know. It ministers fellowship. But, of course, John had seen the Saviour and known Him during His life on earth.

Eliphaz, though commendably desirous of sharing his knowledge, can only share and teach monotheistic principles. They do not save, as the unbelief of the scribes and Pharisees shows clearly. So, once again, we see from Eliphaz unsaved principles of knowledge and in Job the principles of saving faith. The Bible indeed preserves what wise men have taught; these very words of Eliphaz are preserved. But they are to be evaluated under the leading of the Holy Spirit not followed slavishly.

15.19. This is an intriguing verse. The reference may be to Noah and his family and the covenant which the Lord made when there was no other human life. The wise men may be the descendants of Shem. Ultimately, its fulfilment is in the words of the Saviour, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5.5) and also in glory (Revelation 22.14-15), “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie”. The earth, and certainly the new heavens and the new earth belong to the born again; and no unbeliever will ultimately be among them. Isaiah takes up this truth, “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: and they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35.8-10).

15.20-35. The remainder of Eliphaz’ speech concerns the reward of the wicked, and is, in places, an outstanding utterance. These God-fearing men were not ignorant men. However, the whole passage is once again, and to Job’s misery, shot through with the implication that Job is, in his hidden way, such a wicked man as is here described and that one or all of the threatenings spoken of will apply to him. No wonder Job exclaims in the next chapter “shall vain words have an end?...I also could speak as ye do” (16.3-4).

However, the problem addressed by Eliphaz is a real one for believers when they see actually wicked men prospering, and it is well at this juncture to reacquaint ourselves with Psalm 73.

The number of our years (15.20) is hidden to us all. However, when the conscience of a wicked man probes him, he is worried lest he should soon meet his Maker, though without wishing to reform; and he is troubled lest he should not live long enough to enjoy his riches to the full. “Thou fool” (Luke 12.20). If profit-making or profiteering is our main aim then it is accompanied by much pain. True work is accompanied by the sweat of our brow; wicked work has the pain of anguish. If it be true of a drunkard, “Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babblings? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?” (Proverbs 23.29) then there are corresponding miseries for the wicked, whether

drunks or not, in the fleeting nature of their gain, the prospect of losing it all or not being well enough to enjoy it, and the ultimate terror of eternal condemnation. For a believer, “the blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it” (Proverbs 10.22).

If a calamity comes upon a believer he/she knows that it is for refinement; a chastisement, not a destruction; in love, not in opposition. But when the destroyer comes upon the wicked in his prosperity he loses all hope and knows that his doom is writ and has already begun. This is a dreadful state and unless there be a turning to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ there is no hope ‘ere half his days.

Verse 24 pictures a king, with right on his side, marshalling his forces in full view of a terrified enemy, effectively defeated already by the sight. The wicked man is defeated already in face of the LORD’s displeasure revealed in an initial calamity. It is the LORD against Whom he has rebelled in seeking his gain, as likely as not illegitimately.

“Neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth” (29). This expression aptly describes the frustration, the oppression of the wicked man because he knows his “empire” must come to an end all too soon. Whoever we are, to the extent that our joys are on earth and not in heaven we shall be overshadowed by sadness. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3.1-2).

“The breath of his mouth” – that is the LORD’s mouth. A very concise expression for the word of the Lord empowered by His Spirit. The word of the Lord is at all times energized by the Holy Spirit; the inscripturated word, the Bible, is God’s very utterance to us and on each occasion, and in every place where it is received, is always accompanied with power. “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55.11). It is so, even in notes such as these where the scriptures are quoted, if He please to create a willing heart in the reader to receive them.

Deceit (31,35) - deceitfulness and being deceived – is the mark of Satan’s activities, for he is the father of lies in many ways. Vanity is often a description of idol worship as the supreme expression of any sort of empty, meaningless activity. Eliphaz’ warning and pleading note in verse 31 would have much to commend it were it not for the implication he has concerning Job always in the forefront of his mind. We would call it “getting at” someone – it is not dispassionate pleading; though it may serve that purpose for us now all these centuries away and the Lord may please to use it to the saving of an overwhelmed sinner. “Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity.”