

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 17

17.1. Job considers himself now to be at death's door. Maybe it is now an effort to breathe, and life all but extinguished. Still alive, but hardly. When he speaks of "graves" (in the plural) it is a not dissimilar thought from that of Genesis 15.15 "thou shalt go to thy fathers". In such a state he makes an urgent appeal to the Lord.

17.2. His perception is that even at this late stage he is being mocked by his friends. Everything that he observes about them, their whole stance towards him, is nothing but provocation. Call off these hounds is his plea.

17.3. There is only one Surety for men with God, and that is the God-man, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Lay down" means something like "enact." Lay down a ruling, a decree. Establish the Saviour as my Mediator – no one else is willing; no one else will do. Let Him (in my spirit) "shake hands" with me, assure me of sins forgiven and of eternal life and give me a renewed hope in death.

17.4. Job declares to the Lord that despite his friends' words, in the matter of an evangelical faith these God-fearing men, like the Pharisees of the Saviour's day on earth, were blind. "And some of the Pharisees which were with him...said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see: therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9.40-41). They will not be commended. "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Corinthians 10.18).

17.5. The Pharisees sent their disciples with the Herodians to the Lord Jesus Christ, saying, "Master we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men..." (Matthew 22.16). These things were true enough, but were a prelude to an attempt to entangle Him in his talk. Elihu later speaks (32.22) as if the comforters had bestowed flattering titles upon Job. Perhaps an expression such as Eliphaz made in 15.2 was interpreted as flattery, "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge" speaking of Job as a wise man in order to induce him to think more highly of himself than he ought to think and therefore be in danger of God's judgment. Flattery reveals a judicial blindness which the next generation might learn also.

17.6. Our translators have interpreted this verse by their translation to mean that Job's state has been utterly reversed. He is now publicly scorned, whereas once he was a very symbol of happiness. If we take the reading in the margin "before them" then we have not so much Job's reversal of fortunes emphasized, but as an emphasis on the degradation of his present

condition. A byword to be lashed with the tongue, a tabret to be beaten; for a tabret is a drum. The Greek word for drummed is used at Hebrews 11.35. "others were tortured," literally "others were drummed".

17.7. Tears blind his eyes, they are so thick and fast. The same sorrow lays waste his limbs – they are a shadow of their former selves. Muscle wastage is a consequence of the physical inactivity his disease has induced.

17.8-9. The injustice of his treatment by the comforters, who have been terrier-like in their implied and snide assumptions even at such a late stage of Job's life, will galvanize the true believer. They will be so amazed at their behaviour as to see what hypocrites they are. "The righteous also shall hold on his way." It will give momentum to the truly saved believer, Job may even be talking about himself, to continue in his faith to the very end. "Having a good conscience that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ" (1 Peter 3.16). Giving up is not an option for a believer; indeed, His very faith impels him. Faith is the victory; "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5.4). "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deuteronomy 33.25).

"He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Solomon puts it, "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4.18).

17.10. Solomon continues in Proverbs 4.19, "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." The comforters need to be converted without delay, now. For they outvie each other in their unwise assumptions issuing from unsaved hearts.

17.11-12. But Job is now, as he thinks, in his final moments upon earth. All his ideals, plans and desires are finished – everything he had hoped for. His very thoughts, perhaps his concentration span by reason of pain, are of looking back to the past rather than looking forward. Ideals, plans, desires – these turn night into day; but now it is like a short winter's day, darkness prevails. Without the certainty of eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord the approaching day of death has a finality about it which increasingly causes apprehension to the human spirit the nearer that day approaches.

17.13. Job insists he has nothing more than death to expect. "I have made my bed in darkness" suggests that he is ready to lie down and die. David seems to echo this expression, but with a triumphant anticipation, "if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there" (Psalm 139.8). And equally triumphantly but with a different application, "The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness" (Psalm 41.3).

17.14. The worm, he avers, is his mother and sister while corruption is his father. Decay, decay, decay. He bears a closer relationship to decay and death now than to any other experience. Death is not quite so close as Job thinks, and he will have opportunity to speak more of worms later (19.26).

17.15. At this particular moment Job is brought very low as almost to give up hope altogether. His hope later revives, as we shall see. David speaks in Psalm 49.14-15 of the hope of a believer which he contrasts with an unbeliever whose hope is entirely in this life. "Like sheep they are

laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me.”

17.16 “They shall go down to the bars of the pit.” In the darkness of the grave none shall observe another’s state. All alike shall be in darkness. The Saviour says, however, concerning the affirmation which Peter made, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” that “upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16.16-18).