

## **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 18**

18.1-2. Though Job had been silent for a week following the arrival of his friends, Bildad considers that Job is being rash and loose in his talk, especially inasmuch as he was claiming to speak to God as well as about Him. Is there to be no end? Does he have an answer for everything? In certain circumstances many languages may idiomatically speak in the plural when the meaning is singular. We speak of the royal “we” when it is the personage speaking who carries authority rather than necessarily what is said. “How long will it be ere **ye** make an end of words? Mark, and afterwards **we** will speak.” Here probably Bildad feels that he is representing the comforters and Job other wicked people like himself (as Bildad believes) or maybe a few of like theology of whom he may be dimly aware.

Again, we may see something of the transition of the word “mark” here. It is used in the sense of “mark my words,” that is, take notice of them; or in the sense of “marking” a script, meaning reading it, correcting it, and indicating that it has been read. But seeing that Bildad is not talking about his own words, but Job’s, the meaning is more allied to “on your marks,” meaning “stop where you are” or “mark time.” “Stop going on and on” is the force of it, for, says Bildad, I have something rather more important to say. Though he claims importance, it scarcely seems to be so, though it has one memorable expression in verse 14, “king of terrors” and a couple of not inconsiderable insights.

18.3-4. Clearly, Bildad’s perception is that Job places very little value on the friends’ comfort; “miserable comforters are ye all” (16.2) but Job has not inveighed against their persons. The only person Job is harming is himself; as we might say, “give him enough rope and he will hang himself.” The best construction upon the words of Bildad in this chapter is that he earnestly does not want Job to be the means of his own destruction before God, and as best as he knows how strives to stem the torrent of his words.

Bildad’s argument is akin to Eliphaz’. “Art thou the first man that was born?...are the consolations of God small with thee?” (15.7,11). While not denying that God might move in a miraculous way for His own, as in the later event of the bringing of water out of the rock (Numbers 20.8) he certainly thinks that Job’s desiring of a personal audience with God is to enter forbidden territory. Deuteronomy 29.29 is certainly true, though written later. But revelation is still in progress here, and what should afterwards be written (by Job himself, probably) in the Book of Job is certainly revelation. Job is not out of order.

18.5-6. From this point until the end of the chapter Bildad portrays, in language as vivid as he can muster, the dangers of the wicked man if he persists in his way. However much it is true,

it is simply not applicable in Job's case. First Bildad says that the light of his life, that is life itself, shall come to an early end. This is what is happening to Job, he avers, and he is not helping himself by hastening it on. An early death; no spark of life remaining; this is what will be his lot and surely Job can see it happening and should know why.

"Tabernacle" occurs three times in this chapter. It means "tent," either a grand tent as a marquee, or a personal individual or family-size dwelling place. I shall interpret it throughout as the tabernacle of his body, as in the much later 2 Corinthians 5.1,2,4. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven...For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened..."

Verses 18.7-10 are an extended metaphor concerning feet and steps. First, we have had "light" now "feet." The remaining part of his journey through life shall be fraught with difficulty. He will get weaker and weaker, his intelligent directing of his own and others' feet shall become less and less sensible; he cannot now exercise that wisdom, care and commonsense which would keep him from folly. After a blameless life he is suddenly entrapped in sin and he is robbed of his faculties. Where he has not been ignorant hitherto of Satan's devices, and alert to avoid them, now his failing capacities disarm him and he ruins his reputation further at this late stage.

18.11-14 speak of the terrors of the mind and conscience. I shall interpret the "king of terrors", that which is most terrifying of all, as death. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15.26).

So severe will be the terrors of his mind that they will make him restless, give him no rest. They will "drive him to his feet." He will be unable to keep still; a wanderer, as Cain. As Augustus Toplady writes in his hymn concerning one whose trust is utterly in the Lord Jesus Christ, "The terrors of law and of God with me can have nothing to do." But for unbelievers, especially drawing near the end of life, with the memory of former sins crowding in upon him, it is frightening. They will be "utterly consumed with terrors" (Psalm 73.19). But Job was a true believer, and the terrors of law and of God with him could have nothing to do. "His strength shall be hungerbitten." The pangs of hunger are sharp and hunger ultimately emaciates the body and reduces energy levels. The inward terrors of meeting God and facing judgment can have such an effect as to make a person waste away, whether he/she is off their food or not. They will dominate their every thought.

Terror is described as "the firstborn of death." The thought is derived, maybe, from the fact of Abel, who was the first to die, being murdered (Genesis 4.8). The first creatures to die were slain by God to make skins (Genesis 3.21) for Adam and Eve. Cain's response to God's punishment, which was that for the time being he should not die but be a fugitive and a vagabond, was, "My punishment is greater than I can bear" and the sense of terror (the word is not used) pervades the interchange between God and himself (Genesis 4.11-15). The terror of death anticipates it with horror and is often its precursor. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who

through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2.14-15). All confidence in bodily ability will vanish and he will be ushered into the presence of death itself, the king of terrors. This is all very true in very many cases; but not true of Job.

18.15. “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14.7-8). Believers are the Lord’s by salvation; unbelievers are the Lord’s by creation. But we are not our own. “It (that is, terror) shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his;” that is, our lives are not our own” Brimstone, with its sulphurous smell, dissolves the very fabric of our earthly being. Like the scattering of sugar to sweeten or salt to savour, everywhere where the brimstone is scattered shall be destroyed and leave the stench of death.

18.16-17. The earthly body is likened to a tree which may be struck by lightning or disease from above, or overthrown by storm; or dried up from the roots below. Things outward, terrors inward – they will conspire to overthrow one whose limbs were once strong and whose being was confidently established. Loved ones are affectionately remembered but so gruesome was the end, and so appalling the blasphemy that even the nearest and dearest will expunge the one they formerly loved from their minds.

18.18. As Nebuchadnezzar was driven out from among men because of the change which came over him (Daniel 4.32-33) so God will drive the wicked person from the light of life before his time. God will chase him away, as an intruder, out of this world. His values and blasphemies have proved him a thief and a robber (John 10.8).

18.19-21. Either his relatives will be destroyed with him, as afterwards happened to Achan (Joshua 7.24-26) or, as Job himself said (14.21), “his sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not” (14.21). Relatives or not, subsequent generations will abhor their predecessor and not do the things which he did. This is the end of those that know not God, but Job is not in this category.