

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 26

26.1-4. Job rebukes Bildad as offering no help, no strength, no encouragement, no advice. There is nothing constructive, he says, in his reasoning. It is a statement of the obvious, and merely restates the very thing that Job is seeking to solve, namely “How can man be justified with God?” (9.2).

Solomon declares by the Holy Spirit how a counsellor should act. “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Words, advice not only forged of the precious metal of intrinsically valuable wisdom but fitly, that is to say, appropriately and relevantly spoken in a timely way. “As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters” (Proverbs 25. 11-13). The picture of snow is not introduced concerning the possible destruction of the crops, or creating difficulty of ingathering, but purely to illustrate how refreshing the cold would be in the searing heat. Bildad has not given any cool and welcome relief by his words and therefore has not refreshed his soul from the living God.

It would have helped to have been reassured or shown the milk of human kindness. “To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty” (6.14). “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me” (19.21).

Strength is imparted within by the wisdom of Christ imparted by the Holy Spirit when we are strengthened with might by the spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3.16). “Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city” (Ecclesiastes 7.19). “Christ...is made unto us wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1.30).

What does it mean to declare the thing as it is? It means to get to the bottom of something, to discern the real issue. To do so plentifully means to have such a thorough grasp of it as to be able to advise a course of action, or at least unravel the issues by which the one in need can think through the matter in hand in a way he had not been able to do before - taking advice, as from the Lord. The friends have not faced Job's issue and had simply gone head to head with him by being inflexible and obstinate about their own rightness.

“To whom hast thou uttered words?” To the empty air. Bildad's reply was a mere statement scarcely addressed to Job in his personal situation.

“Whose spirit came from thee?” Was it the Holy Spirit? Read again the hair raising account of the false spirit which had animated Eliphaz In 4.12-21. We are to beware of false teachers (2 Peter 2.1-10). Even the good prophet Nathan did not consult the Holy Spirit but only advised what seemed a good idea to him in 1 Chronicles 17.2; but the Lord had something different to say from natural good intentions, though He used Nathan nevertheless to declare His will (1 Chronicles 17.3-27).

26.5. Job declares the greatness of God in the remainder of this chapter. While God is unknowable in the sense of fathoming His being or understanding His ways, yet we may know God in Christ and walk with Him.

In particular Job declares that nothing is hidden from God. As the Lord Jesus Christ said, “there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known” (Luke 12.2). “Dead things” may refer to inanimate things but I think it refers to the original state of the waters, the deep, in the first day of creation from which all things not being then in existence, and could be said to be “dead” were brought into being. “O LORD, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts” (Psalm 104.24-25).

26.6. Death, the grave and the lake of fire are fully open to his view. There is no issue from death (Psalm 68.20) of which He is unaware and He is fully cognisant of every inhabitant in the moment of dying, in the judgment which follows and in the ultimate placement of the “goats” (Matthew 25.31-46).

26.7. Indeed the Arctic is forbiddingly empty, and it is an elegant expression to speak of the north being stretched out in a vast, largely unexplored expanse though thoroughly known to God. The orbiting of planet earth in space so far from being a mystery to the Lord is replete with His mighty and precise calculations and power.

26.8-9. Clouds of water are restrained until the time of His bidding. And the cloud also which veils His glorious presence and hides His omnipotent being (Exodus 16.10), which so frequently appears in the scriptures, is thoroughly familiar to Him.

26.10. Job shows his knowledge of the things which are contained in Genesis 8.22 and 9.9-17.

26.11. The earth is hung upon nothing (26.7) and there are no visible pillars. Important people may be called pillars (Galatians 2.9), and the church of the living God is called the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3.15) but here is meant those “pillars” which sustain life, the sun and the moon. They could be said to be astonished and tremble, for example, in the fulfilment of the later events of Joshua 10.12-14.

26.12. Both these principles are activated in the crossing of the Red Sea when it was divided and the troops of proud Pharaoh were utterly destroyed.

26.13. The garnishing of the heavens is described in brilliant understatement in Genesis 1.16 “he made the stars also”. Without attributing the origin of evil to the Lord, He made Satan

who by his pride turned to evil. Indeed it is the very permissive will of God which has placed Job in this very situation.

26.14. Even when all these things are mentioned; even if all these things could be fully delineated; they would still only represent a part of God's ways. When He speaks the world is made, but He speaks but rarely except by His written word. His thunder may be heard, however, and men may stand in awe of it. That thunder is but a picture of His invisible power and His wrath against all ungodliness of men (Romans 1.18) and is beyond understanding. As the two divisions of Psalm 19 show, if we only had creation to instruct us concerning God and not His inscripturated word we would not know His mercy, His pardon, His grace. Not only would we only see a little portion (wonderful and vast though the universe is) but the most winsome of His ways, His saving ways, would be hidden from our eyes.