

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 27

27.1. When the psalmist says “I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark sayings upon the harp” (Psalm 49.4) he, too, is going to declare the theme, tune his soul to the subject, that “man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish” (Psalm 49.20). Furthermore it is in the larger interests of wisdom that he declares the state of the unrighteous, that God might be glorified and His chosen ones warned and encouraged. “My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding” (Psalm 49.3).

These are wise and edifying words which Job utters. They are a continuation of the previous chapter. Chapter 28, which is a most beautiful parable concerning the location of wisdom (“Where is wisdom to be found?”) continues these words of wisdom and they are extended into chapter 29. “Moreover Job continued his parable” are the opening words of chapter 29, and seeing that chapters 30 & 31 flow naturally and logically from their preceding chapters we may say that the whole passage from Job 26 as far as 31 may be called a parable.

Later in the scriptures the sense of the word “parable” is that it introduces picture language, which it does especially in Job 28. But the usage of the word covers wise and edifying words. Some of what Job teaches here is similar to the thoughts of the friends concerning the state of the wicked, as is the case with Psalm 49, but whereas the teaching of the friends was more condemnatory than edifying their words are not described by the Holy Spirit as parables.

27.2-5. The first theme of this chapter is a most edifying one. It is that a person should not go against his pure conscience. Paul speaks of those who have “their conscience seared with a hot iron” (the Greek word for “seared”, letter for letter, is “cauterised”). We must not plead guilty when we know we are not guilty as charged.

“As God liveth.” So vital is this matter, such is the weight of his three friends who constitute three witnesses to his situation, that he feels the need to call upon God, the living God, to be his witness. Now God does respond in chapter 38 so we shall see that the ways of God are vindicated and that this was a critical juncture for Job. Had he given way and thought to himself that the friends must be right he would have violated his conscience and made a nonsense of the matter between the Lord and Satan.

As matters appeared to stand Job affirms that the issue is unfair and is vexing. He likewise declares that he will not stoop to criticize the Lord (in effect to curse God) under the extreme

pressure of his friends. As a further ingredient he will maintain his integrity and will not justify the accusations of his friends – “till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me”.

27.6. Whenever Job has even hinted such words as he now openly declares, “my righteousness I hold fast” the friends have always interpreted that as self-justification. Indeed, in some instances there may be a fine line between self-justification and self-righteousness. Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, declares it exactly. “They (the Jews) have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10.2-4). Now Job was not ignorant of God’s righteousness in Christ, whereas the friends had not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. Job was a saved person; he had the root of the matter (19.28) in him. The friends at this stage were not.

27.7-8. The friends were his opponents. It is they to whom he refers when he says, “he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous.” They thought they had righteousness on their side and would doubtless be mortally offended, though they reply no more. It is not only the rich whose gains are illusory. “What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?”

27.9-12. Now Job begins to plead with and for his friends. Supposing trouble happens to them. Will their tenaciously held theology hold them fast or will they suddenly feel revulsion and that everything is now unfair for them as it was when applied to Job? “Will he always call upon God?” or will his theology drive him in the end to fall away?

“I will teach you by the hand of God.” We have had the expression “the hand of God” before in 19.21 when Job spoke of the hand of God touching him. It speaks of the activity of the Lord fulfilling His purposes without an intermediary, without a second cause. There is more than a suggestion here that Job was indeed aware of the Spirit of the Lord guiding his words, which have become inspired scripture preserved for the Lord’s people for ever in the Book of Job. He seems especially aware that his words from verse 13 and into the next chapter unveiling the first principles of where to find wisdom, pleading with and for the souls of his friends, have a weight of responsibility attached to them.

“Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it.” Just as Psalm 19 says that “the heavens declare the glory of God...there is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth” (Psalm 19. 1-4); from which Paul declares that men are “without excuse” (Romans 1.20) and that Israel cannot plead ignorance, “Did not Israel know?” (Romans 10.18-19); so he pleads with his friends not to be blinded by bigotry and discount their commonsense and commonplace observations of the workings of God in creation and providence. Surely they have observed that there are instances of wicked men prospering though they are unwilling to admit it because it would disturb their theology. Surely they must at least admit that the converse is possible, that there are truly righteous people who are caused to suffer.

“Why then are ye thus altogether vain?” where the significance of “vain” is “empty,” “empty-headed. People have a responsibility to exercise their God-given faculties wisely, and seeing that they are indeed “God-given” to exercise them in favour of the bestower of such capacities.

27.13. “This is the portion of a wicked man from God.” This is the expression Zophar used in 20.29 and has been the theme of each of the friends in turn. Though to some degree we must discount the words of the friends in their relation to Job for whom they were not applicable, yet aside from that, the things which God declared by them cumulatively, to which is now added Job’s observations by the Spirit of God, are a powerful incentive not to turn aside from the Lord and follow after wealth which must of necessity pass away with the passing of this world and ourselves from it.

27.14-21. Two themes in particular are dealt with, the second in some detail. Firstly, those who are left behind, children and widows, will suffer certain consequences. Secondly, the riches and the glory together with the provision which they purchase is over all too soon.

The heritage of oppressors is that their children, being identified with them, shall perish also. The widows, not being of their flesh and blood, if they, as Abigail (1 Samuel 25) who did not approve of Nabal’s churlishness, mourn over the iniquity of their husbands would be spared though they would not mourn the loss of a wicked husband.

All his accumulated wealth shall be divided to the innocent, and the just shall be robed in his clothing secondhand. His house shall be pulled down. He shall lie down and in the morning will be found dead; but “he will not be gathered”. It is an expression often used in the scriptures of which Numbers 20.26 is but one example. “Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there.” It means that though the unrighteous man die, he shall not be gathered to be with the elect but shall depart into hell. All alone one night, thinking it would be pleasant as other nights, it proves to be his deathbed and is preceded by terrors. “A storm hurleth him out of his place.” Bildad has said (18.18) he shall be “chased out of the world.” Zophar has said (20.8) “he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.” Now Job, with a still more evocative expression “hurled,” describes the loathing with which God deals, in some cases indeed by an early death, with those whose ways are antagonistic to His principles.

27.22. “God shall cast upon him.” That is, God will hurl at him unremitting evils. Job himself has experienced these things but not for that reason. His theology here shares common ground with his God-fearing friends but Job is tacitly indicating by the Spirit that not all such suffering is to be interpreted of the unrighteous. The righteous may suffer too. But as Job was not chased, or hurled out of the world before his time the conclusion has to be that whatever Job’s sufferings, they were not for unrighteousness. Job certainly knows the feeling of desiring to flee out of the Lord’s hand. “Turn from him,” he had exclaimed (14.6), “let me alone” (7.16,19;10.20). Ultimately, there was One, the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ of whom it is written (Isaiah 63.3) “I have trodden the winepress alone,” who bore the sins of His people on Calvary alone, while His holy Father turned from him for those hours in which He bore His people’s sin once and for all.

In Gethsemane we see the Lord Jesus Christ expressing the same thought of fleeing out of his hand, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22.42).

27.23. Even of the Lord Jesus on Calvary it is written, “And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God” (Luke 23.35).