

## **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 28**

It would be good to read the following passages to accompany the study of Job 28:-

1 Corinthians 1-2; Proverbs 1.20-33; 2. 1-22; 3.13-20; 4.5-7; 8 James 1.5-6,17; Luke 12.42-43; 1 Kings 4. 29-33; Exodus 31.1-6 (compare Genesis 4.20-22 where wisdom is not mentioned in connection with the abilities listed).

28.1. "Where shall wisdom be found?" (28.12) is the great theme of this magnificent chapter. There are two degrees of wisdom. The wisdom of this world; and the wisdom which is from above which none of the rulers of this world know. It is the latter to which this chapter directs our earnest seekings. Fittingly, a tribute to the English translators, the words of this chapter roll off the tongue in its glorious cadences. But the music is only an aid to the appreciation of the splendour of wisdom, the cadences an aid to memory. If the book of Job be indeed the earliest book of the Bible, here we have inscripturated for the first time one of scriptures' most insistent themes; that of obtaining and exercising wisdom. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1.5-6). "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things which are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1.27-31).

As veins run through the body so layers, seams of gold, coal and other precious metals and valuable commodities run through the substrata of the earth. There is always a cost, a labour for discovering and extracting it, whatever it is. In our enjoyment of the picture language let us never be diverted from the seeking of the wisdom, in Christ alone, here described. The Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, has indeed gone as a vein throughout all the world. It is not everywhere without exception, but in our global electronic society a vein may be accessed worldwide.

There is a memorable verse in Proverbs 27.21, "As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." "Fine" means "refine," to remove the base metal and purify; to separate that which cloyes and dulls and devalues the true worth of the gold, the silver, or whatever. In some cases intense heat is the only way. A fining pot is needed when we receive praise that we may remove pride, gloating and complacency and redouble our praiseworthy

endeavours. So, near to the mine shaft, the miner has his fining pot. The more valuable the metal, the more important it is that it be utterly purified. The nearer the refining to the source the sooner the purifying and the less likelihood of wastage or loss. This is never more important than in those inward virtues, imparted by the Saviour, which shape our innermost character.

28.2. To emphasize importance and to aid the memory verse 2 parallels precisely the previous verse, substituting iron for silver and brass and stone for gold and place. As early as the events mentioned in Genesis 4, verse<sup>22</sup> we have mention of brass, perhaps bronze (we have the so-called “Bronze Age” which may refer to the same metal). “And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.” It is thought possible that the heathen god Vulcan is a corruption of the name Tubal-cain and a vague memory of that historical, Biblical figure. Thus does truth become corrupted and nowhere more than in the truth of faith in God by Jesus Christ. It is also noteworthy that Nebuchadnezzar’s dream setting forth the four great world empires, is pictured under these very four metals – gold, silver, brass (Daniel 2.32) and iron (Daniel 2.33) and that the progressive weakening of the nature of the successive nations is so illustrated. Truly we may say that this is hidden wisdom which has to be mined for!

28.3-4. Just as a miner by bringing to light long hidden precious metals seeks by skill in refining to enhance their appearance and thereby their value; so, the Lord also brings to light the hidden things of darkness (1 Corinthians 4.5); the counsels of the heart which, if good, shall receive praise from God. By such bringing to light each may examine his heart and refine his ways and apply the wisdom of Christ to their innermost thoughts. “It is God that girdeth me with strength and maketh my way perfect” (Psalm 18.32). “The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me” (Psalm 138.8). “My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth” (Psalm 139.15).

The miner brings an end to the dark life of these mined commodities. He can be said to be always seeking a better gem, perhaps. However, this picture finds its high point as a description of the Lord. He has appointed an end to sin and all its darkness; He who turns the wrath of man to praise him (Psalm 76.10) perfects the ways of His people. We may interpret this as an act of faith on Job’s part. He believes that though his judgment could be said to be taken away a better description may be to think of it as being suspended; and though his soul is vexed (27.2) the Lord has appointed a time for the lifting of the bad times. “Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth” (Psalm 71.20). We know (though Job does not) that the Lord regards him as “perfect” (1.8; 2.3) and what has befallen him is so that the Lord’s name may be vindicated before Satan and Job’s character may be refined and thereby perfected. Out of dark days and closeness to death will come a triumphant end. “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4.17).

The miner spends much of his life in underground darkness with a great risk of death. With the Lord what is hidden in darkness He alone sees and has destroyed that last enemy, death. When God declared, “thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2.17) God did not create a monster He

could not control in the case of every individual, both as to its timing and in particular to its eternal significance.

The miner comes across underground springs or rivers which flood his workings suddenly. The definition of a torrent is that in the season of rain it is overflowing and gushing, but in the dry season is totally dried up and could be used in places as a path, albeit rocky. This is the meaning of Psalm 126.4. where the prayer is that the Lord will reverse the captivity of Israel and give freedom again, just like the streams of the south will certainly be full of torrential rains again when the season comes. As the dry season returns they could be said to be “forgotten of the foot” since none could use the torrent bed as a path during the rainy season. Underground aquifers may likewise be described. At one time danger from flood, at another time no trace of it. Such are the dangers of working underground described in verses 3 & 4. Wisdom may be obtained by fallen man only where there is a great desire to triumph in the Lord.

28.5-6. Back on the surface, food of all sorts grows, whether corn, herbs or fruitful trees – but all with effort. Not only is there danger from floods but also fire; whether that of volcanic eruption from below, the sun from above or man’s carelessness in igniting a blaze. Hidden away in the earth and only visible, perhaps, to the discerning eye are the various treasures with which God has graced it, but which can only be utilized by effort. With effort the things above ground and the things under the earth may be cultivated or extracted. But no such effort naturally finds wisdom; it is the gift of God in Christ (1 Corinthians 1.30).

28.7-8. “There is a path which no fowl knoweth...” Glorious cadences begin here, such a rhythmic flow to enhance the truth, “where can wisdom be found?” Is wisdom under the earth? No. Is it at the end of some hidden track? No. Can it be found, then, by following a dream? No.

Hidden among the scrub and the rocky hillsides; concealed by the bracken or in jungle swamps, in every continent there are creatures which make their passageways beyond the keen gaze of the eagle’s eye. Neither does the top land predator pass that way for prey as he searches for food, nor do curious cubs in their playful discoveries stumble upon it. Wisdom is likewise elusive.

28.9-11. The Lord whose “eye seeth every precious thing;” (28.10) the Creator of every natural resource, who reveals hitherto hidden substances when he “overturneth the mountains by the roots;” the omnipotent God of providence who “bindeth the floods from overflowing” saying, “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed” (38.11); the Judge of all the earth who “will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts” (1 Corinthians 4.5) has so fashioned wisdom that in its highest, purest form it must be sought from Him through His dear, only-begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

28.12. So, “where shall wisdom be found?” In this elevated passage Job keeps his friends in calculated suspense with increasing desire to know the answer, as indeed the Holy Spirit does with us. “Where is the place of understanding?” Wisdom is the application of knowledge to any given situation, the understanding, even calculation, of the impact of things which have

not yet happened nor been revealed and that man could not know, except that the Lord in kindness reveals them through His dear Son.

28.13-19. Again we have a beautiful passage to shine upon the intrinsic worth of such a rare commodity. “Man knoweth not the price thereof;” “the depth saith it is not in me;” “it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir;” “no mention shall be made of coral;” these are cadences which impress these teachings upon the memory and enshrine them in the heart. Take the most precious things known to man from land or sea, add them all together, and they do not approach the value of the things which men count themselves rich to have. Surely our hearts will say, I will treasure wisdom, the wisdom which is in Christ Jesus the Lord, more than all the possessions of earth put together. Solomon, many years later, perhaps meditating on this very passage, is guided by the Holy Spirit to write, “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her” (Proverbs 3.13-15).

If wisdom is not “found in the land of the living” (an expression, note, that has become part and parcel of our language) it is clearly not available except directly from the divine Supplier. It is to Him that we must make application. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1.17). “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1.5).

If the price is unknown, how can we make an informed offer for wisdom? It is the gift of God. There is a form of inverted snobbery which says that if a thing is not expensive it is not worth buying. That is to say, that an individual desires to display or parade this thing as something which is rare, beyond the reach of others to purchase who will naturally admire both the owner and the possession. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and hypocrisy” (James 3.17).

It is now becoming clearer and clearer that the Bible is here distinguishing between man’s wisdom and the wisdom which is from God above. This is the wisdom whose price is above rubies. The Bible speaks enticingly of such wisdom.

“It is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent...for after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1.19,21). “We preach Christ crucified...Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1.23,25). “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1.27,31).

“Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God...We speak wisdom...yet not the wisdom of this world...but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of

the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Corinthians 2.5-8). "The Father, and... Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge" (Colossians 2.2-3).

So, it is not to be found on land or in the sea. It cannot be bought with man's natural resources. Where does that leave us?

28.20-22. "Whence then cometh wisdom? And where is the place of understanding?" We are still not there. We are still being held in gripping suspense. If we are becoming more and more earnest in our desire for such wisdom, there are still things that have to be ruled out or ruled in.

We have certainly been given the impression that wisdom is a hidden thing, greater far than those things which are mined, dug or even died for. It is declared quite specifically here. "It is hid from the eyes of all living." We are being called to take our eyes off of visible values. "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4.18). Wisdom is not seen. It is hidden. It therefore has primarily to do with eternal realities. Unless we grant this, wisdom is beyond our reach.

"Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears." Secondhand information is not much help. But if we've reached death and haven't found wisdom, then it's too late. If we're involved in destructive practices, (warmongers seeking to conquer and rule by destruction, maybe) whatever we may hope to achieve by them will be a million miles from approaching a wise course of action, as the Lord counts wisdom. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4.6) would be the wise course of action..

28.23. The gift of wisdom is entirely vested in God Himself. Without a personal, and humble dealing with Him wisdom will not be found. He alone knows of what it consists. The great Creator God invites us now to consider hidden and wonderful things which lie behind the world which we inhabit, in our quest for wisdom.

There is nothing beyond His observation or consideration; He balances every motion of the winds, be they gentle breezes, gusts or gales. He measures the rain waters and the sea waters and their precise influences, unpredictable as they may seem to us. It rains at His command. If there is thunder there is lightning first. If there is a big bang there is God first. "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens. By his knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew" (Proverbs 3.19-20).

When all these things were first considered and displayed; wisdom was of equal derivation and provenance. Wisdom ranks with all of these. These things appear frequently enough; they are common. But what skill and intents lie behind them each time they are manifested! "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth...when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him" (Proverbs 8. 22-24;29-30).

Every time the wisdom of God is revealed in any situation it has a divine purpose. The greatest revelation of divine wisdom was in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and eternal priesthood of the only Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. But wisdom may yet be obtained. But how?

28.28. Now, at last, we have it. "Unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." Is that all? Is this pedestrian statement the fulfilment of that to which all these enticing pictures lead us?

Sometimes things are closer than we think. Every motorist knows that it is possible to focus upon distant objects and catastrophically miss something closer to the bonnet. Paul gives us such an example in Romans 10. Christ is the end of the law. But we cannot fulfil the law perfectly and obtain righteousness by the Mosaic law, for we cannot fulfil it adequately, to say nothing of fulfilling it perfectly which is the minimum requirement. How do we lay hold of Christ? "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10.6-10).

"The word is nigh thee." The beginning may seem pedestrian but the vista beyond suddenly stretches away into infinity. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7.13-14). The narrow way is near at hand but easily missed. It does not lie in the direction of the crowds; we would miss everything by mingling with the crowds. And that narrow gate, leading to the narrow path leads to life. There is an ever expanding vista, a beckoning horizon of good things beyond.

So it is with wisdom. The Spirit of the Lord reminds us of this theme five hundred years later, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111.10). It is a beginning, without which nothing of eternal significance may be achieved; but it is, after all, only a beginning.

We can see this very practically in the way in which the scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees opposed the Lord Jesus Christ. They were God-fearers. Yet they vehemently opposed the Saviour. The Lord went so far as to say to His disciples concerning them, "the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16.2). To be a God-fearer is a beginning, but no more.

We have seen that Job's comforters were God-fearers. But they opposed Job to whom had been revealed the evangelical faith, the gospel way of salvation through Jesus Christ the Lord. What may go wrong, even with a God-fearer, if he does not seek and enter into this wisdom which is from above, is well described by Paul. "I bear them record that they have a zeal of 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 10.3-4). The natural religion of fallen man lies in seeking to appease God by means devised by his fallen nature. The true wisdom is revealed from heaven by God the Father. With such understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ, of His atoning blood and everlasting life through the forgiveness of sins comes also the understanding of every other relevant matter in turn as such affairs impinge upon the believer’s life.