

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 3

3.1-2. Prolonged silence is embarrassing. To be together and not share words and thoughts even in the saddest of times is unnatural. Someone has to break the silence amidst all the multitude of unexpressed thoughts that were going on within the minds of all four of these friends. Job was the first to break silence, not to greet his friends, but to express his woe. As it was Job's circumstances which were uppermost in all their minds, it was only appropriate that Job should be the first to speak at last.

3.3-5. How can a day or night perish? A day or night, long since gone, cannot be rescinded. Yet it does seem as if it is more than the memory of that day and that night long ago that Job wishes to be obliterated. He has no memory of it, of course, for he was an infant; so it is the blotting out of it from the calendar to which he seems to be referring, never to be used again. Certainly never to come into remembrance again as his birthday and therefore as a feast day (1.4). Such a thing is impossible, but it does reveal the bitterness of his grief.

Such grief may cause a sufferer to be irrational. Job's words are memorable, but they are irrational. "The curse causeless shall not come" (Proverbs 26.2). While it is not perhaps the most obvious application of this proverb, yet it is true that that which is grounded in unreality, like that which is grounded in injustice, can have no power to be enforced. It is an expression in Job's case that harms none but himself. It reveals the intensity of his suffering. God does not "make a man an offender for a word" (Isaiah 29.21) but it was a lesson the friends had yet to learn. The words which pour out from Job in this chapter are the bursting forth of all his heaped up thoughts and emotions. They are the revelation of his emotions, and in that sense are common to man, but they weaken his faith and are in no way edifying. But, for all this, he does not curse God or his friends; only his day; and while God afterwards chides him for his "words without knowledge" (38.2) He nowhere suggests that he borders on blasphemy or the denial of his faith. Unless and until Job goes way beyond this and curses God, Satan's aim is defeated. Let him therefore not have the victory over us when, in response to great pressure, we explode in our words. It is not right; it is unedifying; it is to be repented of; but the Lord will not view this as a mark that we are not His, or that we have denied our faith, and will, as with Job, cause the pressure to pass.

3.6-10. What Job says about the day of his birth he also says about the night of his conception; and likewise the curse causeless shall not come. Some idea of what is meant by "raising up their mourning" may be gathered from 2 Chronicles 35.24-25 and Mark 5.39-40. Of course, the night itself has no power to prevent conception; once again this is highly irrational and,

inasmuch as this is not giving glory to God for his life up to and including the present, diminishes the proper glory of God. The real reason is betrayed in the words “nor hid sorrows from mine eyes.” It is his present sorrow, not his ingratitude for all his former benefits, that Job is really cursing.

3.11-12. Pain and suffering can be so severe that we may wish to die. That is not quite the same as wishing we had never lived. In the former case there may be a real desire of a believer to be with the Lord and it is the very sufferings which the Lord has used to loose his treasured ties with earth. In the latter it is a wiping out of every good thing that has ever occurred for the anguish of present pain. Had Job never lived then he would never have been saved. The greatest gift of all, even salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot come to pass if we do not live. Job is distraught and irrational but the Lord does not take umbrage at him.

It was customary for a father to take a newly born child upon his knees as an act of acceptance. Or, as with “stools” in Exodus 1.16, it may refer to the knees of the midwife receiving the newly born, either herself sitting on a stool or the labouring mother doing so.

3.13-19. There is a sense in which mere physical death makes all mankind equal. All people are not equal in wealth or status when they die; nor are they equal in the manner of their dying. But in the fact of being physically lifeless they are the same. “One event happeneth to them all” (Ecclesiastes 2.14). This, of course, is not great news other than when viewed from the painful deathbed. Not all the dead are at rest. “The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21.8). So Job is not teaching us doctrine here as if we were to take these words as being scriptural truth and not simply as a faithful recording of what Job actually felt and said.

He makes the foetus, the “hidden untimely birth,” and the stillborn to be equal with kings, counsellors and princes. Job was himself a king and, if he was indeed the Jobab of Genesis 36.33, he might in that case have been referring, among others, to his predecessor Bela (Genesis 36.32-33).

“There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.” Of course, though a believer will not be troubled by oppressors anymore, it is quite possible that in hell the wicked will trouble one another; the weary unbeliever will not be at rest. Job is simply referring to the state of physical death, but what he says here is not only cold comfort, but false comfort, for one dying without Christ. The words in this section are a sort of anaesthetic masking the true significance of death as the separation of the soul from the body with eternal consequences for both.

3.20-24. The answer to this question, currently unknown to Job, is in the victory that Job will win over Satan simply by not cursing God under Satan’s intolerable pressures. We do not always see why we live on when it seems we can no longer accomplish anything. But God knows best and His purpose in our life holds true till the day we die and may yet be revealed after we die in lives influenced, perhaps, even by our death.

David in years to come spoke of “roaring.” Speaking of unconfessed sin he said, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me” (Psalm 32.3-4). Job speaks of those violent expressions of agony and frustration as being like the noise of a waterfall.

3.25-26. “The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.” We probably all have secret fears and if our worst fears are realised we must lean harder than ever upon the Lord. In that case we will trace Job’s experience with great interest and see that the eventual outcome is a complete restoration, with double to make up for the heartache. “So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (42.12). A believer knows that all will be made up for in the Saviour’s glorious presence in eternity.

John Gill makes the point that he probably did not live all his life secretly afraid of illness, but that this was rather how he felt when the first of the destructions came upon him. After the destruction of his possessions he may well have thought, “What next?” Only one or two things remained to be destroyed. His wife, perhaps? His health, perhaps?

Though he enjoyed prosperity, Job’s words “I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet, yet trouble came” indicate that he had experienced the common ups and downs of life before his trouble, but that it was not these he feared. It is possible that he feared the loss of his possessions and with them the status he enjoyed. But, bearing in mind that Satan (who does not know everything) thought that he was more likely to succumb to the loss of health than the loss of possessions, it is possible that it was severe illness and a possible early death that prompted his words in verses 25 & 26. However, Job gives his own explanation of what he really feared in 31.23.