

## **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 30**

30.1. Job feels and declares with intensity his innermost thoughts. Onlookers like ourselves may well be thinking, "How are the mighty fallen!" But there, but for the grace of God, go we. In the society of Job's day, in a way that is not true of our own, the elders, if their age were allied with wisdom be it ever so little, were held in honour. As we have seen, the younger would rise up at their approach. All this privilege had now been lost, though temporarily. The thought was so endemic that disaster occurred only as a reward for evildoing, that all agreed with the position of the comforters that Job had a hidden, secret sin lurking beneath.

"Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." What an evocative expression this is! There have always been those who are virtually unemployable through their own ongoing pursuit of sin. The word "disdain" implies that these are worthless men, not those incapacitated by physical or mental weakness. His working dogs were too valuable to be left to such men to whom trained dogs would not have responded. Like father like son. It is not always so and an individual may seek to make his way in the world and rise above humble or base beginnings. By the grace of God even the lowliest person will register some improvement and serve the Saviour acceptably.

30.2. This verse is an explanation of why Job disdained the fathers of these young men who were following in their father's footsteps. It is good to have an old head on young shoulders but the reverse is abhorrent. Those who now hold Job in derision would never have been any use to him in his service. Granted, thinks Job, I'm not going to live into old age. The reversal of his experience Job finds very hard to take. But his very plea that the Lord would visit him and explain Himself is an indication of how desperately he desired to walk before the Lord even in such a dire experience as he was going through.

30.3-8. These verses vigorously describe fathers and sons, the "children of fools, yea children of base men" (30.8). Perhaps the fathers were too fond of drink or vice or were wastrels in other ways. Perhaps they would not work. Perhaps they were too contrary to all men to be able to co-operate in any undertaking. They and their family lived in scarcity on the breadline. Their home was in the wilderness (for there was no welfare state) gleaning what they could from the least nutritious of plants.

Sometimes they would be driven out from a community because of their anti-social behaviour to dwell in the remotest and most barren of places in isolation. Their loud speech is no more sensible than that of an ass braying among the bushes; their lot was to be constantly stung and

disadvantaged still more. Matted with filth, the great unwashed, they eked out a pitiless existence.

30.9-15. When law and order is overthrown, then the wicked prosper. The demise of Job's authority has enabled these young men boldly to come out of their lurking places and into the common life of the town, influencing for the worse those who otherwise might have remained law-abiding and respectful. They made Job the subject of their drunken songs; they make fun of him and even spit on him. It is despicable to take advantage of a man in his trouble; these young men were living up to their culture. They might possibly think they are on God's side, reinforcing the misery He had brought about. Their ill behaviour was unbridled. They push past him, kicking him; whatever else were their vile habits these they turned against Job, probably words as well as actions.

"They have no helper." At least the other townspeople do not act like they act, but neither do they do anything to restrain them. So persistent are they in their ill-use and mockery of Job that their behaviour might be described as being as relentless as the tide and the crashing of waves. Heedless of his feelings, as if he were a brute beast with no soul, they have no concern for his welfare. They only laugh to see his misery.

So are they who watch and mock at martyrs' deaths; even at the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. Young people, raised in homes where Christian values are taught, are led astray by those who would destroy their souls and who have no concern for their soul's eternal welfare.

30.16. Verse 1 began with the contrast between Job's former state and his present state in relation to the actions of the young, now fortunes are reversed. It began "but now." A new section is introduced here with the words "and now" having more to do with what God has brought to pass in his own life. So empty is his life, poured out or, as we might say, poured away that it reaches to his very soul, which feels bereft. His affliction is not beginning to bite but already has a real grip upon him.

30.17. Those who have experienced pain in their bones will understand what Job is describing, "my bones are pierced in me in the night season" and his muscles ache throughout the night. The nights are long, very long. And he is kept awake by pain.

30.18. So forceful is Job's disease, his sores run with puss and blood so much, that he has to change his clothes frequently. Sometimes it brings on choking and difficulty in breathing, which, of course, is very frightening. There were so many different ways in which his disease was manifesting itself, so many different consequences and pains.

30.19. If the earth be dry so that he can besmear himself with dust and ashes not only to indicate grief but, perhaps, to dry up the excrescences, the dry earth is dampened (made miry) with his sweat and blood.

30.20. Sometimes Job had to change his position and stand up and stretch. In such moments, and frequently at other times, he cried to the Lord to help him. There are times when help has to be restrained. The Father turned away, for but a short time, from the Saviour upon the cross. We know that Satan is being defeated as Job goes through this whole experience, but he

doesn't know it. So, until the time is right, our experiences are sometimes prolonged, with no sense of God's answering, that our faith might be strengthened and the enemy defeated.

This is not always so. Sometimes the opposite is appropriate. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46.1). "...we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4.16). Our wisdom must be to judge between times and seasons.

30.21. "Thou art become cruel unto me." The Lord does not bring his wrath to bear for a word wrought out of anguish. It seems cruel. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?...And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High" (Psalm 77.8-10). The psalmist recognised the inappropriateness of such exclamations in the presence of the all-seeing, all-knowing most holy God. It was an infirmity in him. And so it is with us, but He gathers us up in His arms and draws us ever closer to Himself in such experiences. The governing hand of the everlasting God, "the years of the right hand" knows best. The head speaks of purpose; the hand speaks of method. God's ways are best. Job 30.21 speaks of God's hand also. Though Job says rash things, they are not curses, nor is he disqualified from service by such an exclamation nor does it rob him of the victory, though it will earn him a rebuke (38.2).

The 1912 Psalter based on Psalm 77 captures it well:-

Has God forgotten to be kind?  
Shall I His promise faithless find?  
Will He cast off, and never more  
His favour to my soul restore?

Recalling times when faith was bright,  
And songs of gladness cheered each night,  
Those blessed joys of long ago  
Make deeper still my present woe.

30.22-23. Unwise words, though not unforgiveable ones, continue. Job describes how he feels whirled along, out of control, and that his body is disintegrating. He feels certain of impending death, that these sicknesses are irreversible. He, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the midst of rash words, describes death as "the house appointed for all living." The unredeemed are appointed to death, judgment and eternal fire as truly as the elect are appointed to death, judgment and the house of many mansions, reserved for them in heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ. But immediately, he drops back into unguarded speech, not even attaining the understanding again which he had reached at 19.25-27. Pain; the inevitability of continuing decline; the inexorable downward path of nature combine to cloud his vision and lose sight of the Lord. Once we take our eyes off the Saviour we shall sink in the turbulent waves of life (Matthew 14.28-31).

30.24. Job now avers that for all His stretched out power it will not extend to the grave. Not that it could not, nor that men plead not to die so soon, but that death seems so final.

30.25-26. At this point Job's speech turns to pleading with the Lord God. Eliphaz maintained, for example, "thou hast not given water to the weary to drink...thou hast sent widows away empty" (22.7,9), but Job knew how untruthful and hurtful these false accusations were and pleads in his distress that surely natural justice will prompt the Lord to rectify these things. Natural justice would imply a return of good for good, of receiving more light for the dispensing of light.

30.27-28. Each day Job anticipated further affliction; each day he suffered diarrhoea (his bowels boiled). When the sun shone he was so steeped in grief that he did not notice; or the sun was too hot upon his sores as to drive him indoors. Whenever he was able to attend the worshipping congregation he called out aloud in his prayerful distress, or perhaps simply he wept aloud.

30.29. The Saviour in his poignant description of the beggar Lazarus, and to cause us to sympathize with him and therefore to take the part of Lazarus as the parable unfolds, says, "the dogs came and licked his sores" (Luke 16.21). Job desires sympathy but dragons and owls are not so sympathetic as "man's best friend". Perhaps he is describing night time experiences in the cool outdoors when jackals sniffed and owls called.

30.30. The Saviour's loved ones are sometimes black; their sunburnt bodies picturing the blackness of their natural hearts. "I am black but comely...look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me" (Song of Solomon 1.5,6) says the beloved of the Lord. Sin has left its mark, but the believer is justified through blood and loved. Though there is a measure of sin in Job's reaction, his sin is not the pre-emptive cause of his affliction, as we know from chapter 1. The disease itself may have caused additional blackness, and the pain in his bones aggravated his distress.

30.31. Should he attempt to sing the praises of the Lord it is a sad, sad song he sings. It reminds us of the Israelites in exile, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land?" (Psalm 137. 1-4). The organ of his voice, and the harp with which he accompanied his hymns were indeed sad, and that much the more attuned to reach the heart of the Saviour, who says, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5.4).