

## **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 34**

34.1-2. Elihu now turns his attention to the friends whom he calls “wise men.” Whether this is mockingly, in view of what is said in 32.3 that “they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job” is difficult to tell. Probably not, for he calls them “men of understanding” in verse 10. But in the wider ministry of the Holy Spirit to us, through the holy scriptures which “are able to make us wise unto salvation” (2 Timothy 3.15), it is a call to those who would be wise to heed such things as he says. It is easy to be careless and not listen or learn properly. The Lord Jesus Christ says, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13.9).

34.3. The evaluation of what we hear, as the appreciation of the taste of excellently prepared food, is an exercise in which every believer should have his “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5.14). To some extent the enjoyment of certain foods is a cultivated taste. To listen and to make a true judgment upon what we hear demands care. There are times in history when it is particularly necessary to be able to tell the right way from the wrong and when it may be particularly hard to do so. Jeremiah, who for much of his life wrestled with false prophets, is our guide in these things especially. He spoke under the spirit of the Lord concerning distinguishing “the precious from the vile” (Jeremiah 15.19) and choosing the precious.

34.4. The Saviour said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (John 15.16) and, though it may seem to a believer that the choice is his or hers, reflection shows that it would not have been possible had not the Lord moved first in our lives, in accordance with the Saviour’s words, “no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6.44). So Joshua said quite legitimately, “choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24.15). All our choices acted upon prayerfully will be guided, indeed initiated, by the Lord.

34.5-6. But now Elihu falls into the familiar fault of the friends of assuming deliberately hidden guilt in Job and from this point onwards, for the most part, his contribution loses its savour. What Job has said is not good, he maintains, whereas the LORD later says that Job has “spoken of me the thing which is right” (42.7,8). His evaluation is thus mistaken and his wrath (32.2) unjustified. It was in fact imputed, not inherent, righteousness which Job had claimed, as we have seen; and indeed it is a fine expression to define pleading guilty, while knowing ourselves to be innocent as charged, as lying against my right. “My right” here means “what is right” not “rights” as in “human rights”.

34.7-8. But to go on to portray Job as the most rash of men drinking up scorn like water, memorable as the expression is in itself, and as one who, if he didn't actually company with wicked men, at the very least could be said to align himself with them by his attitude, is totally out of order.

34.9. Eliphaz, in fact, had come nearest to such a statement (22.2) when he said, "Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?" in response to Job's words (21.15) "what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" which is the nearest he had come to saying such things. From 21.7 Job was in fact talking about what the wicked believe, or how they act upon that assumption, not what he himself believed.

34.10-12. The words of Elihu in these verses are very true, and we should heed them, but would not have been disputed by either Job or the friends. The permission granted to Satan must not be construed as doing evil that good may come, but rather that the evil which Satan performs arising from within his own being is restrained precisely to the extent that God may work all things together for good and defeat evil. The same principle is declared by the Saviour in John 11.4 when he teaches concerning Lazarus, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby". "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity." The planned redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ for the elect is God's perfect way of declaring the triumph of good wherever He chooses it to be so in the deliverance of His elect, and wherever He chooses it to be so in the ultimate triumph of good over those who go on in their wickedness, dying in their sins.

That God will "render to every man according to his deeds" the New Testament everywhere affirms as, for example, in Romans 2.6.

34.13-15. Isaiah uses this reasoning under the moving of the Holy Spirit in 40.12-17, of which verse 13 reads, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?" and Paul, more than once, for example in 1 Corinthians 2.16, "who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?" The time to die for every single person who has ever lived is entirely the Lord's prerogative whether in a disaster, killing thousands, or one by one.

34.16-19. In verses 2 & 10 and again in verse 34 Elihu had addressed the comforters. Now he turns to Job. If, indeed, Job was king over Edom (Genesis 36.33) Elihu is now rubbing salt into his wounds. Job's state had rendered him unable, unfit as Elihu would say, to govern or judge. Job should know, he avers, from his own understanding of his kingly office, that governance must be the exercise of justice and that the king's honesty should not be impugned. That being so, how much more should the King of kings not be blamed in any matter. By his words, according to Elihu, Job has disqualified himself from rule. The expression "without hand" is taken up by Daniel in 2.34 (in the plural) and 8.25. The meaning is "without man's hand;" that is by God's hand, by His power and direction, alone.

34.21-22. Again, in these verses true theology is declared which would be common to them all, and is a constant theme of the scriptures. "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him" (2 Chronicles 16.9). "Whither shall I go from thy spirit?...if I make my bed in hell, behold

thou art there...If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psalm 139.7-12). Darkness cannot hide the evildoer from the Lord, though it can from man. Some secrets go down to the grave with a person but God knows all about them.

34.23. When David confesses his flagrant and open sin he confesses, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest” (Psalm 51.4) where “clear” does not mean “clear minded” but cleared of all injustice because David acknowledges that He is just whatever condemnation He may choose to bring against him. “More than right.” The repentant sinner freely acknowledges this to be true. And as to the extent of His dealings with us in adversity, Paul writes (1 Corinthians 10.13), “there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”.

34.24. The implication here may be that Elihu expects Job to die and be replaced, being simply one among very many who render themselves worthless to rule by their folly, even though they have been in great power. “Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalm 75.6-7).

34.25-28. Swiftly and publicly, though death may occur in the night, God accomplishes the overthrow of wicked men and it must be said that Elihu’s implication is that this is the explanation of what has happened to Job. Why Elihu, who by his quotations has shown that he has listened attentively, should choose thus to misrepresent Job can only be explained by his own theology blinding him. For Job had expressly said in 31.16 and the verses which follow that he was emphatically not guilty of these implications. Should Elihu not have believed him at that time?

34.29-30. If this is the earliest book of the Bible this teaching is replicated under a different word picture in the last at Revelation 3.7 where the Saviour is described as “he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth” which is itself a re-statement of Isaiah 22.22, “so he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open”. Whether it be individual or national blindness inflicted upon the errant, it can only end when it pleases the Lord.

34.31-32. Certainly this is what Job actually did as we see at 42.1-6. It is indeed a mark of grace and of God’s merciful dealing with a soul when a person’s reaction to adversity of any sort is to say to God, “I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me”.

34.33-34. The repentant sinner readily admits that he is not the one to decide what is best or what is not for himself, or what is best at all in any situation. God must be the judge of that. The reasoning here may also be applied when men say there is no God. What a person thinks does not, in fact, alter anything. If God does in fact exist, a person’s not thinking so makes no difference to the fact, only to himself, whether he refuses or chooses to believe.

In a wedding service opportunity is given by law that if either of the parties, or any others present, know any just cause why the pair should not be married they should then declare it or else hereafter hold their peace. Elihu gives Job opportunity to declare what he knows to be true in his heart. Now Job has already declared himself; what Elihu is really doing is giving him the opportunity to change his mind, on the assumption that he has not hitherto told the truth as inwardly he knows it to be.

Elihu appeals to both parties – the comforters (men of understanding) and Job (if he will prove himself a wise man).

34.34-37. There being no answer from Job, his friends are then invited to agree with Elihu and submit to his view that Job has sinned, evaded the consequences and spoken without knowledge or wisdom, “for he addeth rebellion to sin”. It is, in fact, quite the contrary as the Lord declared in 42.7 as we have seen. If Elihu is claiming to be a mediator or pastor, the words of verse 36 are highly inappropriate. “He clappeth his hands,” not for applause as we would do nowadays, and as in Psalm 47.1, but as an expression of dismissal as in 27.23 where there is no doubt as to the meaning. We clap our hands, for example, to steer cattle away so that we may pass by.