

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 35

35.1-3. Job never actually said, “My righteousness is more than God’s”. It would not be right to say so and Job did not say so. Elihu has set up a “straw man” for his argument and what he argues has relevance to any who do believe that they know better than God, but Job is not one of them. He did not say, “What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?” In 21.15 he said, “What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?” but he was speaking not on his own behalf but was summarizing how the wicked speak and act. Elihu, numbering Job among the wicked, has jumped to the conclusion that this was Job’s real view. Neither did he say, “My righteousness is more than God’s”. This is Elihu’s inference, as his theology probably demanded if he was not to revise it to take into account all the facts, from Job’s words in a passage like Job 16. 9-17, especially perhaps verse 17, “not for any injustice in my hands: also my prayer is pure” or 19.7, “behold I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment”.

35.4. So the answer, however true it is for those who do throw off the constraints of believing in God and obeying His laws, is not true for Job. To the extent in which his friends knew that this was not part of his argument it was not a fault of theirs if they did not meet this particular point.

35.5-8. “If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him?” “If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?” “Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man.” This is a very important truth, but we have to be very careful about the conclusions we draw from it. It is true that we can inflict no damage upon God by our sin. He is not diminished in His person by it. It is also true that we cannot contribute anything to God’s person or bring to Him something He does not already have.

That is not to say that God does not command that we be perfectly righteous. “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17.1). The Lord Jesus Christ said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5.48). That is not to say that God is not pleased with the sacrifices of a broken spirit and a contrite heart (Psalm 51.17).

35.9-11. The essential difference between beasts and mankind is the possession of a soul. This directs us to reflect upon God. The beasts cannot do that. God my maker – an expression sometimes used by those who can’t go further and say, My saviour. “Who giveth songs in the night.” This is a wonderful expression and is taken up by the psalmist in Psalm 42.8 and 77.6.

It is appropriate to praise God by night as well as by day. But inasmuch as night time is the time for sleep, it speaks also of praising in difficulty or adversity, as Paul and Silas in Acts 16.25. Though some pious Jews rose at midnight, as in Psalm 119.62, it is not enjoined; though we may follow the psalmist's example. And when glorious times come it is appropriate to sing praises by night and by day (Psalm 149.5).

35.12. The oppressed cry out. The oppression of their oppressors causes them to cry out, but the weight of wickedness drives every thought of the former goodness of God to them far away, and drives away also the wisdom that man with a soul should possess so that they act irrationally and, perhaps, in retaliation if the way is open to them. Job should not have acted or continue acting as one of them, for God "doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men" (Lamentations 3.33). But Job had not done so. Indeed, until the arrival of the friends Job had fulfilled what Jeremiah declares, "he sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him" (Lamentations 3.38).

35.13-16. Is Job being accused of oppression? But Job desired to have an audience with God, for he knows his sins are forgiven; he knows he is justified, though not entirely free from sin. He does trust Him. He knows He has not visited in anger. He does not consider it an affront to God that He might explain to him what is going on. The conclusion, then, that Job has opened his mouth in vain is not valid and while some words have been rash, as Job later admits, 42.3, the Lord overrules in 42.7.