

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 5

5.1. It was unerring faith in David to turn to God and not to man even when God was threatening far-reaching judgments. "David said...I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hands of man" (2 Samuel 24.14).

There is possibly even an element of smugness in Eliphaz' mocking here. He is effectively saying that everyone agrees with him; that there is no one to be found on Job's side. Well, at such times, to God we must commit our cause. "The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it" (Deuteronomy 1.17).

5.2-5. "Be ye angry and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil" (Ephesians 5.26-27). There is an anger against sin which is legitimate: but if heated anger has risen up, whatever has provoked us should end with the day. The Lord will render "unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Romans 2.6,8-9) but this was not Job's failing. He was neither envious nor angry and therefore the tirade against the foolish man, however true, was not true of Job and therefore by implication hurtful. Again, Job's children had been destroyed and the implication of verse 4 is therefore unkind. This is a hard-line, hawkish faith of Eliphaz at the best of times and, if wrongly applied, exceedingly hateful.

Many years later an unnamed lord of the king of Israel was crushed in the gate of Samaria according to the prophecy of Elisha as the Lord gloriously ended the famine caused by Benhadad's siege. It would be relevant to read 2 Kings 6.24-7.20. Eliphaz declares that he in his day had seen robbers attack a foolish farmer, possibly foolish because he had not adequately protected his property, and in the attack the children are crushed at the farm gate as the hordes enter in. The implications concerning the attack of the Sabeans and the Chaldeans on Job's asses and camels and the destruction of his servants, insinuating folly to Job, are scarcely below the surface.

5.6-7. Here is a memorable and apt description. "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." Affliction may begin with man's inhumanity to man and therefore be said to arise out of the dust, for "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3.19) is man's epitaph, but ultimately it springs from the fall and its punishment. Enmity between Satan and mankind, childbearing in sorrow, the rule of a husband, the thorns and thistles of the earth and the sweat of the brow (Genesis 3.15-19) - all these do not originate with the dust of the

ground but with God's eternal word. Trouble and affliction are now man's lot, as inevitable, and as frequent, and apparently as random as the scattering of sparks whenever a fire is lit.

5.8. In these circumstances how appropriate and how necessary it is to seek help from the Lord. But "how forcible are right words!" (6.25). When Eliphaz says "I would seek unto God" had not Job done so, and in far greater straits than ever Eliphaz had known. Had he not committed his cause to the Lord? The beautiful and wonderful description of God's ways which follow (though the language be not as exalted as when the Lord Himself speaks at chapter 38), instead of being an inspiration to turn to such a wonderful Saviour, are all tainted by the implication that Job has failed in this matter.

5.9. All these things are true and verified by other passages of scripture and worthy of our meditation. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11.33).

5.10. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof..." (Psalm 65.9-10).

5.11. "The LORD...raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory" (1 Samuel 2.7-8). "Blessed are they which mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5.4).

5.12-13. All these words from verse 9 were inspired by the Lord earlier than the quotations from the psalms, the gospel and the epistles above which verify them. In 1 Corinthians 3.19 Paul uses verse 13 to clinch his argument that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" and thereby the Spirit witnesses that these words are inspired by the Lord. It is their application here which is questionable whereas in Paul their application is apt.

5.14. Again, Isaiah, moved by the Spirit, echoes these words as one familiar with them of old. "We wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night" (Isaiah 59.9-10).

5.15-16. "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul" (Psalm 109.31). "He setteth the poor on high from affliction" (Psalm 107.41). "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34.6). "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6.20).

5.17. Eliphaz is not to be denied his place for his words have been revealed to him (much more aptly than those of 4.17-21) and verified in later scriptures by the Spirit of God. Neither are we to deny that with this verse begins an impassioned plea that Job should repent and enter into a state of blessedness. It is simply that the best of men is but man at best and that he has got his application wrong.

Solomon is aware of these words and quotes them in Proverbs 3.11-12. Paul quotes them in Hebrews 12.5, maybe via Proverbs. At all events the Holy Spirit gives powerful approval of these words. Paul has an extended passage on them in Hebrews 12. 5-11 which should be read again.

5.18. Hosea takes up this theme. "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (Hosea 6.1). The psalmist writes, "He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds" (Psalm 147.3). If Eliphaz was the first to whom this was revealed it has been gloriously taken up by subsequent scripture writers since and therefore His seal of approval set upon it. How often have these words been used to describe the sinner in the hands of an angry God who never lets the wound be too severe to heal and tempers the searching conviction of sin to what may be borne prior to restoration and salvation.

Subsequent authors, moved by the Spirit, have taken these words to a more far-reaching degree. Not simply wounding, but killing. Thus Moses (Deuteronomy 32.39) in his inspired song, speaking of the Lord says, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." Again in the heightened language of thanksgiving, moved by the Holy Spirit, Hannah prayed rejoicing, "The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up" (1 Samuel 2.6). Isaiah speaks of the day "that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound" (Isaiah 30.26) while Ezekiel 34.16 writes of the Lord God, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick." This is the heart of the gospel and Eliphaz must not be denied his evangelical fervour.

5.19. Solomon even takes up this way of introducing a powerful truth in Proverbs 6.16 which originated here in this passage, "six...yea, seven." In the account of creation we read, "And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it..." (Genesis 1.31-2.3). The first usage of six in scripture signifies a work finished. The first usage of seventh a day blest, which itself sanctifies the other six. So "He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee" speaks of earth's troubles (however many) being sanctified by heaven's rest at last. Solomon's usage is not so lofty. If there is one demerit that crowns them all, it is he that sows discord among his brethren.

5.20-26. In these verses Eliphaz spells out, in a splendid application of his advice, if only it were based on a true ascertaining of the facts, the glory of the Lord's sanctified blessings following trouble and affliction. Famine, war, the tongue, destruction and wild beasts shall be overcome and, when overcome, laughed at. When the Lord speaks to Ezekiel it is consistent with His one great purpose revealed here by Eliphaz (Ezekiel 14.21), "How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast." If "destruction" here be the same as pestilence Eliphaz has all four. So fundamental is this truth that in the very last book of the

Bible (Revelation 6.8) it makes mentions that “power was given...to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

“In league with the stones of the field.” What a wonderful expression! Our heavenly Father will dispose even inanimate things to serve His people if need be. “I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered” (Amos 4.7). John the Baptist declared (Luke 3.8), “God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Luke 19.40), referring to the restraint which the Pharisees would put upon children’s praise, “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.” Gospel proclamation and gospel praise are in league with the stones of the field!

What is to be observed is that the very things mentioned in verses 24-26 did, in fact, come upon Job at the end.

“Thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.” Much of our sinfulness is accomplished at home. Oh to be a blessing in our very homes!

A “shock” of corn is the farmers’ word for sheaves piled together. As picture language we may speak of a “shock of hair.” Abundance is the great significance, together with the thought that it is harvested successfully. Vigorous strength is meant by the shock of hair. So the happy believer whom God corrects will face death fully prepared, ready to be garnered for an eternity of glory with the Lord Jesus Christ.

5.27. “Lo this, we have searched it, so it is.” It is good if we never cease to be students all our lives long. It was good that Eliphaz searched for knowledge and understanding; not so good that he assumed that his own conclusions were the last words on the subject. When we have learned all we can there are vast libraries in our own specialities, as well as in other subjects, a store of learning still to be acquired. As Job will later say (12.3) “I have understanding as well as you.” Neither Eliphaz nor Job knew it all. But the friends could have contributed better to Job’s store if they had shown respect. However, whatever Eliphaz’ failings, it is to be thought that he said what he said for Job’s good. If we, as believers, desire the eternal good of one another, let us pursue that course without underlying, and perhaps unwarranted, criticism. “Let not then your good be evil spoken of” (Romans 14.16).

This is the only reply of any comforter which is longer than Job’s preceding utterance.