

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 6

6.1-3. As if Job's calamities and grief were not enough, Eliphaz has certainly added to them. Job declares that how he feels is that if you put his grief (he speaks of grief first) and his calamities together on one scale of the balance and all the sand of the sea (how heavy wet sand is!) on the other, the grief and the calamities would prove heavier, would weigh more. When he says, "my words are swallowed up," he means that as with water filtering away through sand, or being evaporated by the heat, his words are so inadequate to describe his condition that they vanish before they start, they can't even begin to describe it.

6.4. However, with this caveat that his words are, as we might say, scratching the surface, he makes the attempt. It is like being struck by a poisoned arrow and the poison is powerfully spreading and death feels imminent. The sickness of his boils causes him to shudder at the feeling of evil and its eternal consequences. marshalled against him.

6.5-7. Is there not a cause for his outcry? Is it not reasonable that he finds his experience unpleasant? He vividly draws his comparisons from the wild ass, the ox, salt and the white of an egg. When satisfied a wild ass and an ox will munch satisfactorily. Interestingly, Amos asking similar rhetorical questions says (Amos 3.4), "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he hath taken nothing?" The picture here is different. The lion would reveal his presence if he roared while stalking. The young lion, hungry and about to leave his den, will not announce his intentions. The illustration in Amos is used to different purpose, namely "can two walk together, except they be agreed" but the question format is the same to secure the assent of the listener. The white of an egg is insipid, flavourless. This is a mild description of the removal of his joys. Job's conclusion is that he has to be satisfied in his bitter experience with that which he would have avoided at all costs.

6.8-9. At this point Job overreaches himself. He pleads that his prayer to be heard by God will be answered. When his pleading is that he may plead his case "face to face" with God then that is altogether a noble plea (16.21). But this prayer is wrenched out of his misery. What is so full of solace here is that his prayer is not taken at face value by our understanding Saviour God. It does not please God to destroy him or cut him off from life or, indeed, from his inheritance. Whenever believers pray for something that is not in their best interests, the Lord does for them better than they know, better than they ask.

6.10. It would not be his comfort; he is mistaken. The grief of physical pain combined with the desolation of loss has warped his senses leading him to wrong conclusions and requests that are remiss. But though it grieves his friends to hear these things, for Bildad immediately

replies when he gets the chance (8.1) “How long wilt thou speak these things?” and the Lord Himself says “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” (38.2), the Lord does not reject Job for such thoughts and words but draws him closer and says, (38.3) “Gird up thy loins now like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.”

When is the “then” with which this verse begins? It seems as if Job may be meaning the very moment in which God lets loose His hand and cuts him off. In that moment, imminent death would be better than continual misery. In that moment he could steel himself, whereas the continual distress unmans him. In that moment God will be justified in not sparing him, for He may do what He wills with His own. In that moment God’s justice must be vindicated for He knows that Job has “not concealed the words of the Holy One;” that is, he has publicly declared His truth and lived it out.

6.11-12. There is a limit to Job’s strength. He feels there is no point in hoping, for he is too far gone. He feels he cannot achieve anything further by living longer. He is human, and does not have the strength of inanimate stone and brass.

6.13. Job’s strength is his clear conscience. The words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 1.12 express it well. May they be ours too. “For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.” Job has a good conscience which he will not sell by admitting there might be sin when all his sin has been covered. This is his help; this is his wisdom.

6.14. Here is a great rule of comforting which even the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Himself observes. “To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend.” Let us all when we minister to the afflicted identify with them in sympathy. Our doctrinal stance should not close our hearts. To do so would be to “forsake the fear of the Almighty,” which would be a grievous sin.

6.15-18. To deal “deceitfully as a brook” is another powerful expression. A raging torrent in the wintertime when the ice is melting, but drying up to a trickle and then disappearing altogether in the heat of summer. Job characterises the dealings of his friends with him as changeable. One moment they were true friends, but in the heat when he needed their comfort most their affection, if not their presence, vanished away.

6.19-20. Job is thoroughly disappointed in his friends, as when travellers from Tema and Sheba expecting to find a brook to relieve their thirst on a regular desert trail find, because of the great heat, that on this occasion there is none.

6.21 It is perceptive of Job to say that the friends “are afraid.” Here is a situation which is beyond them. Their spiritual foundations are not sufficient to bear this weight for themselves or to counsel Job. They compensate for this by blaming the one whose theology is sufficient but who is overborne by grief.

6.22-23. Their presence is voluntary. Job did not invite them, though he was not averse to their coming. He had not asked for their money or for their support in any other way. He had not expected that they would fund a cure or effect one. Naaman (2 Kings 5.11) in later days might have thought, “He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD

his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper,” but Job did not. He knew his Redeemer, if but dimly at this stage, then more clearly by 19.25. He did not imagine his friends could fulfil that role.

6.24. Job is probably being ironic here, for in the person of Eliphaz they had tried. Maybe it is an invitation to do better when they have their turn through Bildad. If there is no irony here and Job is being open and declaring that he is teachable then they in their turn must understand the issue here, if they are to be of any help.

6.25. “How forcible are right words!” This is a wonderful expression. To assert correct doctrine, to declare the truth is most commendable and Job does not disagree with that. A mere declaration of the truth which they all share does not explain the problem. Their truth was only true so far as it went. They did not understand substitutionary atonement as declared in the burnt offering. Seeing that the heart of a believer’s approach to God was foreign to them they did not possess **the** truth, saving truth. It was therefore not to the point. “A word spoken in due season, how good it is!” (Proverbs 15.23) but their words were not appropriate. Their words were not “fitly spoken.” They were not “wise reprovers.” (Proverbs 25.11-12). Each of them before they had finished (32.1) would be guilty of “making a man an offender for a word” (Isaiah 29.21).

6.26-27. Job acknowledges that his speeches are outbursts, as the wind which comes and goes. Pastoral counsel would busy itself with real issues, not busy itself rebuking the expression of fleeting feelings. He acknowledges that their relationship to him was as friends but they are “digging a pit” for him to entrap him rather than helping him in his affliction. If they were to use this approach to the fatherless (Job can scarcely mean himself here, for he has had his own sons who have perished) it would be no less than cruelty to those of tenderer years than he.

6. 28-30. Job’s plea to them is now, as we would say, to look him in the face. Let their eyes meet and in that steady gaze they will discern and understand that there is no falsehood, lie or secret sin in Job. Can they not trust his frank face? Can they not see in his openness that he speaks truly? This is an invitation to return to the standard of friendship, humanity and trust. In their bigoted determination put so eloquently by Eliphaz on their behalf, “Who ever perished, being innocent?...Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same” (4.8) they had hardened their hearts unwarrantably towards him.

Let friendship flood back again. Job certainly desired reconciliation for he knew his friends’ assessment was unfounded. and that they were doing him a grave disservice and on his part there was no barrier to that friendship. He had just called them friends (6.27) and now he says, “Return.” Let Satan not gain an advantage, for it was and is his ploy to separate between very friends. It is true that whether a person is righteous in the sight of God or not is the most fundamental matter of all to be decided in this world before death, but Job knew by His trust in his heavenly Father’s teaching that his righteousness was in his faith in the substitutionary atonement of the burnt offering typifying the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and that he was therefore justified in God’s sight. His taste could discern perverse things, could separate between the precious and the vile (Jeremiah 15.19), It knew and recognised the truth, and his life, so far from hiding secret sin, reinforced his fullness of faith. In the later words of Jeremiah 15.19, “Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them.”