

## **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 9**

9.1-2. Job grants the truth of what Eliphaz and Bildad have said about the character of God but does not grant their insinuations about himself. "I know it is so of a truth." It is a searching question and well put, "How should man be just with God?" He was, in fact, justified by faith through his obedience in offering and believing in the efficacy of the burnt offerings. But the things which had happened had somewhat clouded his confidence in that understanding and he desires to have an audience with God, a personal assurance of his standing, notwithstanding outward appearances. This is very important for a believer. To know that notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, and the presence of sin which so easily besets him/her, the standing into which he/she has entered by faith is steadfast and sure. Job knows his sins are forgiven – this is where he makes his stand. But he desires assurance, an explanation even, to assert that justification before his disbelieving friends.

9.3. "One of a thousand." Elihu uses the expression "one among a thousand" in 33.23 to speak of pastors and teachers. There are a goodly number of them, one per thousand, so to speak. But they are a precious commodity, only one in a thousand. The expression in Elihu has the force of rare but not too rare. Now here the expression is differently weighted. Not once in a thousand times, not once in a thousand judgments can a man dispute God's actions. Because it is the omniscient Lord with whom we have to do, just occasionally, once in a thousand, we might win a cause with a man in authority, but with God not even once. That is the force here. He cannot answer Him. And seeing that Job believes that God is perfectly just he has come to an impasse in his reasoning.

Man cannot reason from himself to God; he may reason of His existence and of the necessity of His holiness and perfection, but can give no explanation of His ways. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Romans 11.33). They must be revealed to him; and that is the distinctive of the Christian faith and of the Jewish heritage that it is a religion revealed from heaven, not invented by man. Job here is at the very core, the very centrality, of what constitutes religious faith. For now, he is a little bewildered. He has experienced the revelation of God in the matter of his thorough understanding of the efficacy of the burnt offering; he will soon experience the revelation concerning the resurrection of the dead and eternal life; and the book will end with his understanding of his personal acceptance of God, an acceptance which had always been so but needed revealing to him. So now, Job shows to the friends, by his own description of the ways of God, that he is not at all behind them in his understanding of Him.

9.4-6. He knows that He cannot be resisted, and despite what the friends think, Job implies that he has not ventured upon such a reckless course. Who could resist His wisdom and His might? Both wisdom and might are revealed in creation, in sustaining that creation and in being proactive in it. Maybe Job is speaking of the events of the flood; maybe he is speaking of what he knows God could do if He pleased.

9.7. Probably Job means that clouds will obscure the sun and the stars on a stormy day, though he clearly believes that God directs these things as First Cause. Many years later Ezekiel writes, referring to the Egypt of his day, “when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezekiel 32.7-8). The Lord Jesus Christ said, “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5.45).

9.8-9. The use of the present tense in these verses, “spreadeth,” treadeth,” “maketh,” gives a powerful impression not only of creating power but of sustaining, keeping power. Of these things Job was in no doubt. The Lord Jesus Christ exemplified this teaching when He “went unto them, walking on the sea” (Matthew 14.25-26; John 6.19). (We use the expression in allusion to this event of walking on water. The gospel writers in allusion to Job 9.8 speak of walking on the sea.) From the perspective of the northern hemisphere the stars in the far south are locked away as in a room, a chamber – invisible.

9.10-11. His personal actions and His movements are likewise invisible, however close to hand. They are, as we have seen, past finding out (Romans 11.33), surely an allusion to this verse.

9.12. Job had lost so many things, taken away by God, which he here acknowledges to be His doing. “What doest thou?” Solomon uses the expression of an earthly king (Ecclesiastes 8.4) but Nebuchadnezzar of the King of kings (Daniel 4.35). Isaiah famously writes (45.9), “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou?...” We may not question God except He draws us to Himself and invites us to take such confidences. We certainly may not question God arrogantly. However, He may take us into His confidence. The Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15.15).

9.13. “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7.11). “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Ecclesiastes 8.11). It is a mercy if God withdraws His anger, if that anger is appeased by faith in the blood of His only beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a mercy for His wrath to be daily accumulating while we continue in sin with God’s sentence hanging over our unwitting heads. All the proud rebels against God, perhaps even encouraging one another in their pride for the expression may mean “helpers of pride” as the margin suggests, will “stoop” under Him.

9.14. But Job knows His standing and therefore is much less inclined to do anything which could be interpreted as being rebellious. However, there are things he would like to ask the Lord but it seems to him that it would be out of place to do so.

9.15. Yet, would supplication be out of place? Would supplication be out of place to God, the Judge, in the act of passing sentence?

9.16. Why would Job not have believed? Would he not have trusted his understanding because of the remnants of the old nature within his mind? Or was it because the supposed evidences of His anger were still in place, for example, His sore affliction? The latter would seem to be the case and there may be therefore an element of rebellion still left in him. He is in a better frame of mind at 15.15 when He puts it the other way round and says, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee."

9.17-22. If there is an element of rebellion it shows itself most openly in the use of the words "without cause." However, He really would like to plead his case with God to understand the underlying cause of what appear to be antagonistic providences. He understands that He can overpower him and outmanoeuvre him in every department and believes He would deal sufficiently graciously with Him to risk it. If strength, God is stronger. If judgment, He can overrule. If he justifies himself then God shall condemn him out of his own mouth as being proud or self-righteous. If perfect, it would depend on the definition and the usual definition would declare him imperfect. By that definition the ignorance of his own inner nature would be revealed. His perfection, were it a real and complete, perfectly perfect perfection would not be of the same ilk as the Lord's perfection; for He is the great Original, the Creator and Job but a creature. By comparison he would despise his life.

"This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked." God is entitled to do that. He could make another world. He could begin again. It almost seemed that might be the case with His people in Deuteronomy 9.14. And, of course, in relation to death those justified by faith in Christ, and therefore perfect in that sense, and the wicked all die.

9.23. This is rebellious, for Job implies that God is making a mockery of him, which, of course, is far from the truth. That God laughs at His enemies (Psalm 2.4) is one thing but He is about much more serious business with Job. Self-pity, exasperation and pain (his reference to his disease hurting like the lashings of a whip, a scourge) characterise the verses which follow, and they are wrung out of his misery, but still he does not curse God which would be his only defeat and Satan's only victory. For all that his words are sighs and groans in the midst of sufferings he is, as a righteous man, holding on his way (17.9). We hold on our way though we sigh and groan.

9.24. Though these words are somewhat jaundiced, there is some truth in them as John witnesses:- "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5.19). Judges do accept bribes or make faulty judgments. Job is wrestling with the fact that, if God is proactive, how is it that true believers are dealt with unjustly. For our answer we must meditate on the death and resurrection of our dear Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

9.25. Though some days and nights may seem long there is nothing inconsistent with the realisation that life is slipping rapidly downhill, gathering momentum. The picture of a rider with an urgent message riding more swiftly than usual is powerful; Job feels his days are accelerating away. "They see no good." Four simple words of one syllable in the English, yet very moving, for we understand Job's feelings well enough, but know equally that this is not really a true evaluation even of our most trying days.

9.26. Bearing in mind the marginal reading "ships of desire" Job may well be conveying how his hopes are dashed, day after day, vanishing away as a ship disappears rapidly over the horizon and as inevitably doomed as when an eagle locks on to the prey.

9.27-28. If Job were to dismiss the hastening away of his days and think along other lines, they are scarcely more helpful. His teeming brain then feels the weight of his sorrows and knows that while guiltless, as a sinner saved by grace, he is not innocent and there may be things not accounted for. Such doubts are insinuated into the believer's mind by Satan. But the work of Christ is thorough, and every sin is covered. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1.9) where the word translated "all" is, in the Greek, "every."

9.29. Here Job is reasoning from another point of view as the later psalmist in Psalm 73, which speaks at length about the apparent "prosperity of the wicked." If I be wicked, he reasons, then why am I not prosperous?

9.30-31. On the other hand, "if I wash my hands with snow water, and make my hands never so clean" (what a wonderful expression! His mind is clearly unaffected by his affliction) the Lord will cause the filth and defilement of this loathsome disease (7.5) to "plunge him in the ditch" again.

9.32-33. We see in this whole passage which comes to its climax in these verses how the Holy Spirit works to lead a person in the midst of affliction to reason in such a way that the Lord will bring him into spiritual light. I can't argue with God, reasons Job, he is a heavyweight and the Creator, while I am lightweight and created by Him. Neither is there a "daysman" to put his hands simultaneously upon us both. Something more than an umpire is envisaged here. A middleman, a Mediator, the very Man Christ Jesus is longed for here. Christ Jesus is not neutral as a referee, the man in the middle, an umpire. Rather, He being God, becomes man's Representative, bearing away his sin, not explaining it. So the Holy Spirit puts this thought into his mind when he is at his lowest ebb, planting it as a seed to surface and spring up a little later.

9.34-35. It will be so with him. "Just are the ways of God and justifiable to man" as John Milton put it. This will be Job's experience later. The Lord does remove the rod and the fear but not so that Job can reason more ably in His presence. The changing of his situation comes after the Lord has reasoned with him while he is still in his miserable state. It is His way to speak with us in our misery, the misery of our lost state perhaps, before setting us free through the salvation which is in Christ.