

Job Chapter 8

Verses 1-22: The second friendly accuser, Bildad, now offered his wisdom to Job. Bildad, also absolutely certain that Job had sinned and should repent, was ruthless in the charges he raised against God's servant (see Job chapters 18 and 25 for Bildad's other speeches).

Verses 1-4 Bildad wastes no time getting to the heart of his argument: Job is full of hot air ("like a strong wind," verse 2). If Job is to be exonerated, then God would be unjust, and that cannot be (verse 3). Job's children must have sinned to incur divine judgment (verse 4).

Job 8:1 "Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,"

This was the second of Job's friends that came to visit him (Job 2:11). And is mentioned next to Eliphaz there, and takes his turn in this controversy in the same side. Which no doubt was agreed upon among themselves, as well as the part each should bear, and the general sentiment they should pursue, which was the same in them all. Some have observed, that Job's friends were like the messengers that brought him the tidings of his losses, before one had done speaking another came. And so as soon as one of his friends had delivered his discourse, and before Job could well finish his reply, up starts another to charge him afresh, as Bildad did here.

In verses 2-7 Bildad accused Job of defending his innocence with a lot of hot air and reasoned that Job's circumstances were God's judgment on his sins and those of his family. Again, this is logical, based on the principle that God punishes sin, but it failed to account for the mystery of the heavenly debate between God and Satan (see chapters 1 and 2). He was sure something was wrong in Job's relationship with God, thus his call for repentance, with the confidence that when Job repented he would be blessed (verses 6 and 7).

Verses 2-3: Job, in a state of deep sorrow (6:3, 26), spoke honestly about the agony of his losses. But because Bildad misunderstood the complexity of the circumstances, unaware that God was allowing a righteous man to suffer, he rushed to judgment.

Job 8:2 "How long wilt thou speak these [things]? and [how long shall] the words of thy mouth [be like] a strong wind?"

Rather than offering religious platitudes as Eliphaz had done, "Bildad", a coldly intellectual debater who saw life in black and white, coarsely attacked Job's character. Contending that Job was a windbag, "words ... like a strong wind": trying to justify himself before God. Bildad believed he was positioned to defend God.

It appears that Bildad, the second friend, spoke very bluntly to Job. He was probably a little younger than Eliphaz and less experienced. He spoke strongly and disrespectfully to Job. He spoke of the words of Job, as being pushy and forcing their way like a strong wind would.

Job 8:3 "Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?"

“Almighty pervert justice”: Bildad took Job’s claims for innocence and applied them to his simplistic notion of retribution. He concluded that Job was accusing God of injustice when God must be meting out justice to Job. Job tried to avoid outright accusations of this sort, but the evidence led Bildad to this conclusion because he had no knowledge of the heavenly facts.

Bildad’s first speech focuses on God’s justice, saying that since Yahweh cannot undermine (“Pervert justice”), the judgment on Job and his sons and daughters must have been deserved.

Of course the answer to this was no. This younger friend seemed to accuse Job of saying that God’s judgement was unfair. God does justice at all times. He is fair in all His dealings with men.

Verses 4-7: Bildad also believed the principle of retribution was at work (see note on 4:7-11), except he asserted that the sin of Job’s children caused God to “cast them away” to their deaths. According to him, prosperity was only a prayer away “seek unto God ... make thy supplication”).

Job 8:4 "If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression;"

Bildad assumes this absolutely; Eliphaz had only hinted at it (Job 10:4). Both presume to know what could be known only to the Searcher of hearts.

"And he have cast them away for their transgression": Literally, and he have delivered them into the hand of their transgressions; abandoned them, that is, to the consequences of their wrongdoing. The allusion is, of course, to the fact recorded in (Job 1:19), when the house fell on the children.

Bildad accused Job’s children of sinning so greatly against God that He disposed of them. He was bluntly judging them, and also calling their death a punishment from God.

Job 8:5 "If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty;"

Bildad saw in the fate of Job’s children not only proof that they had sinned but that their sin was deadly. He saw in Job’s afflictions proof equally decisive that he had sinned. But the fact that he was still spared, however severe his afflictions, gave a different complexion to his sin, and also suggested a different meaning for his afflictions. They were chastisements meant for his good, and Bildad is enabled to hope the best for Job, if he will rightly take his trials to heart.

"And make thy supplication to the Almighty": Not pleading any merit of his own, as deserving of any blessing on account of what he had done. But ask what he should as a favor, as a free gift, in a way of grace and mercy, as the word signifies.

This brazen friend was even accusing Job of not praying to God. He was actually saying that Job had not cried out to the Almighty. His accusations of course, were not true. Job had even scolded his wife for suggesting that he curse God and die. Job had submitted himself to the LORD immediately and completely, as soon as he heard of his children's death.

Job 8:6 "If thou [wert] pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous."

That is, of a sincere heart and blameless life toward God and men.

"Surely now he would awake for thee": He would raise, or stir up himself. Thus David prays, using the same word, Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment.

"And make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous": He would certainly have a regard to thee, and restore the concerns of thy house and family to their former splendor. He says the habitation of thy righteousness, to signify that if it were such, and he would manage his affairs with righteousness and not wrongfully, God would prosper him accordingly. And perhaps also to intimate, that because he had not prospered they had cause to suspect that he had acquired his property by fraud and oppression.

This friend had made up his mind that all of this calamity had come upon Job for his sins. He told Job if he were a righteous man, God would have already heard him and come to his rescue. This same teaching has sprung up again in our day. We hear some ministers say that if you are in right standing with God, you will automatically be prosperous. This was not true for righteous Job, and is not true for many saints of our day as well. God does prosper some of His children, but not all of them.

Job 8:7 "Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase."

In fact, this was Job's outcome (compare 42:10-17), not because Job repented of some specific sin, but because he humbled himself before the sovereign, inscrutable will of God.

Job was now reduced to near nothing. If God did decide to bless him, He could greatly increase Job again. I do not believe this friend of Job believed that God would do this for Job. He felt as if Job deserved all of the punishment he had endured.

Verses 8-10: Here Bildad appealed to past authorities, godly ancestors who taught the same principle, that where there is suffering, there must be sin. So, he had history as a witness to his misjudgment.

Tradition is not necessarily correct. The past is supposed to be a rudder to guide a person, not an anchor to hold him or her down.

Job 8:8 "For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers:"

“Inquire ... of the former age”: Bildad seems to be basing his case on wisdom tradition, unlike Eliphaz who appealed to experience.

His advice to Job was that he should search through the past history for an answer to this dilemma. His fathers, or grandfathers, might have had a similar problem. It appears from this, that there had been some kind of records kept prior to Job's lifetime.

Job 8:9 "(For we [are but of] yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth [are] a shadow:)"

"We," i.e. "of the present generation, old men though we may be, are but of yesterday. Our experience is as nothing compared with the long, long experience of the past centuries, wherein the men of old "stored wisdom with each studious year". Not like ourselves, hurried and pressed by the shortness of the term to which life is now reduced. But having ample time for reflection and consideration in their long lives of five, six, seven, centuries (Gen. 11:10-17). Which enabled them to give their attention to everything in its turn, and to exhaust all the experiences that human life has to offer.

"And know nothing": I.e. comparatively. Sir Isaac Newton said that he felt like a child gathering shells upon the seashore, while the great ocean of truth lay unexplored before him.

"Because our days upon earth are a shadow": (Compare Job 14:2; Psalm 102:11; Isa. 40:6). So brief and fleeting that they can scarcely be called a reality.

Life on earth is short-lived. The moment in time is so short, that it would be difficult to learn much from it. In times of old, the people lived hundreds of years and experienced many more things. Their lives can be of use to us as a teacher.

Job 8:10 "Shall not they teach thee, [and] tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?"

Assuredly they will inform thee that it is as we say.

"And utter words out of their heart": Not partially, but sincerely, speaking their inward thoughts. Not rashly, but from deep consideration; not by hearsay from others, but their own knowledge and experience.

Job's friend believed that he had made errors that could have been avoided, had he studied his ancestors.

Verses 11-19: He further supported his simple logic of cause and effect by illustrations from nature. Again, he accused Job of sin, but surely he had forgotten God as well (verse 13).

While God does use nature to communicate and teach, Bildad's attempt to sermonize was insensitive, for the cause of Job's every problem was not a hypocritical relationship with God. Pious platitudes and spiritualizing only cause further damage. True friends seek to understand rather than condemn.

Job 8:11 "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water?"

No, at least not long, or so as to lift up his head on high, as the word signifies. The rush or bulrush, which seems to be meant, delights in watery places, and has its name in Hebrew from its absorbing or drinking up water. It grows in moist and watery clay, or in marshy places, which Jarchi says is the sense of the word here used. The Septuagint understands it of the "paper reed", which, as Pliny observes, grows in the marshy places of Egypt, and by the still waters of the river Nile.

"Can the flag grow without water?" Or "the sedge"; which usually grows in moist places, and on the banks of rivers. This unless in such places, or if without water, cannot grow long, or make any very large increase, or come to maturity. So some render it, "if the rush should grow up without" etc.

The rush here was speaking of the papyrus which grew in the very wet mire of a lake or river. The flag was a water plant as well. When the water was gone, both of them would die. In a spiritual sense, this is telling Job to draw water from his roots. Water in this particular sense, would be the Word of God.

Job 8:12 "Whilst it [is] yet in his greenness, [and] not cut down, it withereth before any [other] herb."

It grows and flourishes in a rich greenness up to a certain point; if no one touches it. But the water fails from the root, and it fades, collapses, and is gone.

"It withereth before any other herb": The ground may be all green around it with ordinary grass and other herbs, since they only need a little moisture, but the water-plant will collapse unless it has its full supply.

This was speaking of a time when it had grown to its greatest height. When the land dried up where it was planted, it quickly died. At the peak of the greatness of Job, this terrible calamity had come.

Job 8:13 "So [are] the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish:"

So do those proceed on their way by whom God has been forgotten. They spring up in apparent strength and lusty force. They flourish for a brief space; then, untouched by man's hand, they suddenly fade, fall, and disappear, before the mass of their contemporaries. Job is, of course, glanced at in the expression, "all that forget God," though it is the last thing that he had done.

"And the hypocrite's hope shall perish": Or, the hope of the ungodly man shall perish (compare Job 13:16; 15:34; 17:8).

This is a true statement, but did not apply to Job. Job had not forgotten God. He was not a hypocrite. His troubles had come because he loved God.

Job 8:14 "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust [shall be] a spider's web."

That is, whose wealth and outward glory, which is the foundation and matter of his hope, shall be suddenly and violently taken away from him. Or, as the Hebrew may be translated: whose hope shall be irksome or tedious to him, by the succession of earliest expectations and great disappointments.

"Whose trust shall be a spider's web": Which though it be formed with great art and industry, and may do much mischief to others. Yet is most slender and feeble, and easily swept down, or pulled in pieces, and unable to defend the spider that made it. The application is obvious.

This friend did not truly know Job. He had judged Job without any evidence of any of this. It appears to the natural eye, that Job's hope was cut off. A spider builds a web to trap its prey. This was a terrible statement to make about Job.

Job 8:15 "He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure."

He shall trust to the multitude and strength of his children and servants, and to his wealth, all which come under the name of a man's house in Scripture.

"But it shall not stand": That is, not be able to uphold itself, nor him that trusted to it.

"He shall hold it fast": Or, he shall take fast hold of it to strengthen and uphold himself by it. But his web, that refuge of lies, will be swept away, and be crushed in it. Or, by holding it fast, may be meant, that he shall endeavor to support his house by strong alliances, but it will be to no purpose.

"But it shall not endure": Gold perishes, riches come to nought, wealth is no enduring substance, nor is a man's righteousness lasting. Only Christ's righteousness is everlasting. True grace endures to eternal and issues in it; but external gifts, speculative and rational knowledge, and a mere profession of religion, fail, cease, and vanish away.

He was accusing Job of building upon something besides the Rock of God. He was actually accusing Job of building on shifting sand. Everyone around Job had a negative reason for his trouble. Job knew this was not true.

Job 8:16 "He [is] green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden."

Bildad here introduces a third and more elaborate simile. The hypocrite, or ungodly man (verse 13), is as a gourd (Jonah 4:6). Or other rapidly growing plant, which shoots forth at sunrise with a wealth of greenery, spreading itself over a whole garden, and even sending forth its sprays and tendrils beyond it (compare Gen. 49:22). Lovely to look at, and full, apparently, of life and vigor.

“And his branch shooteth forth in his garden”: Rather, over his garden or beyond his garden.

Again, he was speaking of the prosperity of Job, which was well known by everyone. He was prospering in every way.

Job 8:17 "His roots are wrapped about the heap, [and] seeth the place of stones."

The heap of stones where the tree stands. It strikes its roots among them, and implicates and twists them about them, and secures itself and grows up notwithstanding them. And this expresses the seeming stable state and condition of hypocrites for a season, who not only flourish, but seem to take root; and who maintain their ground amidst some difficulties. This fitly agrees with and describes such hearers of the word, and professors of religion, comparable to the seed sown on stony ground (Matt. 13:5).

"And seeth the place of stones": Or, "the house of stones"; a house built of stones, high and stately. Yet this tree rises higher than that, overtops and overlooks it; and is represented as viewing it thoroughly, or looking down upon it, and all around it, being so high and so spreading. The Targum renders it, implicates the house of stones. But this seems to be designed in the former clause: all this suits very well with good men, whose "roots are wrapped about the fountain". As the words may be rendered; about the love of God, in which they are rooted and grounded, and are like trees planted by rivers of water, the river of divine love, which refreshes, revives, and makes them fruitful. And about Christ, the fountain of gardens and well of living waters; in whom they are rooted and built up, increase, flourish, and are established. And though they are among stones, and attended with many difficulties, yet they abide and surmount all; believe in hope against hope, and see and enjoy. Yea, even dwell in the house of stones, the church of God, built on a rock, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

The water that fed the plant in the verse above, was coming from the stones like a spring does. It appears the plant had wrapped around the rock to ensure itself of the life-giving water.

Job 8:18 "If he destroy him from his place, then [it] shall deny him, [saying], I have not seen thee."

Either God, who is the Savior of good men, and the Destroyer of the wicked; or the owner; or any other man. For this is an indefinite speech, and may be taken passively and impersonally; which is very common in the holy text and language.

"From his place": in which he was planted.

"Then it": I.e. the place; to which denying him and seeing him are here ascribed figuratively, as we have often seen.

"I have not seen thee": I.e., I do not know nor remember that I was ever planted here. He shall be so utterly crushed and destroyed, that there shall be no footstep, nor name, nor memorial of him left there.

This was speaking of the sudden calamity that came upon Job, just as this plant was suddenly uprooted.

Job 8:19 "Behold, this [is] the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow."

Bitter irony. The hypocrite boasts of joy. This then is his "joy" at the last.

"And out of the earth": Others immediately, who take the place of the man thus punished; not godly men (Matt. 3:9). For the place of the weeds is among stones, where the gardener wishes no plants.

"And out of the earth shall others grow": A fresh crop of weeds always springs up in the place of those torn up. As there is no end of hypocrites on the earth.

Each plant lives for a short time, and then another takes its place. That was what Job's friend was saying here. Job would be replaced by another.

Verses 20-22: Bildad held out the possibility of restoration to Job, but it must have been cold comfort after the wave of insults (Psalms 35:26; 109:29).

Job 8:20 "Behold, God will not cast away a perfect [man], neither will he help the evil doers:"

"God will not cast away a perfect man": This comment contains a veiled offer of hope. Job could laugh again but he must take steps to become blameless. But Bildad, like Job, was unaware of the dialogue between the Sovereign Judge and the Accuser in the opening chapters of the book and unaware that God had already pronounced Job "blameless" twice to heavenly beings (1:8; 2:3), as had the writer (1:1; compare Psalms 1:6; 126:2; 132:18).

Job 8:21 "Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing."

This is very elliptical. The full phrase would be, "God will not cast away a perfect man. Therefore, if thou be such, he will not cast away thee, till he fill thy mouth with laughter, and thy lips with rejoicing," or "with shouting for joy."

Job was just and upright. Bildad had no way of knowing that Job was anything but an upright man. Bildad had judged Job severely and unjustly. In that sense, Bildad was an evildoer. He was stating in the verse above, if Job was a righteous man, God would not cast him away. God would fill his mouth with laughing, and his lips would rejoice.

Job 8:22 "They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought."

The Chaldeans and Sabeans, who had plundered him of his substance, when they should see him restored to his former prosperity, beyond all hope and expectation. And themselves liable to his resentment, and under the displeasure of Providence: the phrase denotes utter confusion, and such as is visible as the clothes upon a man's back (see Psalm 132:18).

"And the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to naught": Or, "shall not be"; shall be no more. Be utterly destroyed, and no more built up again. Even such dwelling places they fancied would continue for ever, and perpetuate their names to the latest posterity. But the curse of God being in them, and upon them, they come to nothing, and are no more. Thus ends Bildad's speech; Job's answer to it follows.

Bildad was speaking judgement upon the friends of Job in this. These friends included him. They had hated Job without a cause. This shame would not be long in coming. Judging others was a dangerous thing to do, especially a righteous man such as Job.

Job Chapter 8 Questions

1. Bildad was a _____.
2. What did he say that the words of Job's mouth were like?
3. How did he speak to Job?
4. What was the answer to these questions?
5. Bildad accused Job's children of what?
6. What was he calling Job's children's death?
7. What did he accuse Job of in verse 5?
8. What did he call God in verse 5?
9. Job had scolded his wife for what?
10. What had Job done immediately on hearing of his children's death?
11. What had Job's friend made up his mind about?
12. What are many ministers, today, telling their people brings automatic prosperity?
13. What was verse 7 saying?

14. Bildad told Job to inquire of whom?
15. Our days upon earth are a _____.
16. What was the rush in verse 11?
17. What was the flag?
18. Whose hope shall perish?
19. Why does a spider build a web?
20. What happened to the house in verse 15?
21. Where did the water come from, that was feeding the plant in verse 17?
22. What was Job's friend saying in verse 19?
23. What would God do for the perfect man?
24. Who was Bildad speaking judgement upon in verse 22?