



Job - Chapter Eight

II Job 3:1-42:6 - Dialogue: Job, His Suffering, and His Standing before God (continues)

II.b Job 4:1-25:6 - The Friends and Job: Can Job be Right Before God? (continues)

II.b.i Job 4:1-14:22 - The First Cycle (continues)

Summary of Chapter Eight

Bildad immediately begins with a stern rebuke: Job's words are a tempestuous wind (refer also to Job 6:26), and whatever has come upon his children or upon Job himself has to be right, because God does not pervert justice (vv.1-7). If Job will simply listen to the wisdom to which Bildad is pointing him, he will remember that the wicked do not endure (vv.8-19), and that God will surely restore Job if he is truly blameless (vv.20-22).

II.b.i.3 Job 8:1-22 - Bildad Speaks: Job Should Repent

Refer to the chapter summary above.

¹ Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:

² 'How long will you say these things,
and the words of your mouth be a great wind?

³ Does God pervert justice?

Or does the Almighty pervert the right?

⁴ If your children sinned against him,
he delivered them into the power of their transgression.

- 5 If you will seek God
and make supplication to the Almighty,
6 if you are pure and upright,
surely then he will rouse himself for you
and restore to you your rightful place.
7 Though your beginning was small,
your latter days will be very great.

Job 8:1-7

How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a great wind? Bildad, who some think was a descendant of Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah (Genesis 24:1-2), now speaks. He admonished Job for Job's rebuke of Eliphaz who had previously criticised Job. Bildad dismissed Job's defence as recorded in Job Chapters 6-7 as a great wind. Bildad was quick to rebuke Job for his strong words; but he did not stop to consider why Job spoke this way. He heard Job's words but did not consider his pain or confusion.

Does God pervert justice? Bildad's confidence is in the justice of God; in the idea that Job could only receive such calamity from God as the just punishment for some sin: <<*Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice*>> (Job 34:12), <<*Ha! You who hide a plan too deep for the Lord, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, 'Who sees us? Who knows us?'*>> (Isaiah 29:15), <<*But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way)*>> (Romans 3:5).

After the rhetorical questions 'Does God pervert justice?' and 'Or does the Almighty pervert the right?' Bildad presents two conditional statements to Job that are meant to represent the necessary consequences of God's justice. The first (v.4), although set as a conditional, assumes that Job's children have suffered because of their sin. The second is then meant to call Job to remember that if he will repent (v.5) and if he is blameless (v.6), then God will spare him from the end that his children have suffered. Bildad was brash enough to throw the death of Job's sons before his face, i.e. If your children sinned against him, he delivered them into the power of their transgression. There is not only steely indifference to Job's plight but an arrogant certainty that Job's children only received what their own sin deserved and that Job was well on his way to the same fate. The encouragement to earnestly seek God comes right after the condemnation of Job's sons.

Or does the Almighty pervert the right? Scripture answers this question, but now without allowing some to question the Lord's righteous judgement in some cases, for example: <<*Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?>>* (Genesis 18:25), <<*You will be in the right, O Lord, when I lay charges against you; but let me put my case to you. Why does the way of the guilty prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?>>* (Jeremiah 12:1), and: <<*O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you 'Violence!' and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous – therefore judgement comes forth perverted>>* (Habakkuk 1:2-4).

Though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great. When Bildad said this he was both wrong and right. He was wrong in that he assumed that, because Job was not currently in prosperity and abundance, it proved that Job had not made supplication and was not pure and upright. Charles Spurgeon comments, "He wished to prove that Job could not possibly be an upright man, for if he were so, he here affirms that his prosperity would increase continually." Bildad was right in that Job, at the end of his trials, did increase abundantly: <<*And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before>>* (Job 42:10). Again Spurgeon comments, "It is true, as indeed the facts of the book of Job prove: for Job did greatly increase in his latter end. His beginning was small: he was brought down to poverty! To the potsherd and to the dunghill he had many graves, but no children; he had had many losses, he had now nothing left to lose; and yet God did awake for him; his righteousness came out from the darkness which had eclipsed it; he shone in sevenfold prosperity so that the words of Bildad were prophetic, though he knew it not; God put into his mouth language which did come true, after all."

- ⁸ 'For inquire now of bygone generations,
and consider what their ancestors have found;
- ⁹ for we are but of yesterday, and we know nothing,
for our days on earth are but a shadow.
- ¹⁰ Will they not teach you and tell you
and utter words out of their understanding?

Job 8:8-10

For inquire now of bygone generations. If Eliphaz based his counsel on the night vision (refer to the comment made on Job 4:12-21), here Bildad appeals instead to the tradition of their ancestors. Bildad asked Job to consult the wisdom of the ages and to consider what they had to teach and tell Job: <<*Remember the days of old, consider the years long past; ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you*>> (Deuteronomy 32:7), <<*So even to old age and grey hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come*>> (Psalm 71:18a), <<*Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not reject your mother's teaching*>> (Proverbs 1:8), and: <<*Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight; for I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching*>> (Proverbs 4:1-2).

Bildad quoted the ancients, but even in ancient Biblical history they could see that there is not an easily seen correlation between righteousness and blessing. Even at the beginning of time, Abel was righteous but was rewarded with murder at the hand of his own brother Cain.

For we are but of yesterday, and we know nothing. Bildad gave Job a graceful excuse for what he considered to be his previous foolishness. It was simply because Job did not consider and consult ancient wisdom.

For our days on earth are but a shadow. Compared to the eternal existence of God and the promise of a life yet to come, the span of even the longest lived humans is but a blink of the eye in comparison.

- 11 'Can papyrus grow where there is no marsh?
Can reeds flourish where there is no water?
- 12 While yet in flower and not cut down,
they wither before any other plant.
- 13 Such are the paths of all who forget God;
the hope of the godless shall perish.
- 14 Their confidence is gossamer,
a spider's house their trust.
- 15 If one leans against its house, it will not stand;
if one lays hold of it, it will not endure.
- 16 The wicked thrive before the sun,

and their shoots spread over the garden.

17 Their roots twine around the stoneheap;
they live among the rocks.

18 If they are destroyed from their place,
then it will deny them, saying, “I have never seen you.”

Job 8:11-18

Typical of wisdom literature, Bildad uses an analogy from nature to illustrate his point regarding the vulnerability of the wicked. Papyrus and reeds grow quickly in the wetlands to a height of 15 feet or 4.6m or more, but are also the most vulnerable of plants, dependent on a constant supply of water. Other plants are deeply rooted in rocky soil, but they can be uprooted, leaving no trace of their presence. The way of the wicked is precarious and futile.

These reeds are like the hypocrite or the one who makes a mere show of faith without true trust in God. Spurgeon used Bildad’s illustration of papyrus reed here as a description of the hypocrite:

- Like the reed, hypocrites grow up quickly.
- Like the reed, hypocrites are hollow and without substance.
- Like the reed, hypocrites are easily bent.
- Like the reed, hypocrites can lower their head in false humility.
- Like the reed, hypocrites bear no fruit.

Spurgeon continues, “Long before the Lord comes to cut the hypocrite down, it often happens that he dries up for want of the mire on which he lives. The excitement, the encouragement, the example, the profit, the respectability, the prosperity, upon which he lived fail him, and he fails too.”

Such are the paths of all who forget God. Even as the papyrus quickly withers and dies, so will all those who turn their back on God. He may prosper for a time, but will ultimately come to ruin.

Bildad is quite correct with his statements of fact but just as wrong in his deductions in applying these facts to Job’s situation.

19 See, these are their happy ways,
and out of the earth still others will spring.

20 ‘See, God will not reject a blameless person,
nor take the hand of evildoers.

21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,

and your lips with shouts of joy.

²² Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
and the tent of the wicked will be no more.'

Job 8:19-22

See, these are their happy ways, God will not reject a blameless person. Bildad's message was blunter and less diplomatic than that of Eliphaz, but his basic message was the same. Job could once again come to a place of joy and laughing if he would only turn to God again.

In his conclusion, Bildad asserts two things: if Job were a blameless man God would not have rejected him; and the tent of the wicked will not stand for long. Job will question the truth of each assertion, "If a man were blameless, how could he show himself to be right before the God of justice?" Refer to Job 9:2. And, "if shame and disaster are the fate of the wicked, how is it that the wicked so often appear to prosper in relative safety?" Refer to Job 12:6 and 21:7.

In his simple theology everything can be explained in terms of two kinds of men - the blameless, Hebrew *tam*, used of Job in Job 1:1, and the secretly wicked, Hebrew *hanep* (v.13). Outwardly the same, God distinguishes them by prospering the one and destroying the other.

Those who hate you will be clothed with shame. Job's frustration was rising because of these contentious dialogues with his friends. After the harsh words between Eliphaz and Job (Chapters 4-5 and 6-7), Bildad invited Job to find vindication through repentance.

Bildad had his wisdom of the ancients and his own belief system, both of which agreed and seemed unshakable. What he did not really have was God himself. Bildad and the other counsellors of Job talk a lot but what they do not do is pray and seek God themselves. It would seem that Bildad had very little real experience with God; yet Job was being prepared to experience God so closely that he could say: <<*but now my eyes see you*>> (Job 42:5b).