

Job and His Three Friends: The Introduction of Bildad

Chapter 8

Job 8:1&2 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,

² How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?

BILDAD, showing little patience toward Job, voices his irritation with Job's response to Eliphaz.

The words of thy mouth be like a strong wind? - The Syriac and Arabic (according to Walton) render this, "the spirit of pride fill thy mouth." The Septuagint renders it, "The spirit of thy mouth is profuse of words" - πνομηῖρρυλο *polurrēmon*. But the common rendering is undoubtedly correct, and the expression is a very strong and beautiful one. His language of complaint and murmuring was like a tempest. It swept over all barriers, and disregarded all restraint.¹

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

It is worth considering that though men improperly apply truth to the wrong situations, the truth still retains its integrity. Though men may speak God's Word where it does not apply, it is still the truth. Though spoken by a miserable comforter, Bildad's words are still true words. God will neither pervert judgment nor deny justice, so He will not deal unjustly or unrighteously with men. There is nothing for Him to gain by doing so and nothing unrighteous in Him that could cause such an action. As a fair and just God, He cannot and will not ever judge any man unrighteously. Men reap as they have sown,² and they determine their own fate. If God executes His judgment in men's lives for either good or evil, it is what they deserved according to His divine laws. To

¹ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 8:2

² Gal. 6:7&8 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. ³For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

³ Benson Commentary, Job 8:3

infer otherwise is to conclude that God is a corrupt judge who perverts justice.

Doth God — Hebrew, לַא, *El*, the mighty God, as this word signifies; *pervert judgment?* — Judge unrighteously? No: this is inconsistent with God's nature, which is essentially and necessarily just, and with his office of governor of the world. *Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?* — Hebrew, יְשַׁדַּי, *Shaddai*, a word that sets forth God's *omnipotence* and *all-sufficiency*. These names are emphatically used to prove that God cannot deal unjustly or falsely with men: because he hath no need so to do, nor temptation to it, being self-sufficient for his own happiness, and being able, by his own invincible power, to do whatsoever pleaseth him.³

This principle that God will not pervert justice is such an important one to consider. It is also included in Elihu's divine and proper reproof of Job, revealed later in the book, where Elihu focuses on Job's false belief that his rights were violated and he was not given a fair chance to appeal his case. Job initially thought that if he could defend himself in God's courtroom, he would be acquitted and proven righteous. Elihu's words to Job are similar to Bildad's, yet they are spoken correctly through the inspiration of the Spirit.

Job 34:1–5 Furthermore Elihu answered and said,

² Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.

³ For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth meat.

⁴ Let us choose to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good.

⁵ For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment.

Elihu's reproof stems from Job's own words in 27:2.

Job 27:2 As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul;

my judgment] As above, **my right**. God has taken this away by afflicting Job unjustly. The state of Job's mind here is altogether the same as before. He still cleaves to God and swears by His name, and still charges Him with iniquity in His treatment of himself.⁴

Job believes he was treated like a guilty man without a proper trial and the chance to defend himself. Thus, he infers that God perverted judgment. In the end, though, it is God who demands of Job an accounting for what he has done, not Job complaining to Him about His unfairness. *Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.*⁵ After being corrected by the Lord, Job repeats none of his previous claims against Him but rather confesses his own vileness. *Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.*⁶ After Elihu's and Jehovah's reproofs, Job's heart turns from accusation against God to conviction of himself. Therefore, the tongue that was used to infer improper justice is now properly used to admit Job's own sinfulness.

Behold, I am vile: what shall I answer thee? - "Instead of being able to argue my cause, and to vindicate myself as I had expected, I now see that I am guilty, and I have nothing to say." He had argued boldly with his friends. He had, before them, maintained his innocence of the charges which they brought against him, and had supposed that he would be able to maintain the same argument before God. But when the opportunity was given, he felt that he was a poor, weak man; a guilty and miserable offender. It is a very different thing to maintain our cause before God, from what it is to maintain it before people; and though we may attempt to vindicate our own righ-

teousness when we argue with our fellow-creatures, yet when we come to maintain it before God we shall be dumb. On earth, people vindicate themselves; what will they do when they come to stand before God in the judgment?⁷

What is learned here should be considered by all men: it is one thing for the atheist and God-rejector, and even professing Christians, to indict God on this earth, but quite another thing to stand before the majesty of His power in heaven. It is one thing for even God's children to question His judgment in their lives, but another to have to give their own account. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*⁸ Christ shall sit on His throne, and every man will have to give an account of the things done in His body. This will include things done by the tongue, the hand, and the heart. All men will have to give an account to the Lord. The book of Job, perhaps the oldest book of the Bible, clearly teaches this—that those who complain against God's justice will have to stand and give an account before His throne.⁹ This was true for Job, and it will be true for every man who questions God after Job. Job was among the first to have to give an account to God for his thoughts and words, but he will not be the last.

Elihu's proper reproof of Job continues.

Job 34:6–12 Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression.

⁷ *What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?*

⁸ *Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men.*

⁴ Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Job 27:2

⁵ Job 38:3

⁶ Job 40:4&5

⁷ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 40:4

⁸ II Cor. 5:10

⁹ Matt. 12:36 *But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

Rom. 14:10–12 *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. ¹²So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

I Pet. 4:5 *Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.*

⁹ *For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.*

¹⁰ *Therefore hearken unto me ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.*

¹¹ *For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways.*

¹² *Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.*

Men have forever accused God of being unfair in His judgments.¹⁰ It is for this reason that men murmur and make false accusations against His character. It should be noted that those who murmur against his justice are not thankful for His grace. *And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.*¹¹ Of course, all grumbling is sin and without merit, yet it is repeated over and over by men who are sinners to the highest degree, who transfer what is in them to God.

When men reap as they have sown and do not like their fruit, God is generally blamed. As a rule, sinners take little to no responsibility for their corrupt hearts and sinful actions. Instead of condemning themselves, they readily transfer injustice to God. Every sinner, until he comes to possess a broken and contrite spirit,¹² will assume the role of the victim

of both God's justice and judgment, foolishly believing that He is somehow wrong in dealing with him. It is not until these false beliefs are broken and men see their own sin against God that reconciliation with God becomes possible.

God's judgment is one of the ways in which God instructs men in His righteousness. By judgment, He teaches men the error of their ways. By divine judgment, men learn His righteousness. *With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.*¹³

For when thy judgments are in the earth - This is given as a reason for what had just been said, that in their calamity they had sought God without ceasing. The reason is, that the punishments which he inflicted were intended to lead people to learn righteousness. The sentiment is expressed in a general form, though there is no doubt that the immediate reference is to the calamities which the Jews had suffered in their removal to Babylon as a punishment for their sins.

Learn righteousness - The design is to warn, to restrain, and to reform them. The immediate reference here was undoubtedly to the Jews, in whom this effect was seen in a remarkable manner in their captivity in Babylon. But it is also true of other nations; and though the effect of calamity is not always to turn a people to God, or to make them permanently righteous, yet it restrains them, and leads them at least to an external reformation. It is also true in regard to nations as well as individuals, that they make a more decided advance in virtue and piety in days of affliction than in the time of great external prosperity (compare Deuteronomy 6:11-12¹⁴).¹⁵

There will be no good end for any who falsely accuse God of dealing improp-

¹⁰ Num. 14:34 *After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.*

Deut. 1:27 *And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.*

Ps. 106:25 *But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.*

¹¹ Exod. 16:7&8

¹² Ps. 51:17 *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

¹³ Isa. 26:9

¹⁴ Deut. 6:11&12 *And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;*

¹⁵ *Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.*

¹⁵ Barnes' *Notes on the Bible*, Isa. 26:9

erly with them. Opposing and rebelling against His judgments will only increase pain and suffering, as none have ever fought with the Lord and won.¹⁶ *There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.*¹⁷ Isaiah also echoes the futility of men striving with their Maker. *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? or thy work, He hath no hands?*¹⁸ Men will never win when they war against God; neither shall they find any peace in themselves while doing it. He who fights against God brings trouble to his own soul.¹⁹ If men continue blaming God for wrongdoing, they will then remove themselves from His salvation. Accusers of the Lord will never be saved by Him.

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

Bildad's words reveal his lack of both compassion and love. The death of one child is unbearably painful, let alone all

of one's children, yet Bildad speaks with no apparent empathy for Job. If men are not prompted by love or led by God's Spirit, then even if what they speak has elements of truth, they do not speak for God. *And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.*²⁰ If a man does not love, then whatever other thoughts he may have of God and the reasons He will judge men cannot be right.²¹ Truly enlightened men are fully aware that it grieves God's holy character to bring forth judgment on sinful men.²² *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the LORD God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?*²³ So also, *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*²⁴

Bildad's words continue, but with the very shaky and shallow premise that if Job were pure and upright, God would respond to his pain.

Job 8:5-6 If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty;

¹⁶ Acts 5:39 *But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.*

¹⁷ Prov. 21:30 (NIV)

¹⁸ Isa. 45:9

¹⁹ Acts 26:14 *And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

²⁰ I Pet. 4:8

²¹ John 13:35 *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

I John 2:9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

I John 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

I John 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

I John 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

²² Gen. 6:5-7 *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. ⁷And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.*

Exod. 32:14 And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

I Sam. 15:10-11 Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, ¹¹It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

II Sam. 24:16 And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite.

I Chrn. 21:15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

Jonah 3:10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

²³ Ezek. 18:23

²⁴ I Tim. 2:4

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

If thou wert pure and upright - ...Nothing could be more unjust and severe, however, than to take it for granted that he was a hypocrite, and then proceed to argue as if that were a settled point. He does not make it a supposition that possibly Job might have erred - which would not have been improper; but he proceeds to argue as if it were a point about which there could be no hesitation.²⁵

Bildad speaks of men being upright before God as if it were a small thing, as if man, in his sinful state, could be pure in God's eyes. These are the thoughts of a very shallow thinker who has no real insight even into his own sinful nature. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*²⁶ Only determined sinners and religious hypocrites, which Job surely was not, do not know this.²⁷ True religion, which is taught by God, does not make a man pure but rather reveals to him how impure he is. True purity before God is not something any man can achieve on his own. It is also a false assumption that men's purity is what allows God to hear their prayers. The real truth is that every prayer, both heard and answered by God, comes from a sinner. Hence, even godly men are, to a degree, sinful men. If God were to only hear those without sin, then none would be truly heard at all. So every petition answered by God needs His mercy for it to be granted. It is not by human purity that prayers are answered or men's needs are met, but solely through divine mercy. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*²⁸ The Lord instructs men when they approach Him to rely on His mercy

and not their own purity. God's throne is spoken of as a throne of grace, where divine mercy is distributed to care for men's needs. It is a place of compassion where through God's good character petitions made unto Him are granted. Thus, if a man leans on himself when trying to gain confidence in God, he will never have it; but if his confidence is placed in God's mercy, his courage to come to God will continue to grow. True faith and confidence in having our prayers answered and petitions granted do not have man as their foundation, but God.

Job 9:1&2 Then Job answered and said, 2 I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?

The question has never been satisfactorily answered except in the Christian revelation, where a plan is disclosed by which God "may be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth." Through the infinite merits of the Redeemer, man, though conscious that he is personally a sinner, may be treated as if he had never sinned; though feeling that he is guilty, he may consistently be forever treated as if he were just. The question asked by Job implies that such is the evidence and the extent of human guilt, that man can never justify himself. This is clear and indisputable. Man cannot justify himself by the deeds of the law. ... He can never be justified therefore by the law, and it is only by that system which God has revealed in the gospel, where a conscious sinner may be treated as if he were righteous through the merits of another, that a man can ever be regarded as just before God; see Romans 1:17,²⁹ note; Romans 3:24-25,³⁰ note.³¹

Bildad speaks of Job as though he is not pure and upright, and to this Job replies, "Who then can be?" Again, it is only the self-righteous man, like the Pharisee in Luke 18, who thinks himself worthy to stand in God's holy presence.³² It is also

²⁵ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 8:6

²⁶ Rom. 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

²⁷ I Cor. 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

²⁸ Heb. 4:16

²⁹ Rom. 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

³⁰ Rom. 3:24&25 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

³¹ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 9:2

³² Luke 18:9-14 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

here that we see that Job was aware to a degree of his own unholiness. Job knew that sin existed in both himself and his children, perhaps not to the degree that he would later come to realize, but he was aware of his own inability to be pure before God. The sacrifices that Job made for his children also show us his consciousness of his sin.

God's lesson for Job is not simply about his own vileness but also about the righteousness of His judgments. These are two distinct and different truths. One can know that he is a sinner but not know God as truly righteous, especially in His distribution of judgment. It is by learning this second revelation that true humility enters the heart. The truth is that we can never reach full humility until we accept and agree that God's judgments are fair and equitable.³³ *I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.*³⁴

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

Bildad seems to have spoken under a spirit of prophecy, without being sensible of it, and not imagining in the least that so it would be in fact; for he only affirms it on supposition

of Job's good behaviour for the future, putting it entirely upon that condition, which he had no great expectation of it ever being performed.³⁵

What Bildad says appears to come forth as prophecy, since this would in fact be Job's end.³⁶ However, it cannot be assumed that Bildad was fully aware of this, simply because in his lack of spiritual perception he also assumed Job to be a hypocrite. Observe that God may speak through men—and He has—even when they do not know it. Just as the Lord can make an ass speak,³⁷ so He can also bring truth out of those totally unaware of it.

Job 8:8–10 For enquire, I pray thee, of the search of their fathers:

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

¹⁰ Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?

In analyzing Job's condition, we see that the foundation of Bildad's argument is the former age: the historical past and God's dealings with sinners and saints. He draws his conclusions not only from personal experience but also from history. There is no doubt that men can learn

¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹²I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

³³ Deut. 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

Ps. 9:7&8 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. ⁸And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

Ps. 89:14 Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

Ps. 146:7–9 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners: ⁸The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: ⁹The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

Isa. 30:18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him.

³⁴ Ecc. 3:17

³⁵ Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible, Job 8:7

³⁶ Job 42:12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

³⁷ Num. 22:27–31 And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. ²⁸And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? ²⁹And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. ³⁰And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? and he said, Nay. ³¹Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

much from the past, but the present and the future are always more complicated than a few observations of what is behind us. Life is like a winding river, and though its bends may seem similar, they are all vastly unique. Hence, to simply judge things and make conclusions based on what has happened before shows little true wisdom. History and tradition can be avenues for learning, but they cannot be the only ones and must not be overly relied upon. The former ages can teach us some things, but it is prideful to assume that they can teach all things.

Bildad's words to Job continue:

Job 8:11&12 Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water?

¹² Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb.

Here Bildad refers to two marsh plants common in the area to show the short and very limited prosperity of the hypocrite. His point is that hypocrites may flourish for a time, but this time of prosperity will be only momentary before their pretensions catch up with them.

The word "rush" here נגלל *gôme'* denotes properly a bulrush, and especially the Egyptian papyrus - *papyrus Nilotica*; see the notes at Isaiah 18:2.³⁸ It is derived from the verb נגלל *gâmâ'*, to absorb, to drink up, and is given to this plant because it absorbs or drinks up moisture. ...

Without mire - Without moisture. It grew in the marshy places along the Nile.

Can the flag - Another plant of a similar character. The word אָחֻלָּא *'âchûlâ*, flag, says Gesenius, is an Egyptian word, signifying marsh-grass, reeds, bulrushes, sedge, everything which grows in wet grounds. ... Jerome says of it, "When I inquired of the learned what this word meant, I heard from the Egyptians, that by this name everything was intended in their language which grew up in a pool." The word is synonymous with rush, or bulrush, and denotes a plant which absorbs a great quantity of water. What is the exact

³⁸ Isa. 18:2 *That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled!*

³⁹ Barnes' *Notes on the Bible, Job 8:11&12*

idea which this figure is designed to convey, is not very clear. I think it probable that the whole description is intended to represent a hypocrite, and that the meaning is, that he had in his growth a strong resemblance to such a rush or reed. There was nothing solid or substantial in his piety. It was like the soft, spongy texture of the water-reed, and would wilt under trial, as the papyrus would when deprived of water. ...

And is not cut down - Even when it is not cut down. If suffered to stand by itself, and if undisturbed, it will wither away. The application of this is obvious and beautiful. Such plants have no self sustaining power. They are dependent on moisture for their support. If that is withheld, they droop and die. So with the prosperous sinner and the hypocrite. His piety, compared with that which is genuine, is like the spongy texture of the paper-reed compared with the solid oak. He is sustained in his professed religion by outward prosperity, as the rush is nourished by moisture; and the moment his prosperity is withdrawn, his religion droops and dies like the flag without water.³⁹

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

It must be remembered that Bildad's words about Job's downfall expressed his belief that Job was but a professor of religion and in fact a hypocrite at heart. From Bildad's perspective, Job's world had crashed because of his lack of sincerity in his faith. Job's life, Bildad inferred, was like that of marshy plants, which can endure only in the wet season, when there is prosperity and no adversity. And though it is true that the hypocrite's hope will perish, this would surely not be Job's end. As for hypocrisy, God's Word teaches us that its roots stretch deep into man's past, all the way back to man's beginning. Even in the time of Job, religious hypocrisy was present and pervasive.

(1) That there were hypocrites even in that early age of the world. They are confined to no period, or country, or religious denomination, or profession. There are hypocrites in religion - and so there are in politics, and in business, and in friendship, and in mor-

als. There are pretended friends, and pretended patriots, and pretended lovers of virtue, whose hearts are false and hollow, just as there are pretended friends of religion. Wherever there is genuine coin, it will be likely to be counterfeited; and the fact of a counterfeit is always a tribute to the intrinsic worth of the coin - for who would be at the pains to counterfeit that which is worthless? The fact that there are hypocrites in the church, is an involuntary tribute to the excellency of religion.

(2) The hypocrite has a hope of eternal life. This hope is founded on various things. It may be on his own morality; it may be on the expectation that he will be able to practice a deception; it may be on some wholly false and unfounded view of the character and plans of God. Or taking the word "hypocrite" in a larger sense to denote anyone who pretends to religion and who has none, this hope may be founded on some change of feeling which he has had, and which he mistook for religion; on some supposed vision which he had of the cross or of the Redeemer, or on the mere subsiding of the alarm which an awakened sinner experiences, and the comparative peace consequent on that. The mere cessation of fear produces a kind of peace - as the ocean is calm and beautiful after a storm - no matter what may be the cause, whether it be true religion or any other cause. Many a sinner, who has lost his convictions for sin in any way, mistakes the temporary calm which succeeds for true religion, and embraces the hope of the hypocrite.⁴⁰

Though what Bildad inferred about Job was not true, what he spoke of the hypocrite's end surely is. This is why if a man wants hope in his life, any and all hypocrisy must be avoided. Hypocrites are those who hear the Word but do not by faith and obedience apply It to their lives. And though hypocrites often like the sound of God's voice, they do not obey it. Jesus warned of the consequences of merely hearing God's Word without doing it. The Lord has warned all men that merely hearing His Word is not enough to walk as a Christian. As Jesus said, men have no hope of keeping their religion secure without doing God's Word.

Matthew 7:24-27 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

⁴⁰ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Job 8:13

²⁵ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.

²⁶ And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

²⁷ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

It is only by doing God's Word that we will set our lives upon a rock. It is only when men's religion is sincere that it can withstand life's storms. Only true faith and obedience to God will allow men to endure the storms of this world.

Returning to Bildad's words to Job, still in the context of the hypocrite, we read—

Job 8:14&15 Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.

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

Continuing with this theme, reference is made to the spider trying to hold its web together—either because of a strong wind blowing against it or another physical force passing through it—because it is of such a weak material that it cannot endure.

He shall lean upon his house - This is an allusion to the web or house of the spider. The hope of the hypocrite is called the house which he has built for himself; his home, his refuge, his support. But it shall fail him. In times of trial he will trust to it for support, and it will be found to be as frail as the web of the spider. How little the light and slender thread which a spider spins would avail a man for support in time of danger! So frail and unsubstantial will be the hope of the hypocrite! It is impossible to conceive any figure which would more strongly describe the utter vanity of the hopes of the wicked. ... *He shall hold it fast* - Or, he shall lay hold on it to sustain him, denoting the avidity with which the hypocrite seizes upon his hope. The figure is still taken from the spider, and is an instance of a careful observation of the habits of that insect. The idea is, that the spider, when a

high wind or a tempest blows, seizes upon its slender web to sustain itself. But it is insufficient. The wind sweeps all away. So the tempest of calamity sweeps away the hypocrite, though he grasps at his hope, and would seek security in that, as a spider does in the light and tenuous thread which it has spun.⁴¹

It is important to stress the ultimate consequences of hypocrisy, lest men remain unwarned about the potential severity that will result from merely pretending to follow God.

Another comparison to the hypocrite is used.

Job 8:16–18 He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden.

¹⁷ His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones.

¹⁸ If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee.

Then it shall deny him - That is, the soil, the earth, or the place where it stood. This represents a wicked man under the image of a tree. The figure is beautiful. The earth will be ashamed of it; ashamed that it sustained the tree; ashamed that it ever ministered any nutriment, and will refuse to own it. So with the hypocrite. He shall pass away as if the earth refused to own him, or to retain any recollection of him.

I have not seen thee - I never knew thee. It shall utterly deny any acquaintance with it. There is a striking resemblance here to the language which the Savior says he will use respecting the hypocrite in the day of judgment: "and then will I profess to them, I never knew you;" Matthew 7:23.⁴² The hypocrite has never been known as a pious man. The earth will refuse to own him as such, and so will the heavens.

⁴¹ Barnes' *Notes on the Bible*, Job 8:15

⁴² Matt. 7:23 *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

⁴³ Barnes' *Notes on the Bible*, Job 8:19

⁴⁴ Ps. 37:9 *For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.*

Ps. 37:22 *For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.*

Ps. 37:28&29 *For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. ²⁹The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.*

Ps. 37:34 *Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.*

Isa. 57:13 *When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee; but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain;*

Other translations of verse 18 show us the denial that even the earth will exhibit towards the hypocrite.

(NIV) *But when it is torn from its spot, that place disowns it and says, 'I never saw you.'*

(NAS) *But when it is uprooted, it's as though it never existed!*

(ESV) *If he is destroyed from his place, then it will deny him, saying, 'I have never seen you.'*

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

Behold, this is the joy of his way - This is evidently sarcastic. "Lo! such is the joy of his course! He boasts of joy, as all hypocrites do, but his joy endures only for a little time. This is the end of it. He is cut down and removed, and the earth and the heavens disown him!"

And out of the earth shall others grow - This image is still derived from the tree or plant. The meaning is, that such a plant would be taken away, and that others would spring up in its place which the earth would not be ashamed of. So the hypocrite is removed to make way for others who will be sincere, and who will be useful. Hypocrites and useless people in the church are removed to make way for others who will be active and devoted to the cause of the Redeemer.⁴³

God's promise is that all false religion will one day be replaced by true religion. All false worshippers will be replaced by true worshippers . . . *out of the earth shall others grow.* This teaches us that though hypocrites may have temporary influence, in the end only those with genuine faith will inhabit the earth. This is God's promise to Israel,⁴⁴ and it will be fulfilled. God promises that the wicked, though they have their day now, will have no tomorrow. Hence, there is no lasting and substantial hope for any who do not love,

obey, and yield to Him through a sincere and pure heart. The hope of the hypocrite is vain, and he would be wise not to pretend otherwise.

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

Bildad's words now shift to a very general truth, but it's one that hardly applies to Job because from God's point of view, Job meets the standard.⁴⁵

Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man. Bildad winds up with words of apparent trust in, and good will towards, Job. God is absolutely just, and will neither forsake the righteous man nor uphold the wicked one. If Job is, as he says, true to God, upright, and (humanly speaking) "perfect," then he has only to go on trusting God; God will not leave him "till he fill his mouth with laughing, and his lips with rejoicing" (ver 21); then "they that irate him shall be clothed with shame, and their dwelling-place shall come to nought" (ver. 22); but if, as we feel instinctively that Bildad believes, Job is not "perfect," but "an evil-doer," then he must expect no relief, no lull in his sufferings; he is obnoxious to all the threatenings which have formed the bulk of Bildad's discourse (vers. 8-20) - he may look to being cut off, like the rush and the flag (vers. 11, 12), crushed like

the spider's web (ver. 14), destroyed, and forgotten, like the rapidly growing gourd (vers. 16-19); he must look for no help from God (ver. 20); but must be contented to pass away and make room for men of a better stamp (ver. 19). Neither will he help the evil-doers; literally, neither will he grasp the hand of evil-doers; i.e. though he may support them for a while, he will not maintain them firmly and constantly.⁴⁶

Job 8:21&22 Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing.

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

Bildad concludes that if Job is truly penitent and righteous, this will be his end. There is no real sense of certainty in his words, which are not nearly as harsh as the judgments he uttered against hypocrites. Perhaps Bildad's thoughts are like those of so many of us who feel certain that the wicked will fall but seem to have much less faith that the righteous will be rewarded. However, if one truth of God is certain, the other must be equally as certain. God's warnings and promises will be equally upheld, for the Lord will bless the saints just as He uproots the hypocrite. The justice of God demands that each man receives as he has sown. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Job 1:8 *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

⁴⁶ *Pulpit Commentary, Job 8:20*

⁴⁷ Gal. 6:7