

# CHAPTER 8

Job's friends are like Job's messengers: the latter followed one another close with evil tidings, the former followed him with harsh censures: both, unawares, served Satan's design; these to drive him from his integrity, those to drive him from the comfort of it. Eliphaz did not reply to what Job had said in answer to him, but left it to Bildad, whom he knew to be of the same mind with himself in this affair. Those are not the wisest of the company, but the weakest rather, who covet to have all the talk. Let others speak in their turn, and let the first keep silence, <sup><440></sup>1 Corinthians 14:30, 31. Eliphaz had undertaken to show that because Job was sorely afflicted he was certainly a wicked man. Bildad is much of the same mind, and will conclude Job a wicked man unless God do speedily appear for his relief. In this chapter he endeavours to convince Job,

- I.** That he had spoken too passionately (v. 2).
- II.** That he and his children had suffered justly (v. 3, 4).
- III.** That, if he were a true penitent, God would soon turn his captivity (v. 5-7).
- IV.** That it was a usual thing for Providence to extinguish the joys and hopes of wicked men as his were extinguished; and therefore that they had reason to suspect him for a hypocrite (v. 8-19).
- V.** That they would be abundantly confirmed in their suspicion unless God did speedily appear for his relief (v. 20-22).

## <888> JOB 8:1-7

### THE ADDRESS OF BILDAD

Here,

**I.** Bildad reproves Job for what he had said (v. 2), checks his passion, but perhaps (as is too common) with greater passion. We thought Job spoke a great deal of good sense and much to the purpose, and that he had reason

and right on his side; but Bildad, like an eager angry disputant, turns it all off with this, *How long wilt thou speak these things?* taking it for granted that Eliphaz had said enough to silence him, and that therefore all he said was impertinent. Thus (as Caryl observes) reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes. Men's meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked as if they were evil-doers. Bildad compares Job's discourse to a *strong wind*. Job had excused himself with this, that his speeches were but *as wind* (<sup><8165></sup>Job 6:26), and therefore they should not make such ado about them: "Yea, but" (says Bildad) "they are as strong wind, blustering and threatening, boisterous and dangerous, and therefore we are concerned to fence against them."

**II.** He justifies God in what he had done. This he had no occasion to do at this time (for Job did not condemn God, as he would have it thought he did), or he might at least have done it without reflecting upon Job's children, as he does here. Could he not be an advocate for God but he must be an accuser of the brethren?

**1.** He is right in general, that *God doth not pervert judgment*, nor ever go contrary to any settled rule of justice, v. 3. Far be it from him that he should and from us that we should suspect him. He never oppresses the innocent, nor lays a greater load on the guilty than they deserve. He is God, the Judge; and shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? <sup><8185></sup>Genesis 18:25. If there should be unrighteousness with God, *how should he judge the world?* <sup><8185></sup>Romans 3:5, 6. He is *Almighty, Shaddai* — *all sufficient*. Men pervert justice sometimes for fear of the power of others (but God is Almighty, and stands in awe of none), sometimes to obtain the favour of others; but God is all-sufficient, and cannot be benefited by the favour of any. It is man's weakness and impotency that he often is unjust; it is God's omnipotence that he cannot be so.

**2.** Yet he is not fair and candid in the application. He takes it for granted that Job's children (the death of whom was one of the greatest of his afflictions) had been guilty of some notorious wickedness, and that the unhappy circumstances of their death were sufficient evidence that they were sinners above all the children of the east, v. 4. Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment; and yet it did not therefore follow either that his children were cast-aways or that they died for some great transgression. It is true that we and our children have sinned against God, and we ought to justify him in all he brings upon us and ours; but

extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces; and, in our judgment of another's case (unless the contrary appears), we ought to take the more favourable side, as our Saviour directs, ~~☞~~ Luke 13:2-4. Here Bildad missed it.

**III.** He put Job in hope that, if he were indeed upright, as he said he was, he should yet see a good issue of his present troubles: “*Although thy children have sinned against him, and are cast away in their transgression* (they have died in their own sin), yet if thou be pure and upright thyself, and as an evidence of that wilt now seek unto God and submit to him, all shall be well yet,” v. 5-7. This may be taken two ways, either,

**1.** As designed to prove Job a hypocrite and a wicked man, though not by the greatness, yet the by the continuance, of his afflictions. “When thou wast impoverished, and thy children were killed, if thou hadst been pure and upright, and approved thyself so in the trial, God would before now have returned in mercy to thee and comforted thee according to the time of thy affliction; but, because he does not so, we have reason to conclude thou art not so *pure and upright* as thou pretendest to be. If thou hadst conducted thyself well under the former affliction, thou wouldst not have been struck with the latter.” Herein Bildad was not in the right; for a good man may be afflicted for his trial, not only very sorely, but very long, and yet, if for life, it is in comparison with eternity but for a moment. But, since Bildad put it to this issue, God was pleased to join issue with him, and proved his servant Job an honest man by Bildad's own argument; for, soon after, he blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Or,

**2.** As designed to direct and encourage Job, that he might not thus run himself into despair, and give up all for gone; there might yet be hope if he would take the right course. I am apt to think Bildad here intended to condemn Job, yet would be thought to counsel and comfort him.

**(1.)** He gives him good counsel, yet perhaps not expecting he would take it, the same that Eliphaz had given him (~~☞~~ Job 5:8), to *seek unto God*, and that *betimes* (that is, speedily and seriously), and not to be dilatory and trifling in his return and repentance. He advises him not to complain, but to petition, to *make his supplication to the Almighty* with humility and faith, and to see that there was (what he feared had hitherto been wanting) sincerity in his heart (“thou must be *pure and upright*”) and honesty in his

house — “that must be *the habitation of thy righteousness*, and not filled with ill-gotten goods, else God will not hear thy prayers,” ~~<3668>~~ Psalm 66:18. It is only the prayer of the upright that is the acceptable and prevailing prayer, ~~<118>~~ Proverbs 15:8.

(2.) He gives him good hopes that he shall yet again see good days, secretly suspecting, however, that he was not qualified to see them. He assures him that, if he would be early in seeking God, God would awake for his relief, would remember him and return to him, though now he seemed to forget him and forsake him — that if his habitation were righteous it should be prosperity. When we return to God in a way of duty we have reason to hope that he will return to us in a way of mercy. Let not Job object that he had so little left to being the world with again that it was impossible he should ever prosper as he had done; no, “Though thy beginning should be ever so small, a little meal in the barrel and a little oil in the cruse, God's blessing shall multiply that to a great increase.” This is God's way of enriching the souls of his people with graces and comforts, not *per saltum* — *as by a bound*, but *per gradum* — *step by step*. The beginning is small, but the progress is to perfection. Dawning light grows to noonday, a grain of mustard seed to a great tree. Let us not therefore despise the day of small things, but hope for the day of great things.

## ~~<318>~~ JOB 8:8-19

### THE ADDRESS OF BILDAD

Bildad here discourses very well on the sad catastrophe of hypocrites and evil-doers and the fatal period of all their hopes and joys. He will not be so bold as to say with Eliphaz that none that were righteous were ever cut off thus (~~<304>~~ Job 4:7); yet he takes it for granted that God, in the course of his providence, does ordinarily bring wicked men, who seemed pious and were prosperous, to shame and ruin in this world, and that, by making their prosperity short, he discovers their piety to be counterfeit. Whether this will certainly prove that all who are thus ruined must be concluded to have been hypocrites he will not say, but rather suspect, and thinks the application is easy.

I. He proves this truth, of the certain destruction of all the hopes and joys of hypocrites, by an appeal to antiquity and the concurring sentiment and

observation of all wise and good men; and an undoubted truth it is, if we take in the other world, that, if not in this life, yet in the life to come, hypocrites will be deprived of all their trusts and all their triumphs: whether Bildad so meant or no, we must so take it. Let us observe the method of his proof, v. 8-10.

**1.** He insists not on his own judgment and that of his companions: *We are but of yesterday, and know nothing*, v. 9. He perceived that Job had no opinion of their abilities, but thought they knew little. “We will own,” says Bildad, “that we know nothing, are as ready to confess our ignorance as thou art to condemn it; for we are but of yesterday in comparison, *and our days upon earth are short and transient, and hastening away as a shadow.* And hence,”

**(1.)** “We are not so near the fountain-head of divine revelation” (which then for aught that appears, was conveyed by tradition) “as the former age was; and therefore we must enquire what they said and recount what we have been told of their sentiments.” Blessed be God, now that we have the word of God in writing, and are directed to search that, we need not *enquire of the former age, nor prepare ourselves to the search of their fathers*; for, though we ourselves are but of yesterday, the word of God in the scripture is as nigh to us as it was to them (~~418~~ Romans 10:8), and it is the *more sure word of prophecy, to which we must take heed*. If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them *understand more than the ancients*, ~~419~~ Psalm 119:99, 100.

**(2.)** “We do not live so long as those of the former age did, to make observations upon the methods of divine providence, and therefore cannot be such competent judges as they in a cause of this nature.” Note, The shortness of our lives is a great hindrance to the improvement of our knowledge, and so are the frailty and weakness of our bodies. *Vita brevis, ars longa — life is short, the progress of art boundless.*

**2.** He refers to the testimony of the ancients and to the knowledge which Job himself had of their sentiments. “Do thou *enquire of the former age*, and let them tell thee, not only their own judgment in this matter, but the judgment also of *their fathers*, v. 8. *They will teach thee*, and inform thee (v. 10), that all along, in their time, the judgments of God followed wicked men. This they will *utter out of their hearts*, that is, as that which they firmly believe themselves, which they are greatly affected with and desirous to acquaint and affect others with.” Note,

(1.) For the right understanding of divine Providence, and the unfolding of the difficulties of it, it will be of use to compare the observations and experiences of former ages with the events of our own day; and, in order thereto, to consult history, especially the sacred history, which is the most ancient, infallibly true, and written designedly for our learning.

(2.) Those that would fetch knowledge from the former ages must search diligently, *prepare for the search*, and take pains for the search.

(3.) Those words are most likely to reach to the hearts of the learners that come from the hearts of the teachers. *Those shall teach thee* best that *utter words out of their heart*, that speak by experience, and not by rote, of spiritual and divine things. The learned bishop Patrick suggests that Bildad being a Shuhite, descended from Shuah one of Abraham's sons by Keturah (~~(125)~~ Genesis 25:2), in this appeal which he makes to history he has a particular respect to the rewards which the blessing of God secured to the posterity of faithful Abraham (who hitherto, and long after, continued in his religion) and to the extirpation of those eastern people, neighbours to Job (in whose country they were settled), for their wickedness, whence he infers that it is God's usual way to prosper the just and root out the wicked, though for a while they may flourish.

## II. He illustrates this truth by some similitudes.

1. The hopes and joys of the hypocrite are here compared to a rush or flag, v. 11-13.

(1.) It grows up out of the mire and water. The hypocrite cannot gain his hope without some false rotten ground or other out of which to raise it, and with which to support it and keep it alive, any more than the rush can grow without mire. He grounds it on his worldly prosperity, the plausible profession he makes of religion, the good opinion of his neighbours, and his own good conceit of himself, which are no solid foundation on which to build his confidence. It is all but mire and water; and the hope that grows out of it is but rush and flag.

(2.) It may look green and gay for a while (the rush outgrows the grass), but it is light and hollow, and empty, and good for nothing. It is green for show, but of no use.

(3.) It withers presently, *before any other herb*, v. 12. Even *while it is in its greenness* it is dried away and gone in a little time. Note, The best state of

hypocrites and evil-doers borders upon withering; even when it is green it is going. The grass is *cut down and withers* (<sup>3906</sup>Psalm 90:6); but the rush is *not cut down* and yet *withers, withers before it grows up* (<sup>3906</sup>Psalm 129:6): as it has no use, so it has no continuance. *So are the paths of all that forget God* (v. 13); they take the same way that the rush does, *for the hypocrite's hope shall perish*. Note,

[1.] Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of men's hypocrisy, and of the vain hopes with which they flatter and deceive themselves in their hypocrisy. Men would not be hypocrites if they did not forget that the God with whom they have to do searches the heart and requires truth there, that he is a Spirit and has his eye on our spirits; and hypocrites would have no hope if they did not forget that God is righteous, and will not be mocked with the torn and the lame.

[2.] The hope of hypocrites is a great cheat upon themselves, and, though it may flourish for a while, it will certainly perish at last, and they with it.

2. They are here compared *to a spider's web, or a spider's house* (as it is in the margin), a cobweb, v. 14, 15. The hope of the hypocrite,

(1.) Is woven out of his own bowels; it is the creature of his own fancy, and arises merely from a conceit of his own merit and sufficiency. There is a great deal of difference between the work of the bee and that of the spider. A diligent Christian, like the laborious bee, fetches in all his comfort from the heavenly dews of God's word; but the hypocrite, like the subtle spider, weaves his out of a false hypothesis of his own concerning God, as if he were altogether such a one as himself.

(2.) He is very fond of it, as the spider of her web; pleases himself with it, wraps himself in it, calls it his house, *leans upon it*, and *holds it fast*. It is said of the spider that *she takes hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces*, <sup>3903</sup>Proverbs 30:28. So does a carnal worldling hug himself in the fulness and firmness of his outward prosperity; he prides himself in that house as his palace, fortifies himself in it as his castle, and makes use of it as the spider of her web, to ensnare those he has a mind to prey upon. So does a formal professor; he flatters himself in his own eyes, doubts not of his salvation, is secure of heaven, and cheats the world with his vain confidences.

**(3.)** It will easily and certainly be swept away, as the cobweb with the besom, when God shall come to purge his house. The prosperity of worldly people will fail them when they expect to find safety and happiness in it. They seek to hold fast their estates, but God is plucking them out of their hands; and whose shall all those things be, which they have provided? or what the better they will be for them? The confidences of hypocrites will fail them. *I tell you, I know you not.* The house built on the sand will fall in the storm, when the builder most needs it and promised himself the benefit of it. *When a wicked man dies his expectation perishes.* The ground of his hopes will prove false; he will be disappointed of the thing he hoped for, and his foolish hope with which he buoyed himself up will be turned into endless despair; and thus his hope will be cut off, his web, that refuge of lies, swept away, and he crushed in it.

**3.** The hypocrite is here compared to a flourishing and well-rooted tree, which, though it do not wither of itself, yet will easily be cut down and its place no it no more. The secure and prosperous sinner may think himself wronged when he is compared to a rush and a flag; he thinks he has a better root. “We will allow him his conceit,” says Bildad, “and give him all the advantage he can desire, and bring him in suddenly cut off.” He is here represented as Nebuchadnezzar was in his own dream (<sup>2040</sup>Daniel 4:10) by a great tree.

**(1.)** See this tree fair and flourishing (v. 16) like a *green bay-tree* (<sup>1875</sup>Psalm 37:35), *green before the sun*, it keeps its greenness in defiance of the scorching sun-beams, and *his branch shoots forth* under the protection of his garden-wall and with the benefit of his garden-soil. See it fixed, and taking deep root, never likely to be overthrown by stormy winds, *for his roots are interwoven with the stones* (v. 17); it grows in firm ground, not, as the rush, of mire and water. Thus does a wicked man, when he prospers in the world, think himself secure; his wealth is a *high wall in his own conceit*.

**(2.)** See this tree felled and forgotten notwithstanding, *destroyed from his place* (v. 18), and so entirely extirpated that there shall remain no sign or token where it grew. The very place say, *I have not seen thee*; and the standers by shall say the same. *I sought him, but he could not be found*, <sup>1808</sup>Psalm 36:36. He made a great show and a great noise for a time, but he is gone of a sudden, and *neither root nor branch is left him*, <sup>3000</sup>Malachi



4:1. *This is the joy* (that is, this is the end and conclusion) *of the wicked man's way* (v. 19); this is that which all his joy comes to. *The way of the ungodly shall perish*, <sup><916></sup>Psalm 1:6. His hope, he thought, would in the issue be turned into joy; but this is the issue, this is the joy. *The harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow*, <sup><271></sup>Isaiah 17:11. This is the best of it; and what then is the worst of it? But shall he not leave a family behind him to enjoy what he has? No, *out of the earth* (not out of his roots) *shall others grow*, that are nothing akin to him, and shall fill up his place, and rule over that for which he labored. Others (that is, others of the same spirit and disposition) shall grow up in his place, and be as secure as ever he was, not warned by his fall. The way of worldlings is their folly, and yet there is a race of those that *approve their sayings*, <sup><943></sup>Psalm 49:13.

## <sup><880></sup>JOB 8:20-22

### THE ADDRESS OF BILDAD

Bildad here, in the close of his discourse, sums up what he has to say in a few words, setting before Job life and death, the blessing and the curse, assuring him that as he was so he should fare, and therefore they might conclude that as he fared so he was.

**1.** On the one hand, if he were a perfect upright man, God would not *cast him away*, v. 20. Though now he seemed forsaken of God, he would yet return to him, and by degrees would *turn his mourning into dancing* (<sup><811></sup>Psalm 30:11) and comforts should flow in upon him so plentifully that his *mouth* should be *filled with laughing*, v. 21. So affecting should the happy change be, <sup><809></sup>Psalm 126:2. Those that loved him would rejoice with him; but those that hated him, and had triumphed in his fall, would be ashamed of their insolence, when they should see him restored to his former prosperity. Now it is true that *God will not cast away an upright man*; he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away for ever. It is true that, if not in this world, yet in another, the mouth of the righteous shall be *filled with rejoicing*. Though their sun should set under a cloud, yet it shall rise again clear, never more to be clouded; though they go mourning to the grave, that shall not hinder their entrance into the joy of their Lord. It is true that the enemies of the saints will be *clothed with*

*shame* when they see them crowned with honour. But it does not therefore follow that, if Job were not perfectly restore to his former prosperity, he would forfeit the character of a perfect man.

**2.** On the other hand, if he were a wicked man and an evil-doer, God would not help him, but leave him to perish in his present distresses (v. 20), and his *dwelling-place* should *come to nought*, 22. And here also it is true that God *will not help the evil-doers*; they throw themselves out of his protection, and forfeit his favour. He *will not take the ungodly by the hand* (so it is in the margin), will not have fellowship and communion with them; for *what communion* can there be *between light and darkness*? He will not lend them his hand to pull them out of the miseries, the eternal miseries, into which they have plunged themselves; they will then stretch out their hand to him for help, but it will be too late: he will not take them by the hand. *Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed*. It is true that *the dwelling-place of the wicked, sooner or later, will come to nought*. Those only *who make God their dwelling-place* are safe for ever, ~~90~~ Psalm 90:1; 91:1. Those who make other things their refuge will be disappointed. Sin brings ruin on persons and families. Yet to argue (as Bildad, I doubt, slyly does) that because Job's family was sunk, and he himself at present seemed helpless, therefore he certainly was an ungodly wicked man, was neither just nor charitable, as long as there appeared no other evidence of his wickedness and ungodliness. Let us *judge nothing before the time*, but wait till the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, and the present difficulties of Providence be solved to universal and everlasting satisfaction, when the *mystery of God shall be finished*.