

## JOB

### LESSON 8

- A. Bildad does not recognize the possibility of forgiveness; nothing can come between sin and its consequences.
1. The only alternative is to be pure and upright (6b, the second word is used of Job in the prolog).
  2. On this basis Job might *seek God* and be rewarded.
  3. God will rouse himself for Job and reward him with a rightful habitation, restoring his legitimate estate.
  4. His life will thus be transformed from small beginnings to a splendid end (v. 7).
  5. Significantly, Bildad makes the mistake of thinking that one must be pure before he can approach God; Jesus exposed the folly of that position when he pointed out that it is the sick who need a physician (Matt. 9:12).
  6. If Job does what Bildad tells him to, the doubt raised by Satan in chap. 1 will have been justified.
    - a) Job will have proved that he does not fear God for naught (1:9).
    - b) He will have allowed his desperate need to determine his behavior toward God and made piety into a means for improving his sorry lot.
- II. Vv. 8-10.
- A. As often happens, the weaker the case the more confidently it is stated.
1. Bildad appeals to the wisdom of the ancients, as if what he is saying is common knowledge.
  2. Both Bildad and Job start at the same point:

- a) Our days on earth are brief (9b; 7:7,16).
  - b) We know nothing.
3. But then they go in opposite directions.
  4. Bildad's experience is augmented by the accumulated experiences of the past, or, better, by the purer wisdom of the golden age of bygone ages.
  5. The teaching of the fathers is the source of understanding.
- III. Vv. 11-19. This sketch of the destruction of the wicked is a companion piece to Eliphaz' painting of the good man in 5:15-26.
- A. It opens with rhetorical questions (v. 11).
    1. The answers are scattered throughout the section.
    2. It luxuriates for a while but as soon as the moisture is cut off they wither before any other plant (12b).
    3. Vv. 16-17 continue the picture of the thriving of the godless.
    4. Such prosperity is no better than a spider's web (14).
    5. He is rejected by his own community (18) (prodigal son).
  - B. V. 18 (*place*) may link back to 7:10 and maliciously hint that Job's course looks like that of the wicked.
- IV. Vv. 20-22.
- A. Bildad sums up his analysis of the contrasting fate of the wicked and the righteous
  - B. This is Bildad's wisdom, helpful as a general guide to life; but trite, and even cruel, when the friends of God are the ones with the most trouble.
    1. Job has long since left behind Bildad's simple classification into good and bad.

2. He knows that all men are sinners, including himself.
  3. He hopes for blessedness with God through forgiveness (7:21).
  4. He has already enjoyed that relationship, and, unknown to him (perhaps unappreciated as well), he still enjoys it.
- C. Bildad's assertion that God will not reject a blameless man (20a) makes him the precursor of those who mocked Jesus with the same logic, "He trusts in God; let God deliver him" (Matt. 27:43).
1. While Bildad is correct in general, he is wrong when applied to Job, and even more so when applied to Jesus Christ.
  2. In Christ, it was God's full purpose and intention to reject a blameless man and strengthen the hands of those who crucified him.
- D. Job has a cross, but a lesser cross; each person has his or her own.
1. It is an experience from which no believer is exempt.
  2. We must remember in our hearts that we are the beloved and redeemed children of God, and yet compelled to experience first-hand the cruelty and injustice of a world in which the righteous are unwelcome intruders, and in which all too often the strength of evil-doers goes unchecked.
  3. Karl Marx said that religion is the opiate of the masses; he is wrong on several counts, among them that religion contains no opiate.
    - a) No matter what religious system is injected into our veins, we still cannot escape pain.
    - b) Like many today, Bildad seems more interested in avoiding pain at all costs than in enduring it for Christ's sake.

- c) There is place in his thinking for stoical acceptance of suffering as a kind of penance, but there is no place for the redemptive bearing of unjust, undeserved suffering.
  - d) He seems to think of faith as a way of getting out from under one's cross instead of bearing it.
4. True believers bear their cross, and when we, unlike Job, know about God's rejection of Jesus, our burden can never again be as dark as Job's.

## CHAPTER 9

### **2.b.iv. – Job’s Second Speech**

- I. We need to find our bearings by asking what is the trend of Job’s thought at this point.
  - A. Even more importantly, we need to discern his mood.
    1. Since we can not hear the tone of his voice, and the book gives no clue as to what kind of temper he is in, we cannot be certain.
    2. The decision we make is important, because our understanding of the book depends on it all the way down the line.
  - B. We have already insisted that Job and his friends are in basic agreement about the character of God.
    1. That is not where the debate centers.
    2. Their disagreement concerns the whys and wherefores of God’s dealings with Job, just as the story began with God and Satan disagreeing over the character of Job.
    3. Job’s faith is stronger than theirs, more adventurous, and in consequence, more exacting and painful.
    4. Job will explore his way into God while the rest merely watch and talk.
    5. Job accepts what they have said, and then goes far beyond.
  - C. He replies to Bildad’s speech with a tribute to the magnificence of God that makes Bildad’s easy-to-talk-about deity seem puny and trivial.
    1. His agreement with Bildad is genuine (9:2a).
    2. His question (9:2b) is not derisive, but the starting point of a most urgent quest.

- II. V. 2 – But how can a man be just before God?
  - A. The language is forensic – how can a man win a legal dispute with God?
  - B. Eliphaz asked almost the same question (4:17).
  - C. His negative answer came from the immense difference between God and man.
  - D. Job is fully aware of the difference, but is not daunted by it.
- III. V. 3 – Here the word “contend” is the technical word for conducting a law suit.
  - A. It is not clear who is the plaintiff, and who is the defendant; who is laying the charges and who is unable to answer them.
  - B. Some versions like to make Job a radical who indicts God, but it would be futile because God would not answer him one question in a thousand.
    - 1. This implies that God disdains to give any man an account of his ways.
    - 2. There could be two reasons for this.
      - a) The infinite power of God leaves finite man a very unequal contestant.
      - b) Man’s ideas of justice are so different from those of God that no man can expect his righteousness to receive any recognition from God.
        - (1) A man has only to take another step to say that, by human morals, God is altogether unjust.
        - (2) The man who takes that step has fallen into the pit.
        - (3) If Job had already reached that conclusion, he would have already given up.

(4) He would already have reviled God in his mind.

- IV. V. 4 – The reverent way he speaks here about the wisdom and strength of God shows how completely captivated his thought is with the power and justice of God, even though his thought cannot capture these realities.
- A. His faith is still intact even though he has been plunged into a pit (v. 31).
  - B. He cannot see God; this is his trouble (v. 11).
  - C. His question is *How*. . .? and he asks it again and again.
    - 1. How can he secure his vindication with God?
    - 2. He knows he is due it, but he knows he cannot secure it, he cannot summon God by the formulas suggested by his friends.
    - 3. Job gives his question proper dimensions by rehearsing:
      - a) The immense power of God in Creation (vv. 3-12); and
      - b) His undisputed sovereignty in judging the world (vv. 13-24).
      - c) Discouraged by a renewed sense of his own weakness, he expresses a longing for an umpire (v. 33) between himself and God.
    - 4. If there is any defiance in Job, it is seen in the persistence with which he thrusts his prayers into God's heart (10:1-17).
      - a) The pity he has not received from his human friends (6:14ff) he still hopes to obtain from the Lord.
      - b) However, the most he dares to ask now is that God would leave him alone. (10:18-22).

- V. Vv. 5-10 – In these lines we have a soaring lyric that is a great celebration of the works of God.
- A. Volcano, earthquake, eclipse and other marvels of the sky are all brought about by God.
  - B. Such acts are too numerous to count and too marvelous to comprehend (10).
  - C. The meaning of *the chambers of the south* still alludes us.
- VI. V. 11 – It is no wonder that Job is amazed; in spite of this abundance of evidence that God is present and active, Job cannot perceive him.
- VII. V. 12 – As other occurrences of the same question show, it is not so much *What doest thou*, as *Why*?
- A. The preceding recital makes it quite plain that Job knows quite clearly what God does.
  - B. Verse 24b will sum this up with the unqualified assertion that God is the only cause of every event.
- VIII. V. 13 – Indeed, the aspect of God that Job most closely experiences is not his righteousness or creative power, but his mighty anger.
- A. That is the final barrier to any move to wring vindication from God: his permanent hostility, as it seems to Job.
  - B. God does not turn back his anger; anger has been his predominant impulse ever since primordial times, when it was unleashed against the sea-monster Rahab, symbol of chaos, and her helpers.
    - 1. For other references to Rahab as God's adversary in a primeval battle, see Job 26:12; Ps. 89:11 [10]; Isa. 51:9.
    - 2. The name is probably connected with a root word meaning *be boisterous, agitated*.
- IX. V. 14 – Job wants to be able to talk to God, but to do this he must have some idea of the purpose of God's activities. [Later on (10:9-13) he will insist that there must be some purpose in creation.]



- X. V. 15 – This seems to be the pivot of his argument.
- A. As in v. 3, it is not clear who is making the response.
1. *My judge* (AV), which is literal, has been replaced in modern versions by such words as *accuser* or *opponent*, presumably God.
  2. But this seems like a surprising capitulation to Bildad's advice to *appeal for mercy*.
  3. This inconsistency can be removed if the *not* in v. 15a carries into 15b.
  4. Job rejects Bildad's proposal: I won't answer any charges, because I know they would be unwarranted; and I won't appeal to my judge for clemency because it is vindication I am insisting on, not mercy.
- B. This is reaffirmed in verses 20ff.
- XI. V. 16 – Throughout the chapter Job has envisioned a formal summons to God that would compel him to vindicate Job or at least to show cause why he would not.
- A. But even if he should call and God should answer, what confidence could he have that God was listening to his questions?
- B. It is not that God can be expected to behave unrighteously and ignore the due processes of justice, but that the majestic God hymned by the doxology of vv. 5-10, who is also the inapprehensible, unrestrainable God depicted by vv. 11-13, is hardly likely to concern himself too seriously with the protests of Job.
- C. Human calling and divine answering are a familiar pair in the psalmic language of appeal (e.g., Ps. 3:5[4]; 17:6), but here in Job we do not have the address to the judge as deliverer, but the summons to a party in a lawsuit.
- XII. Vv. 17 - 19 – These verses state a reason why Job does not believe that God would take his care seriously enough to listen to his

questions: Job has in the past experienced God too often as one who rides roughshod over him, cares nothing for him, and treats him with disproportionate hostility (cf. 7:12, 20).

- A. The language of the lawsuit is temporarily abandoned while Job depicts with the imagery of physical conflict his prior experience of God on which is based his expectations for any forensic disputation with God.
- B. The two halves of v. 19 sum up in turn Job's experience of God and his expectation of God.
  - 1. To this point his experience has been of the domineering might of God, that can be properly recognized only when it is felt or suffered.
  - 2. The fact that he is the "mighty one" (cf. v. 4) negates every other force.
  - 3. Transfer the sheer strength of God to the judicial arena, and Job's hopelessness is confirmed: no one can compel God into any kind of debate or litigation.
  - 4. Job's quest for vindication from God is as futile as resistance to God's power (cf. v. 13a).

XIII. Vv. 20 - 21 – Job believes he is perfect, but he does not know how to go about establishing it.

- A. So far no sin has been laid to his charge by God or man.
- B. But Job is afraid that if God does enter into litigation with him that he will not be able to carry his defense, that he will be overawed and confused by God's presence. God will not have to win the case, Job will lose it.
- C. The focus is on two features of a man's place before God.
  - 1. No man can establish his own righteousness.
  - 2. A man's highest perfections do not give him any control over God.

- XIV. V. 22-23 – Job is consistent; he is not accusing God of failing to appreciate the difference between a good and a bad man.
- A. He adopted from the beginning that a good man will receive both good and ill from God (2:10).
  - B. Here Job recognizes another aspect of this in contradiction of what Bildad and Eliphaz have said about the opposite fortunes of good and bad men: *God destroys both the blameless and the wicked.*
    - 1. The other side of this coin is found in the teaching of Jesus. Mt. 5:45.
    - 2. The inequity of the one matches the inequity of the other.
    - 3. If God is to be charged with unfairness, he must be charged on both counts.
  - C. V. 23 – Not only is destruction God’s goal for the good as well as the wicked, but he mocks derisively at the fare of the innocent when they are overtaken by some calamity.
    - 1. How does Job know that God mocks the innocent?
    - 2. He knows nothing but what he infers; and he infers from the suffering of the innocent that only a sadist could be responsible for what happens.
    - 3. It is his own situation that is the touchstone.
    - 4. It is God’s response that forms the gravamen of Job’s charge, and it is his response, rather than the disasters themselves, that may be referred to by the words of v. 22.
    - 5. It is not the justice of God that is on trial in this speech, but his sympathy.
    - 6. The nub of Job’s resentment is God’s aloofness (9:4-12, 16, 19, 32), that terrifies humans and is perceived by them as cruelty and anger (9:5b, 12a, 13, 17-18, 22-24, 34-35; 10:3-17).

- XV. V. 24 – Job highlights the side he has most recently experienced.
- A. The occasions of men’s suffering are all too frequently crime (24a) and corruption (24b).
  - B. But no matter what may be the human instrumentalities, Job has no doubt that it is God, and God alone, who orders the world in this way (24c).
- XVI. vv. 25 - 31 – Job uses three figures to describe the brevity of life – the sprinter, the boats of reed, and an eagle swooping on its prey.
- A. He is afraid to make an effort to be of good cheer, for there is no guarantee that a new bout of suffering will not follow, so long as he does not know where he stands with God.
  - B. He will be depressed so long as God treats him like a *condemned* man.
  - C. The meaning is not that God will think him wicked for trying to be cheerful.
- XVII. V. 32-35 – The lament in 31-35 was addressed to God; this reflection resumes the theme of verses 14-21, the difficulty of sorting out the issues between Job and God.
- A. Job can neither initiate nor conduct the necessary negotiations.
  - B. This is the persistent problem, the real problem of the book: not the problem of suffering, to be solved intellectually by supplying a satisfactory answer that explains why it happened; but the attainment of a right relationship with God that makes existence in suffering holy and acceptable.
  - C. Job’s question is *how*.
    - 1. He sees the need for an *umpire*, whether he states it as a longing, or as a regret that there is none.
    - 2. The word does not indicate a judge who merely decides who is in the right; he is a mediator who settles the quarrel by reconciliation, a negotiator who brings both

parties together, by laying *his hand upon us both* as a common friend.

- D. Besides the handicap of human inadequacy, Job is unable to *speak without fear of him* (35a) as he wishes, because of God's apparent continuing hostility.
1. Once more Job recognizes that the initiative rests solely with God to *take his rod away from me* (34a).
  2. But there is no arbiter, so God's rod will not be removed, the fear will not be quieted, and a formal controversy with God will not (as yet) be entered upon.
  3. But the mere contemplation of such a possibility has rejuvenated Job and given him resilience.
    - a) Though he will not enter into a controversy with God, he announces that he does not have a numbing fear that would foreclose dialog with him.
    - b) It is God's wrath, and what an angry God can do even to a righteous man, that has clouded his mind to the possibility that is indeed still open to him.
    - c) Even if he risks his life to do so (10:1a), he can – and he will – open his mouth, “give free utterance to his complaint” (10:1b), ask God why he holds him guilty, why he oppresses him.
    - d) No matter that God would never agree to a court hearing, that Job could have no hope of a response to this challenge, he can still ventilate his grief, he can still speak to God (10:2a).