

JOB

Chapter 8

Bildad Speaks: Job Should Repent

Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said: 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 have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the hand of their transgression. 5 If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, 6 if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation. 7 And though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great. 8 “For inquire, please, of bygone ages, and consider what the fathers have searched out. 9 For we are but of yesterday and know nothing, for our days on earth are a shadow. 10 Will they not teach you and tell you and utter words out of their understanding? 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 His confidence is severed, and his trust is a spider's web. 15 He leans against his house, but it does not stand; he lays hold of it, but it does not endure. 16 He is a lush plant before the sun, and his shoots spread over his garden. 17 His roots entwine the stone heap; he looks upon a house of stones. 18 If he is destroyed from his place, then it will deny him, saying, ‘I have never seen you.’ 19 Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the soil others will spring. 20 “Behold, God will not reject a blameless man, nor take the hand of evildoers. 21 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with shouting. 22 Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, and the tent of the wicked will be no more.”

Bildad attacks Job for the things he said (chs 6–7). Picking up the cry “How long” from 7:19, Bildad applies it to Job. (TLSB)

In today’s language he called Job a “windbag.” (PBC)

8:3 *Does God pervert justice?* But Job has not yet blatantly accused God of injustice. (CSB)

Bildad defends God’s integrity and justice, a key issue. (TLSB)

Even in his most outspoken moments Job had not accused God of perverting justice. Yet Bildad’s question at least indirectly accused him of that. (PBC)

8:4 *your children have sinned* – In bringing up that subject Bildad was extremely cruel. Of all Job’s misfortunes none hurt more than the sudden death of his ten children. (PBC)

For Bildad, the death of Job’s children is proof they sinned and deserved to die. How cruel can a well-intentioned “friend” be? (TLSB)

8:5–6 Bildad reasons as follows: God cannot be unjust, so Job and his family must be suffering as a result of sinfulness. Job should plead for mercy, and if he has been upright, God will restore him. (CSB)

8:5 *seek God* – This phrase is literally translated “go early to God” or “hurry to God,” in other words, “don’t waste any time. In itself, what Bildad said is true and sound advice, but the context reveals a self-righteous attitude on his part. (PBC)

8:6 *if you are pure and upright*. We know God’s verdict about Job (see 1:8; 2:3), but Bildad is confident that Job is a hypocrite (see v. 13). (CSB)

Bildad thinks God saves only the pure, not sinners. If Job is indeed innocent, God will eventually restore him. Like Eliphaz, Bildad believes only the guilty suffer. (TLSB)

He was wrong in claiming that Job’s affliction was the result of a special sin. He couldn’t see that a godly man might suffer severe afflictions as a test of his faith. (PBC)

8:7 *latter days ... great*. Bildad speaks more truthfully than he realizes. Cf 1:3; 42:10–17. (TLSB)

8:8–10 *fathers*. Eliphaz appealed to a supernatural experience to confirm his understanding of suffering (4:12–16). Bildad turns to previous generations (“bygone ages” is equivalent to “the fathers” in this verse) for confirmation of his simplistic and mechanical view of suffering and reward. Their ancestors formulated and handed down the traditional teaching that people suffer because God punishes them for sin. (TLSB)

8:8 *inquire...of bygone ages*. Eliphaz appealed to revelation from the spirit world (see 4:12–21), while Bildad appeals to the accumulated wisdom of tradition. (CSB)

Bildad the traditionalist held “the good old days” in high regard, and considered the venerable fathers far superior to the thinkers of his day. (PBC)

8:9 *our days ... are but a shadow*. A common motif in wisdom literature (see 14:2; 1Ch 29:15; Ps 102:11; 144:4; Ecc 6:12; 8:13). (CSB)

8:11–19 A practical wisdom poem, giving words of instruction learned from the fathers. It is introduced in v. 10 and applied to Job in vv. 20–22. (CSB)

8:11–13 *they wither before any other plant*. Bildad uses the image of the papyrus and reed plants to illustrate his “wisdom.” When the water source for these plants dries up, they wither and die prematurely just like wicked people. Bildad wrongly holds that if you are righteous, God blesses you with health and wealth. If you are wicked, He punishes you with suffering. (TLSB)

8:14 *spider’s web*. A spider’s web (Hbr *beth*, “house”) lasts only a short time and tears easily. Wicked people place their confidence in other things besides God and are inevitably brought to ruin. (TLSB)

8:18 *it will deny him*. When a wicked person is gone, no lasting memory remains. Even the place where that person lived and worked will deny having seen him. (TLSB)

8:19 *joy*. Bildad apparently uses “joy” ironically; the “joy” a wicked person experiences lasts briefly. (TLSB)

out of the soil others will spring. When that individual is gone, others move in (as new plants replace dead ones in a flower bed). No memory of the wicked remains whatsoever. (TLSB)

8:20–21 *God will not reject.* Bildad summarizes his philosophy in v 20 and applies it to Job in vv 21–22. He speaks positively, as though Job were pure. If Job will repent and seek God (vv 5–6), then God will reward him (v 7). (TLSB)

8:20 Bildad is blunt about Job’s being an evildoer, whereas Eliphaz had resorted to insinuation (see 4:7–9). (CSB)

Bildad apparently felt he needed to emphasize the message stated earlier by repeating it here. (PBC)

8:21 Bildad paints an unrealistic picture of the life of God-fearing people. We might wish they would experience much happiness and success in this life, but in many cases they do not. – Many preachers today, including some famous televangelists, preach a “prosperity theology.” They make attractive promises to the effect that if you give yourself over to Jesus, all your problems will be solved. (PBC)

Matthew 16:24, ‘Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”’

Acts 14:22, “strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.”

Revelation 7:14, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

8:22 *Those who hate you.* The wicked generally hate the righteous (Ps 35). Jb names no personal enemies of Job, other than Satan (1:9). (TLSB)

be no more. Bildad’s speech ends with the same Hbr word as that in Job’s speech (7:21). (CSB)

Ch 8 Bildad argues backward: sin produces suffering; therefore, all who suffer must have sinned against God. The Bible does teach that sin brought suffering and death (Rm 5:12), but this does not mean that an individual’s suffering is the direct consequence of some particular sin against God. In Christ Jesus, our perfectly righteous Savior, God atoned for all sin (Rm 3:21–26). In the midst of trials, we need constant and regular reassurance of God’s love for us, anchored in the cross of Christ. Luth: “People who have gone through spiritual trials know how necessary it is to support their heart with a sure and strong comfort that will finally bring them back to the hope of grace and help them to forget the wrath. Often a single day or a single month is insufficient for this purpose; but just as the alleviation of sickness requires a long time, so these wounds of the heart are not cured at once or by a single word” (AE 2:118). • Cure my heart and bind my wounds, O Redeemer, with Your grace, which is ever new. Amen. (TLSB)