

Job 8:1-22**The Discomfiting Comfort of Well-Meaning Friends**

¹ 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.” – Job 8:1-22 ESV*

Job’s impassioned plea to his friends fell on deaf ears. Like a contestant on a professional wrestling tag team, Eliphaz turned over the task of attacking Job to his partner, Bildad, who enters the ring with an abundance of energy and a lot to say.

He immediately picks up where Eliphaz left off, accusing Job of sinning against God. In his opinion, Job was an obstinate apostate who stubbornly refused to confess his sin and was suffering the consequences. From his perspective, Job was nothing more than a belligerent windbag whose persistent claims of innocence were a direct attack on God’s justice and integrity. Bildad even had the audacity to suggest that the deaths of Job’s adult children were the result of their own sins. They simply got what they deserved.

*“How long will you go on like this?
You sound like a blustering wind.
Does God twist justice?
Does the Almighty twist what is right?
Your children must have sinned against him,
so their punishment was well deserved.” – Job 8:2-4 NLT*

Imagine yourself in Job’s sandals. How would you have handled all that had happened to this man? He had lost everything, including his health, and now he was being “comforted” by his friends. They have looked at the circumstances of Job’s life and logically but, wrongfully, concluded that it was all a result of sin – the sins of his children as well as his own.

In the middle of a tremendous time of pain, loss, and suffering, Job finds himself having to defend himself against the attacks of his closest friends. They meant well and their conclusions seem logical and even biblical at times, but in their zeal to assess Job’s guilt, they seem to have overlooked a few of God’s character qualities. They stress His justice but leave out His mercy. They portray God as vindictive and wrathful but ignore his love and grace. Their view of God is rather one-dimensional and, as a result, inaccurate. Whether they realize it or not, they have placed God in a box of their own making. They have worked out their own theology of God and allowed it to determine their interpretation of the world.

Bildad begins his counseling session with Job with a rhetorical question, “Does God twist justice? Does the Almighty twist what is right?” (Job 8:3 MSG). Of course, the answer is no, so

this led Bildad to conclude that Job's circumstances were the result of a just and righteous God justly dealing with Job's unrighteousness. To Bildad, it seemed like the only logical conclusion.

Job's assumed guilt is what drives the messages of each of his friends. But this begs the question: Was Job sinless? Again, the answer is no. He was a man living in a fallen world. Yet God declared him to be blameless.

The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." – Job 1:8 NASB

God was not declaring Job to be without sin. He was commending Job's faithfulness. From God's perspective, Job was a man of integrity and moral excellence who strived to live in a way that demonstrated his fear and reverence for the Lord.

Yet something tragic had taken place in this man's life. He had suffered tremendous loss, and Job's friends could only conclude that it was all the result of sin. And they are partially right. Virtually everything that happens in this world is the result of sin. It is a direct consequence of what theologians like to call "the fall." When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they paved the way for sin to enter the world and infect the human race.

When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. – Romans 12:12 NLT

As a result, we live in a fallen world where sin reigns and even the creation is impacted by the presence of sin. Disasters happen. Earthquakes take place. Wildfires consume thousands of acres and hundreds of lives. And every person living on the planet is exposed to the effects of the fall. Good men and evil men all suffer. Righteous men get cancer. Godly women lose children. Faithful Christ-followers lose their jobs. Innocent children are born into abusive homes. That is life in a fallen world. In his commentary on the Book of Job, John Gill states, "Job's view in saying this is to observe, that a man's state God-ward is not to be judged of by his outward circumstances, whether he is a good man or a bad man, since they may both be in the same afflictions and distress, and which he opposes to the sentiments and sayings of Eliphaz and Bildad."

We can't judge based on circumstances alone. Yet that is exactly what Bildad was doing. His advice to Job was predicated on Job's admission of guilt and his need for confession. If Job only humbled himself and asked for God's forgiveness, all would be restored.

*"But if you pray to God
and seek the favor of the Almighty,
and if you are pure and live with integrity,
he will surely rise up and restore your happy home." – Job 8:5-6 NLT*

God had already recognized and commended Job for his integrity and blamelessness, but Bildad seemed to know better. He had wrongly assumed that all tragedy and sorrow were the direct result of personal sin; not just the presence of sin in the world.

Bildad pulls no punches and dares to describe his friend as godless and of being guilty of forgetting God. As far as Bildad could tell, Job was a fairweather God-follower who remained faithful as long as God blessed him with wealth and health. He viewed Job as an opportunist who sought a relationship with God only for what he could get out of it.

*“The hopes of the godless evaporate.
Their confidence hangs by a thread.
They are leaning on a spider’s web.
They cling to their home for security, but it won’t last.
They try to hold it tight, but it will not endure.” – Job 8:13-15 NLT*

Now that Job had no home in which to live, no family to love, and no semblance of health on which to rely, Bildad believed he was exposed as a fraud and a fake. He had only appeared to be blessed by God. But his problem-free world had been rocked by God and he had been brought to his knees.

*“The godless seem like a lush plant growing in the sunshine,
its branches spreading across the garden.
Its roots grow down through a pile of stones;
it takes hold on a bed of rocks.
But when it is uprooted,
it’s as though it never existed!” – Job 8:16-18 NLT*

According to the “wisdom” of Bildad, all Job had to do was stop arguing and start confessing. He truly believed that Job had a serious pride problem and it was the source of all his problems. Once he confessed, everything would turn around.

*“But look, God will not reject a person of integrity,
nor will he lend a hand to the wicked.
He will once again fill your mouth with laughter
and your lips with shouts of joy.
Those who hate you will be clothed with shame,
and the home of the wicked will be destroyed.” – Job 8:20-22 NLT*

For Bildad, it was a simple black-and-white matter; Job was wicked and needed to be righteous. His lack of integrity had left him devoid of joy and laughter. His shame was his own fault. His destruction had been well-deserved.

But Bildad’s confidence didn’t make him right. In fact, he was woefully wrong and completely off-base in his assessment of Job’s situation. Yet Job's greatest dilemma was that he couldn't

defend himself. He knew he was innocent. He was convinced that he had done nothing to deserve this kind of suffering. But how could he prove it? Who was he to argue with God? But he was more than willing to argue with Bildad. Unwilling to sit back and listen to the condemning rhetoric of his friend, Job prepared to give Bildad a piece of his mind and a primer on the sovereignty of God.

Job 18:1-21**Bildad, the Insufferable Bully**

¹ Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:

² *“How long will you hunt for words?
Consider, and then we will speak.*

³ *Why are we counted as cattle?
Why are we stupid in your sight?*

⁴ *You who tear yourself in your anger,
shall the earth be forsaken for you,
or the rock be removed out of its place?*

⁵ *“Indeed, the light of the wicked is put out,
and the flame of his fire does not shine.*

⁶ *The light is dark in his tent,
and his lamp above him is put out.*

⁷ *His strong steps are shortened,
and his own schemes throw him down.*

⁸ *For he is cast into a net by his own feet,
and he walks on its mesh.*

⁹ *A trap seizes him by the heel;
a snare lays hold of him.*

¹⁰ *A rope is hidden for him in the ground,
a trap for him in the path.*

¹¹ *Terrors frighten him on every side,
and chase him at his heels.*

¹² *His strength is famished,
and calamity is ready for his stumbling.*

¹³ *It consumes the parts of his skin;
the firstborn of death consumes his limbs.*

¹⁴ *He is torn from the tent in which he trusted
and is brought to the king of terrors.*

¹⁵ *In his tent dwells that which is none of his;
sulfur is scattered over his habitation.*

¹⁶ *His roots dry up beneath,
and his branches wither above.*

¹⁷ *His memory perishes from the earth,
and he has no name in the street.*

¹⁸ *He is thrust from light into darkness,
and driven out of the world.*

¹⁹ *He has no posterity or progeny among his people,
and no survivor where he used to live.*

²⁰ *They of the west are appalled at his day,
and horror seizes them of the east.*

²¹ *Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous,
such is the place of him who knows not God.” – Job 18:1-21 ESV*

In Bildad’s second speech to Job, one can sense his growing frustration and disdain for his “patient.” He is put out by Job’s persistent claims of innocence and more than a bit offended that his ungrateful friend refuses to recognize the wisdom of his words. So, Bildad resorts to name-calling and sarcasm. He turns into the neighborhood bully who picks on the one kid who can’t effectively defend himself.

First, he attacks Job’s verbosity, accusing him of being a pompous blowhard who seems to think that he can talk his way out of his dilemma.

*“How long before you stop talking?
Speak sense if you want us to answer!
Do you think we are mere animals?
Do you think we are stupid?” – Job 18:2-3 NLT*

Bildad finds Job’s little monologues to be nothing more than “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.” He isn’t buying what Job is selling and is, frankly, fed up with having to listen to Job’s incessant claims of victimhood. In a highly unsympathetic tone, Bildad tells Job that his displays of self-righteous anger are a total waste of time.

*“You may tear out your hair in anger,
but will that destroy the earth?
Will it make the rocks tremble?” – Job 18:4 NLT*

Throwing a fit and putting on a show of mock mourning isn’t going to change anything. Job is wasting his time and his breath because Bildad and his companions remain stubbornly convinced that Job is guilty as charged. In fact, Bildad pulls no punches, clearly labeling Job as a wicked man who is getting exactly what he deserves.

*“Surely the light of the wicked will be snuffed out.
The sparks of their fire will not glow.
The light in their tent will grow dark.
The lamp hanging above them will be quenched.
The confident stride of the wicked will be shortened.
Their own schemes will be their downfall.” – Job 18:5-7 NLT*

Throughout this relatively short speech, Bildad repeatedly associates Job with the wicked. There is nothing subtle about his insinuation and his words must have cut deep into Job’s psyche. How could a man whom Job considered to be a close friend end up being so brutally cruel and heartless? Bildad provides Job with no hope but, instead, he presents his friend with a

bleak picture of further suffering that will end in Job's demise. Unwilling to declare Job's wickedness to his face, Bildad takes the more tactful but no less hurtful course. He simply infers Job's guilt by referring to "the wicked," and he makes it clear that "those people" always end up getting what they deserve.

*"All memory of their existence will fade from the earth;
no one will remember their names." – Job 18:17 NLT*

Job had lost everything but his mind. He could still understand what Bildad was saying and it must have cut like a knife. Bildad's words were as subtle as a brick to the forehead. He practically describes Job's personal plight word for word, in a less-than-compassionate attempt to prove just how wicked Job is.

*"Terrors surround the wicked
and trouble them at every step.
Hunger depletes their strength,
and calamity waits for them to stumble.
Disease eats their skin;
death devours their limbs.
They are torn from the security of their homes
and are brought down to the king of terrors.
The homes of the wicked will burn down;
burning sulfur rains on their houses." – Job 18:11-15 NLT*

Virtually every one of these things had happened to Job and Bildad was using them as evidence of the fate awaiting "the wicked." In Bildad's estimation, Job was living proof that the wicked always get what they deserve. Job's litany of losses gave ample testimony to his life of unrighteousness; they were the just judgments of a holy God on an unholy man.

And in an almost demonic display of insensitivity, Bildad claims that any lingering hope that Job may have of leaving a legacy is nothing more than wishful thinking.

*"They [the wicked] will be thrust from light into darkness,
driven from the world.
They will have neither children nor grandchildren,
nor any survivor in the place where they lived." – Job 18:18-19 NLT*

If anyone is wicked, it's Bildad. He displays an inordinate amount of disdain for his friend, using his words to wound rather than to heal. He shows no desire to lift up his brother with words of encouragement. His speech is destructive rather than instructive. His callous conclusions are meant to defend himself rather than Job, and the longer he talks, the more damage he does.

Bildad finally runs out of things to say, but he makes sure to end his speech with a knock-out punch. He tells Job that, one day, long after Job is gone, people will come by the ruins of his

former home and say, “This was the home of a wicked person, the place of one who rejected God” (Job 18:21 NLT).

According to Bildad, Job will leave a legacy, but it will not be the one he had hoped for. There will be no memories of Job’s blamelessness. There will be no heirs to carry on his good name. All that will be left to memorialize Job will be the remnants of his destroyed life. These are the words that Bildad leaves ringing in the ears of his suffering friend. And with friends like this, who needs enemies?

Job 25:1-26:4**God's Greatness and Goodness**

¹ *Then Bildad the Shuhite answered and said:*

² *"Dominion and fear are with God;
he makes peace in his high heaven.*

³ *Is there any number to his armies?
Upon whom does his light not arise?*

⁴ *How then can man be in the right before God?
How can he who is born of woman be pure?*

⁵ *Behold, even the moon is not bright,
and the stars are not pure in his eyes;*

⁶ *how much less man, who is a maggot,
and the son of man, who is a worm!"*

¹ *Then Job answered and said:*

² *"How you have helped him who has no power!
How you have saved the arm that has no strength!*

³ *How you have counseled him who has no wisdom,
and plentifully declared sound knowledge!*

⁴ *With whose help have you uttered words,
and whose breath has come out from you?" – Job 25:1-26:4 ESV*

It almost appears as if Bildad is growing weary. In what will be the last of his three speeches, he seems to run out of energy and words in his ongoing attempt to convince Job of his guilt. Since Job has continued to express his belief that God will ultimately vindicate him, Bildad reminds his friend that God is not to be trifled with. He describes God as a "powerful and dreadful" (Job 25:1 NLT) ruler who reigns over the armies of heaven. His power is so vast that He controls the sun and "is more glorious than the moon" and "shines brighter than the stars" (Job 25:5 NLT).

This all-powerful deity is a force to be reckoned with and not to be taken lightly. Bildad is appalled by Job's arrogant display of faux intimacy with God. From his perspective, Bildad sees Job as far too flippant in his attitude toward the God of the universe. His beleaguered friend displays a shockingly and unwise disregard for God's holiness and transcendence. Job speaks of God as if they were best friends and Bildad goes out of his way to paint God as anything but Job's bosom buddy in the sky. This great and glorious God is so vast and holy that no mere mortal can dare to stand in His presence, let alone hope to be called His friend. Bildad drives home this point like a dagger.

*"How can a mortal be innocent before God?
Can anyone born of a woman be pure?" – Job 25:4 NLT*

And in an apparent attempt to build a bridge of reconciliation to Job, Bildad includes himself in the category of all those who fail to measure up to God's glorious standard.

*"In comparison, people are maggots;
we mortals are mere worms." – Job 25:6 NLT*

While there is truth in what Bildad has to say, he is applying that truth like a sledgehammer while neglecting to factor in such things as God's love, mercy, compassion, and desire to have a relationship with mankind. God is indeed transcendent, but He makes a habit of reaching out making Himself available and approachable to humanity. The incarnation of Jesus Christ is the greatest example of God's desire to make Himself known to man.

No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us. – John 1:18 NLT

Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. – Colossians 1:15 NLT

God made Himself known to Adam and Eve in the garden. Before the fall, they had daily fellowship with their Creator-God. Noah and Enoch are said to have walked with God. They both enjoyed an intimate relationship with the Almighty that He initiated. Abraham was called "the friend of God" (Isaiah 41:8; James 2:24) and that relationship was marked by regular interactions with his divine counterpart. They talked repeatedly and Abraham knew what it was like to be discipled and disciplined by his Heavenly Father and friend.

Bildad mistakenly portrays God as a one-dimensional being who is so dissimilar and distant from humanity that the gulf between the two cannot be bridged. What right does the lowly worm have to expect the God who created the universe to take notice of it. And, according to Bildad's logic, a sinful human being has not hope of standing before the wholly righteous and sinless God of the universe. Job was out of his league and out of his mind to think that God would give him the time of day. Bildad believed Job was living in a fantasy land of illusion and false hope, and the sooner he woke up to the reality of his sinfulness and God's holiness, the better.

But Job isn't swayed by Bildad's pessimistic logic. Rather than bow the knee to Bildad's demand for abject submission to God's transcendence, Job levels a series of stinging and sarcastic one-liners against his friend.

*"How you have helped the powerless!
How you have saved the weak!
How you have enlightened my stupidity!
What wise advice you have offered!
Where have you gotten all these wise sayings?
Whose spirit speaks through you?" – Job 26:2-4 NLT*

These literally statements drip with sarcasm. Job wants Bildad and his two companions to know that their lengthy monologues have been utterly useless and of no benefit whatsoever. He is not impressed with their wisdom. He has received no life-altering insights from all their pontificating and posturing. He has not been swayed by their rhetorical skills or pithy-sounding platitudes masquerading as truth. There is nothing they have said that he didn't already know. They have brought nothing new to the table but have simply regurgitated the same old worn-out arguments about God's greatness and man's lowliness. But that doesn't help to explain Job's predicament. Job fully understood that God is God and he is not. He knew that God was holy and righteous. In fact, he was counting on it. He was so convinced of God's "otherness" that He was willing to take his questions and concerns straight to the sole source of wisdom, truth, and justice.

Job knew God was holy, and he wasn't taking Him lightly or treating Him with contempt. Despite the picture his friends painted, Job wasn't stupid. But he was desperate. He needed answers. He longed for relief. And so he called out to that powerful and dreadful God who rules over the host of heaven and controls the sun, moon, and stars. He went straight to the top, not out of some misguided sense of self-worthiness or equality with God, but based on his understanding of God's greatness and goodness.

God invites His children to call upon Him. He desires even lowly worms to reach out to Him in faith and hope.

"...call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." – Psalm 50:15 ESV

"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known." – Jeremiah 33:3 ESV

...everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. – Romans 10:13 ESV

And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. – Acts 2:21 ESV

Job had not called his friends, but they had shown up anyway, and their arrival had brought him nothing but grief. Their answers and advice had proven unhelpful and nothing but hurtful. They were even advising Job to curtail his pitiful and pointless cries to God. It would do him no good, they reasoned. He was wasting his time. But Job knew better. Despite all that had happened, Job knew that God was his only hope. Yes, his hope was wavering and his faith was being severely tested, but he kept returning to the one piece of solid ground in the landscape of his shattered life: The greatness and goodness of God.

If Job had only had access to the Psalms, he might have shared the following insights with his friend, Bildad. These amazing words from the pen of Ethan the Ezrahite provide a powerful counterpoint to the short-sighted logic of Bildad.

*O Lord God of Heaven's Armies!
Where is there anyone as mighty as you, O Lord?
You are entirely faithful.*

*You rule the oceans.
You subdue their storm-tossed waves.
You crushed the great sea monster.
You scattered your enemies with your mighty arm.
The heavens are yours, and the earth is yours;
everything in the world is yours—you created it all.
You created north and south.
Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon praise your name.
Powerful is your arm!
Strong is your hand!
Your right hand is lifted high in glorious strength.
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.
Unfailing love and truth walk before you as attendants.
Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship,
for they will walk in the light of your presence, Lord.
They rejoice all day long in your wonderful reputation.
They exult in your righteousness. – Psalm 89:8-16 NLT*

It is God's greatness that makes possible His goodness. Only He is all-powerful and fully capable of using His righteousness and justice to right the wrongs and bring about vindication and restoration to the hurting and hopeless of this world.