

A Guide To The Reader

Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.

Job 8

8.1-3. Whereas the particular theme of Eliphaz' reply to Job was, "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (4.7-8), Bildad comes at the same theme from a slightly different angle, "Doth God pervert judgment? Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?"

Of course, Job would agree with him. But, again, Bildad's implication throughout is the same as that of Eliphaz. What has happened to Job is God's judgment. God does not pervert judgment. Therefore Job must have sinned. Case closed.

All down the ages this has been the natural God-fearing response to disease and misfortune and the book of Job refutes it once and for all. But still the popular mind is prone to think that particular suffering is the result of secret or gross sin or both.

"How long wilt thou speak these things?" Bildad believes that like an animal caught in a trap all Job's words are only enmeshing him more and more and will ultimately bring greater judgment upon him. He should calm down and restrain himself. Of course, Job had spent a long time enduring silently. It isn't the fact that he speaks, it is what he says that is so offensive to Bildad here; and he represents all the three friends. Zophar will take the same tack when it is his turn.

Of the wind, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John 3.8). Bildad's picture is of a strong wind doing damage. It is Job who by his words is guilty of calling God's ways into question and thereby, as he thinks, liable to overthrow the faith of some. It strikes the friends this way because what Job is thinking does not conform to their traditional, God-fearing, and to some degree self-righteous, way of thinking which defines the man who is only religious and moral, but without the evangelical faith of the righteousness which comes by Christ only.

This is the very argument concerning the later Jews which Paul refutes. "If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous?..." (Romans 3.5). He goes on to prove that all have sinned (which, of course Job does not deny) and then declares that, "now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory

of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom 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... Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.” (Romans 3.21.28).

This faith in Christ’s blood, through the atonement of the burnt offering which foreshadowed it, Job believed. He had therefore, long before the mystery of the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus had been revealed, entered into this faith, taught by God Himself to do so. So that in the book of Job we see the answer of the evangelical faith to the “moral night” of the self-righteous man, religious by nature; and not merely the answer, but the conflict, exemplified in later days by the proud and hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees in their opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ.

8.4. How unkind these words are! “If thy children have sinned against him, and he hath cast them away for their transgression...” Again the cruel argument is the same. God does not pervert judgment. Your children have perished. Therefore they are cast away for their transgression.

Now we have seen in 1.5 that Job offered burnt offerings to cover the sins of his children. Whether we may do that for another effectually is a moot point. Even in 42.7-8, although Job was to pray for his friends, they were themselves to offer a burnt offering for themselves. It does seem that they were justified by faith, as was Job, from 42.9 where their acceptance is implicitly spoken of in the words, “the LORD also accepted Job.” But they brought their own offering. Maybe Job’s early children who perished consented to their father’s worship on their behalf by their attendance (that Job sent for them seems to be what is inferred from “sent” in 1.5 as also the use of the word in 1.4) and that they were thereby saved is a possibility. We simply can’t decide on the basis of the evidence we have in this book. But Bildad’s words and the doctrine which activates them are cruel.

8.5. Verses 4-6 each begin with “if” and Bildad’s assumptions are certainly wrong in the latter two verses and probably so in verse 4. Again, his reasoning is the same as Eliphaz’, “I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause” (5.8). Bildad says, “If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes and make thy supplication to the Almighty...” Was not Job constantly making supplication?

8.6-7. The expression “awake for thee” is a fine one and words that modern Christians might well use in prayer. These are precisely the things that did occur when Job was restored as recorded in chapter 42, so though Bildad has some sort of understanding his application is wrong when it comes to Job because of his correlation of suffering and sin. The expression “make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous” is also elegant, but if it were ourselves in Job’s place who would want elegant words in place of kindness? However, to dwell at home in righteousness towards all our family and neighbours is an exalted thing and deserves such an elegant description when the subject may be considered dispassionately, and not coloured by other unkind words.

“Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.” This, of course, was proved to be true for Job. The general truth which Bildad proclaims is quite right, provided the application is correct. The elect of God are chosen and called from the humblest and most obscure of origins to take their place in glory with the Saviour, the elect angels and all the saints. “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people” (Psalm 113.7-8). His people, whatever their origins, have been made kings and priests unto God (Revelation 1.6).

8.8-10. Bildad now appeals to tradition as does Eliphaz in 15.10. That’s all very well if the tradition was correct from the beginning. But tradition’s tendency is always to replace God’s commandments with man-made inventions (Matthew 15.9). The things handed down to us (traditions) should always be examined in the light of God’s word to see if they are true according to that word. This would be a good time to read again Matthew 15.1-20 and Mark 7.1-23. Of course, a proper search of Abraham (as in Romans 4.1-3) would indeed have revealed the true faith in Christ. Whether Job (the fifth from Abraham, as seems likely) had that access we do not know, but the invitation to search suggests such a possibility. It is the interpretation of the facts available that would have proved crucial. But in any case Job had been led by the Lord Himself into the true faith as was Abraham. Job was indeed of the true line of Abraham by faith. History is a useful subject; our forefathers in the faith a powerful incentive, by their example, to us in our day. It is good to know Protestant history; Reformation history and, logically and of necessity, the history of the Christian church.

“Shall they not teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart?” Indeed they will. A Spurgeon, a Gill, a Whitefield, the Puritans, a Calvin, a Luther and as many as we find it congenial to read, they, like Abel, “being dead yet speak” (Hebrews 11.4). “All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” (1 Corinthians 3.21-22).

8.11-14. But what follows is not the deduction, the interpretation, we should be making from the best education:- “Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water?” Of course not. But that does not warrant the assumption that unusual suffering cannot grow without the soil of unusual or secret sin. Then Bildad’s picture language goes on to make the observation that these grow rapidly and are cut down early. So it is, he means, with Job. The hurtfulness continues. He virtually accuses Job of being a hypocrite; of forgetting God while pretending to be a practising believer.

8.15. “He shall lean upon his house but it shall not stand.” A hypocrite shall lean upon his house but it shall not stand. Job’s house (family, household) has not stood. Therefore Job must be a hypocrite. All very unkind and barbed.

8.16-19. Again, this is powerful picture language but misplaced when applied to Job. The sunlight causes the too rapid growth of a green shoot with roots merely wrapped around a heap of stones so that it soon withers. So brief was its existence that the garden might well say, “I don’t remember it.” Another more hardy plant will replace it. Its “joy” is shortlived. While this teaching is wrongly applied to Job, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches similarly and rightly concerning false prophets in Matthew 7. 15-23.

8.20-22. Again these words came true for Job as described in chapter 42, thus disproving Bildad's logic. Bildad's logic is once again false. God will not cast away a perfect man ("perfect" in the sense in which it is used in 1.8). But Job is cast away. Therefore he is unacceptable to God as not being perfect. Similarly, God will not help evil doers. Job is not being helped, quite the contrary. Therefore Job is an evil doer.

There is in Bildad's speech nothing like as persuasive an element or such pleading to repentance as was evident in Eliphaz' speech. Only in verses 5 & 8 until verse 21 is there any attempt to turn Job to seek the Lord, although there is some reasoning to encourage the attempt in verses 6-10. There is no fervour, however, as in Eliphaz chapter 5.15-26.

There is, however, a truer inference between verses 20 & 21. "God will not cast away a perfect man...till he fill thy mouth with laughing..." If Job were to acknowledge his sin and repent, he avers, then these good things would be God's reward, namely, laughing, rejoicing and the sight of his enemies clothed with shame. He ends, however, with a final warning, virtually saying, "Mark my words." "The dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought." Inasmuch as his wife and his dwelling place (not that with his sores he was actually living in it) were now his only possessions this was quite a dire threat.