

NOTE: The following verses come from different Bible translations or Hebrew scholars. The NIV is the primary version, but at times I have chosen other translations which I believe to be clearer or more accurate. Verses that are not from the NIV are marked to the left of the verse (for example, see 8:5).

CHAPTER 8

Bildad, another of Job's friends, speaks up. He is appalled by Job's response to Eliphaz and offers his own searing rebuttal. He is analytical and objective, but superficial.

8:1 Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

8:2 "How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind.

8:3 Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?

8:4 When your children sinned against him, he gave them over to the penalty of their sin.

ESV **8:5 If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy,**

8:6 if you are pure and upright, even now he will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place.

Throughout these speeches there is a lot of interaction between the speakers. For example, Job had said that his friends had treated his word "as wind" (Job 6:26). Bildad picks this up and tells Job that his words are just that. They are like a whirling wind (8:2); they are empty. Likewise, in 7:21 Job had prayed to God saying, "You will seek me, but I will be no more." Bildad takes that, as well, and in verse 5 suggests that Job spend more time seeking God than imagining a day when God is seeking him. There are many such connections elsewhere that show their interaction.

Job is so adamant that he has suffered undeservedly that Bildad thinks he is dangerously close to charging God with perverting justice (Job 8:3). Job's friends are so confident that everything that happens to people is deserved. Bildad even tells Job that the reason God allowed his ten children to be killed by the storm was because they sinned; their death was deserved (8:4 cf. Job 1:18-19). To say anything less is to subvert justice. Therefore, he encourages Job to humble himself, seek God, and He will restore him (8:5-6).

Bildad, like Eliphaz, assumes that Job has sinned (which he hadn't – see chapters 1, 2). Because he believes God's actions match man's behavior, he reasons backwards. If God has not restored Job to his rightful place, it is because Job is unrighteous. It's either that, or God is punishing Job for no reason. The latter, of course, is unthinkable. To punish someone who doesn't deserve it would be unjust. Although Bildad is correct in saying that there is no injustice with God, he is mistaken in thinking that all that God does is related to justice; Job was not being punished; he was suffering for other reasons altogether.

Although Bildad misapplies what he knows, he is stating some wonderful truths nonetheless.

First, as verses 5 and 6 say, there is room for repentance with God. That is a glorious thought. God is slow to anger. He does not judge quickly. Furthermore, He is quick to forgive and restore His relationship with us. If we humble ourselves and seek Him, we can be reconciled to God. It reminds us of Isaiah 1 where God says,

15 When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood;

16 wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong,

17 learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

18 "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

19 If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land;

In Isaiah 1:15 God tells Israel that they lift their hands in prayer, but their prayers are not heard because their "hands are full of blood." This expression denotes crime and guilt of a high order such as murder. Here it is probably a figurative expression, not meaning literally that they were murderers, but that they were given to injustice; to the oppression of the poor, the widow, etc. God tells them if they wash (their hands) and make themselves clean (put away their sins), stop doing wrong and do right, He will forgive them (Isa. 1:18) and bless them once again (Isa. 1:19).

In other words, we cannot say, "I am seeking God" while living in sin. If we are seeking God, we should do so "with clean hands". Even though we are washed in the blood of Christ, we still need to seek God from a repentant heart. When we do, God will respond. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Secondly, we should revel in the fact that God is just. God does not pervert justice (8:3). How awful it would be if He was almighty and unjust!

The gospel is an outworking of God's justice. If God turned a blind eye to sin or just swept it under the rug, He would not be righteous. The cross was necessary because sin must be punished for God to maintain justice. We are only forgiven because our sins have been punished in Christ ("He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross; 1 Pet. 1:24). Because we can trust God to do what is right, we can know with absolute certainty that since the penalty for sin has been paid, we are completely forgiven and will be punished no more. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Ro. 8:1). Praise God for His justice!

So Bildad's solution is that the way forward for Job is "to seek God and plead with the Almighty" (Job 8:5). If Job humbles himself and is truly pure and upright, God will restore him to his "rightful place."

Then, to drive the point home, Bildad reminds Job of what happens to the unrepentant (8:11-19).

8:11 Can papyrus grow tall where there is no marsh? Can reeds thrive without water?

8:12 While still growing and uncut, they wither more quickly than grass.

8:13 Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless.

The wicked man's fate is likened to a papyrus in a drying marsh. Even though no one cuts it down, it will wither and perish by itself. "Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the hope of the godless."

The godless forgets God; he thinks he can live outside of the scrutiny of God's eye and act as if there are no consequences for his actions. Yet apart from his source of life, he shrivels and dies.

8:14 What he trusts in is fragile; what he relies on is a spider's web.

8:15 He leans on his web, but it gives way; he clings to it, but it does not hold.

The wicked puts his confidence in things that will fail. The object of his confidence is like a spider's web (the frailest of all houses). As soon as he leans on it or clings to it, he quickly discovers that there is nothing substantial to support him.

8:16 He is like a well-watered plant in the sunshine, spreading its shoots over the garden;

8:17 it entwines its roots around a pile of rocks and looks for a place among the stones.

8:18 But when it is torn from its spot, that place disowns it and says, 'I never saw you.'

8:19 Surely its life withers away, and from the soil other plants grow.

The memory of the wicked will be short lived. They may flourish for a while -- like a well-watered plant in the sunshine, spreading its roots over a garden. They appear to be thriving and firmly rooted. Yet they will be torn from their spot and the place they once occupied will disown them saying "I never saw you" and others will take his place. As Proverbs 10:7 says, "The memory of the righteous will be a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot."

Verse 20 sums up Bildad's thoughts: **"Surely God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers."**

That is certainly correct. God does watch over his own and ultimately does punish the evil. "But as Bildad expresses the case, he claims to know more about God's doings than he really does (neither he nor Job knows the behind-the-scenes setup in chapter 1). Worse, he applies his doctrine mechanically and shortsightedly, and ends up condemning a righteous man" (Carson, How Long, O Lord?).

CHAPTER 9

Job responds to Bildad.

Job has no quarrel with Bildad's fundamental assumption that God is just. In 9:2(a) he says, **"In truth I know that this is so."** Instead Job asks, **"But how can a man be in the right before God?"** (9:2b). In this context, he is not asking if it is possible for anyone to ever be perfectly righteous before a holy God; rather, he is asking how a mortal can be vindicated before God. In short, Job is saying, "My problem is that I am righteous but I am suffering unfairly. How can I prove it to God? How can I be vindicated before him? How can I be acquitted by God when He is my accuser?"

He then imagines what would happen if he entered into litigation with God to prove his innocence.

NLT **9:3 "If someone wanted to take God to court, would it be possible to answer him even once in a thousand times?"**

9:4 "His wisdom is profound; his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?"

If he wanted to take God to court what would be the chance of him winning his case? In a thousand attempts could he even win a single argument? Job flatly states that God's wisdom is too profound. Job could never win a case against God.

Of course, Job does not claim sinless perfection, he is just arguing that he has not committed any sin that justifies being made the target of God.

Not even the wisest person or strongest person could defy God and win (9:4).

To prove the point that God is too strong and wise, Job gives some examples of His power and greatness.

NAS 9:5 "It is God who removes the mountains, they know not how, When He overturns them in His anger;

Mountains are typically thought to be stable and immovable. Yet God removes them, or overturns them in an instant. The mountains are nothing to God.

- Isaiah 40:12: "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?"
- Psalm 97:5: "The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth."
- Revelation 6:14: "The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place."

9:6 Who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble;

In a poetic fashion, the earth is pictured as being supported like a building by pillars or columns. It expresses stability and inalterability of the earth. The literal truth as to the earth is given in Job 26:7. Job's point is that not even the earth as it rests on its great pillars are exempt from the power of God. He can hold the earth steady, or He can shake it at will.

- Psalm 75:3: "When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars."
- Isaiah 13:13: "Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, and the earth will be shaken out of its place, at the wrath of the LORD of hosts in the day of his fierce anger."
- Haggai 2:6: "For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land."

NAS 9:7 Who commands the sun not to shine, and sets a seal upon the stars;

Not only are the mountains and the earth subject to His power, but the heavens themselves are as well.

We take the rising of the sun and the stars in the sky for granted as daily occurrences in our lives. We can predict the time that the sun will rise on any particular day of the year, even ten years from now. We can navigate by the stars in the night sky. But the sun only rises upon the earth each day because God causes it to rise. The stars are where they are because God appointed them to be there. Job reminds us that all the movements of the earth and of the heavenly bodies are movements God causes, and He could at any moment suspend them. God, if He pleases, can command the sun not to shine, or remove the stars from our sight; He can hide them away like contents of a package.

- Genesis 1:14-18: "Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good."

- Matthew 5:45: "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous"
- Amos 4:13: "For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth- the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!"
- Joel 2:10: "The earth quakes before them; the heavens tremble. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining."

9:8 He alone stretches out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea.

9:9 He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south

God alone (by his own single power, without any other help) spread out the heavens when He first created them, and He keeps them spread for the comfort and benefit of man, and does not roll and fold them up, as He will do in due time (see Isa. 34:4; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 6:14, Poole).

He walks upon the waves of the ocean. God is the ruler of all.

- Psalm 102:25-27: "In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."
- Psalm 33:6: "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host."
- Isaiah 40:22: "It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;"
- Isaiah 44:24: "Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,"
- Psalm 93:3-4: "The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the LORD on high is mighty!"

God is the Maker of the stars of the sky.

- Genesis 1:16: "And God made the two great lights- the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night- and the stars."
- Psalm 147:4: "He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names."
- Amos 5:8: "He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name;"

"The Great Bear (9:9) is the glory of the northern hemisphere, Orion of the southern sky, and the Pleiades of the east" (Ellicott). "These he names as constellations of greatest eminence; but under them he seems to comprehend all the stars, which, as they were created by God, so are under his government" (Benson).

9:10 He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted.

In 9:5-9 Job has illustrated that in creation God performs wonders that cannot be fathomed. His workings are incomprehensible. Romans 11:33; "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!"

We can only go so far in understanding the ways of God, then we must stop. We must admit that God's ways cannot be understood. We reach a point where we say, "Let God be God!" and we bow.

Normally the above descriptions of God would be reasons for praise. The fact that God is almighty means there is nothing to worry about. But Job is terrified because he sees God as causing his suffering and there is nothing that can stop it. The omnipresence of God meant that Job could not escape God's notice (7:16-19); the omnipotence of God to Job means there is no way to contend with Him. Job's point is, "If I have nothing to repent of and He still treats me this way, what can I do? . . . Nothing!" God is too powerful.

In verses 11-12 Job moves from God's working in creation to His affairs among men. In these verses he tells us three things about God's providence: It is incomprehensible, it is invisible, and it is incontestable.

9:11 When he passes me, I cannot see him; when he goes by, I cannot perceive him.

God's ways are invisible.

In the mystery of God's providence, He often works beyond our ability to discern Him acting. He is beyond investigation.

We know this from our own salvation experience. In speaking of the regenerating work of the Spirit, Jesus makes an analogy to wind; He says, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:8). The Spirit comes. He goes. Where He comes from, we do not know. Where He is going next, we cannot predict. We cannot see Him or physically perceive His presence. But our response in faith in salvation proves that He has visited us.

The weakness of our understanding is such that we cannot search out God's plan and ways. Our finite minds cannot apprehend his motions, or comprehend the measures He takes.

"Job depicts the unapproachable majesty of God omnipotent, but invisible, and shows the utter hopelessness of entering into judgment with Him" (Ellicott).

9:12 If he snatches away, who can stop him? Who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'

God's actions are incontestable.

No one can stop God. He does whatever He wants, whenever he wants to do it. If He takes from us, we have no grounds to question His right to do so.

9:32 "He is not a man like me that I might answer him, that we might confront each other in court.

NLT 9:33 If only there were a mediator who could bring us together, but there is none.

In verse 32 Job admits his hopelessness in bringing his case to God once again. God is not a man. He is too powerful, too wise; His actions are incontestable. Entering into litigation against God is futile. It would be a completely lopsided contest. He had no prospect of success. He needs someone who has more authority or power than he does to represent him before God: "If only there were a mediator who could bring us together, but there is none."

Job needed a mediator (or arbitrator) to stand between him and God to argue his innocence. We need to remember who Job was. By God's own declaration he was a man who was blameless and upright, who feared God and shunned evil (1:1, 8; 2:3). If he saw no chance standing before God without a mediator, what chance would we have?

What he saw in the shadows we see in the light. He knew of no mediator, but praise God we know one! Jesus, the one mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5) has made it possible for the guilty to be reconciled to God. He is our advocate (1 Jn. 2:1) who pleads our cause before God, and communicates to us the favors which God proposes to bestow on us. Not only that, His ministry toward us will never end since He always lives to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25).

Application

1. As we look at the creation, we should let it direct our attention to the beauty and power of God. It is good to meditate on His transcendence. As Job said, "He is not a man like me." "His wisdom is profound; His power is vast." It would be good to read through all of the verses listed above that are related to God's power and pray through them as a confession of His greatness. Marvel at Him. Glory in Him. Bless His holy name.

2. The one who forgets God will reap disaster. He will perish. Whatever he puts his confidence in will fail. Though he may flourish for a season, any memory of him will be forgotten. May God give us the grace to not forget the One who gives us life, never fails, and will preserve the memory of our existence for all eternity.

3. God acts with power that no creature can resist.

We should recognize the impossibility of resisting God. Those who fight against God fight against someone who moves mountains, holds the stars in the sky, makes the earth tremble, and walks upon the seas. How foolish to think that we can resist God!

Even as Christians we sometimes attempt to resist God when we murmur against Him and complain about the things He has brought into our lives. Our life may not be what we wish it was. We may be overwhelmed with sorrow and pain or stress. Yet we are unfit to judge the manner of God's ways; we cannot see Him, we do not know what He does, or what His designs are. We cannot change the plan of God, but we can submit to it. We shall, by God's grace, rest in Christ. We may not understand what God is doing. We may not like what God is doing. But we must not contest and fight against the work of an all-wise, all-knowing, good and loving God. We need grace to acquiesce as God works out His plan.

We must not forget that there are some things that God has promised never to take from us. He never takes away His love from us (Ro. 8:35-39). He never takes away the gift of His Son. He will never take away our eternal inheritance.

- 1 Peter 1:3-5: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, *to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*”

This place is not our home. We must learn not to cling to the things we have here with too much vigor or become bitter when they are gone.

5. Lastly, we need a Mediator. Praise God that He has given us Jesus who has purchased peace for us with His blood, and is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him. “If we trust in His name, our sins will be buried in the depths of the sea, we shall be washed from all our filthiness, and made whiter than snow, so that none can lay anything to our charge. We shall be clothed with the robes of righteousness and salvation, adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit, and presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Henry).