

JOB 8

BILDAD SPEAKS: "JOB IS A HYPOCRITE!"

In this chapter, Bildad the Shuhite speaks to Job for the first time; and the first words out of his mouth are these: "How long wilt thou speak these things?" The meaning of Job's words was not taken rightly, and now he was rebuked as if he was an evildoer. Sadly, even in disputes on spiritual things, it is all too common for people to treat others with sharpness, and their arguments with contempt.

Bildad's discourse showed that he did not have a favorable opinion of his friend's character. Job had acknowledged that God does not pervert judgment; yet that does not *necessarily* mean that His children are made an apparent "cast-away" because of some great transgression. Extraordinary afflictions are not *always* the punishment for extraordinary sins; sometimes they are actually the trials of extraordinary graces. And so, when we behold other people's situations, we ought to have a very gracious opinion concerning them.

The very grounds upon which Bildad began his discourse were ill-founded. Job had never said that the Lord perverted judgment. He had indeed complained in the bitterness of his soul, but he had not said a word to accuse God of injustice. Bildad also seemed to employ a new argument that would greatly irritate poor Job's mind, by insinuating that the death of his children was a judgment from Jehovah upon them for their iniquity. Even if that had been true, it was an act of great unkindness to the grieving father to thus remind him of the source of his affliction.

Let us pause and observe how sharp the trials of Job were. The messengers which came to him in the beginning of the narrative (chapter 1) were all treading upon the heels of each other, and all of them carried evil tidings – worse and worse. And now his friends – who came under the appearance of endeavoring to comfort him – only succeeded one another in sharper reproofs. Surely this is a reminder to us of how sweet it is, in our own sorrows, to have the Lord Jesus as our Comforter to fly to!

Bildad spoke of hypocrites and evildoers, and of the fatal end of all their hopes and joys. He employed several metaphors to describe and illustrate his thoughts on the matter. The first of these was a bulrush or a reed, which grows in marshy ground, and looks very green; but it withers in dry weather. This represents the hypocrite's profession of faith, which is maintained only in times of prosperity. Another illustration was the spider's web, which is spun with great skill, but is easily swept away. This represents a person's pretensions to religion when, in reality, he is without the grace of God in his heart. A mere formalist

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Bildad tries to convince Job that he and his children had sinned – verses 1-4
- ❖ He reasons that if Job would seek the Lord, He would restore him – verses 5-7
- ❖ He says that Providence usually treats wicked men as Job was being treated – verses 8-19



flatters himself in his own eyes, does not doubt about his salvation, rests in a false security, and cheats the world with his vain-confidences. The third metaphor was the flourishing of a tree that strikes root to a rock, and yet is eventually cut down and thrown aside. Its roots do not sink into the earth; and similarly, the hypocrite's piety is not planted in rich soil, but upon the hard rocks of an unconverted human heart. Yet it sends out its roots afar, and it seems to flourish for a time. It draws nourishment from remote objects; it clings to a crag or a projecting rock – or anything – for support, until a tempest sweeps it down to rise no more! What a fitting representation of wicked men! When they are most firmly established, they are suddenly thrown down and forgotten.

This doctrine of the vanity of a hypocrite's confidence, or the prosperity of a wicked man, is indeed sound; but it was not applicable to the case of Job. Bildad finished his words with an assurance to his friend that people's lives do indeed receive their just reward; and therefore, he and his friends concluded that the reward that Job was receiving indicated a previous life of sin. Now it is certainly true that God will not cast away an upright person; he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away forever. And it is also true that sin does bring ruin on persons and families. Yet to argue hereby that Job must have been an ungodly and wicked man was unjust and uncharitable. The mistake in these reasonings arose from Job's friends not distinguishing between the present state of trial and discipline in this lifetime, and the future state of final judgment in eternity. The Shuhite and his companions drew a false conclusion about the Providence of God. The Lord will never cast away a righteous person, nor will He help evildoers; yet this conclusion is not to be made by a view of outward circumstances. Asaph was so overwhelmed with what he saw of the prosperity of the wicked and the sorrows of the righteous, that he declared that it staggered him (Ps. 73). Therefore, we must look to the Last Day to have these things fully and finally cleared up – when the Lord will visibly judge the world in righteousness and justice. May we choose the portion, possess the confidence, bear the cross, and die the death of the righteous; and in the meantime, let us be careful to neither wound others by rash judgments, nor distress ourselves needlessly about the opinions of our fellow-creatures.

Before concluding our thoughts on this chapter, let us not forget to observe how graciously the Lord supported Job's mind while Satan thus assaulted him, and while even his supposed friends joined in the temptation to cast him down. And how precious it is for us to look back in our own lives and see how Jesus' fullness and all-sufficiency has helped us in past afflictions, when – at the time – we were perfectly unconscious of His presence and His favor!

Lord, thank You for graciously preserving us from being guilty of playing the hypocrite, and of only serving You when we obtain temporal comforts from You. Amen.