

In examining chapter 25 last week, we considered the final speech of Job's three friends. Chapters 26-31 contain Job's final response. Chapter 26 is more directly a response to Bildad (and the other friends), whereas chapters 27-31 are more generic in nature.

Job's basic purpose in chapter 26 is to contrast Bildad (and his friends) with God. Bildad (and his friends) were powerless to help (vv1-4), which is in stark contrast to the power of God as seen in creation (vv5-14).

Many commentators have mentioned how beautiful verses 5-14 are, and suggest they are among the loftiest in the entire book of Job (and even Bible). For example—"Chapter 26 is one of the grandest recitals in the whole book. It is excelled only by the Lord's speeches, as is fitting" (Francis Anderson).

- I. Job Rebukes Bildad (vv1-4)
- II. Job Describes God (vv5-14)
- III. Observations

- I. Job Rebukes Bildad (vv1-4)

1. Verses 1-4 are not only a rebuke to Bildad but all three friends—this is Job's final rebuke to his friends.
2. He does so by asking a string of rhetorical questions, wherein he basically rebukes his friends for two things.
3. (1) For not giving him strength (vv1-2), v2—"How have you helped him who is without power? How have you saved the arm that has no strength?"
4. I think it's rather evident, that Job is here referring to himself as the one without power and that has no strength.
5. The point being—Job felt powerless to bear his afflictions in his own strength—he needed help and strength.
6. (2) For not giving him wisdom (vv3-4), v3—"How have you counseled one who has no wisdom? And how have you declared sound advice to many?"
7. Again, I think Job is referring to himself as "one who has no wisdom" and needed "sound advice" from his friends.
8. He not only needed strength and encouragement but direction and guidance—all of which they failed to give.
9. V4—"To whom have you uttered words? And whose spirit came from you?"—this first phrase identifies how they were to help him—with their words.
10. "To whom have you uttered words?"—that is, to whom have you uttered words that have give strength and wisdom.
11. The last phrase of v4 is difficult to understand—Job may be asking about the source of their words—that is, who has inspired you?
12. Whose spirit or breath came from you? Are the words you've spoken influenced by God or another?"
13. Or else, it's possible that by "spirit" is meant Job's and not theirs—"and who spirit has been revived by you."
14. Joseph Caryl—"Whose spirit came from thee? That is, whose soul, or whose mind has been recovered out of trouble and fear, out of sadness and sorrow by the words which thou hast spoken."
15. Either way, Job's friends were ineffective in giving him strength and wisdom from the words they spoke.

- II. Job Describes God (vv5-14)

1. Within vv5-14, Job describes the power of God over creation: the sea, grave, outer space, sky, sea, and heavens (from the lowest parts of the earth to the highest heaven).
2. But before I come to this, I want to do two things: (a) I want to briefly explain how verses 1-4 relate to verses 5-14—how does Job's rebuke of Bildad relate to his description of God?
3. Well, at first to be honest, it may seem like these two sections don't relate at all (they are so fundamentally different).
4. In fact, it's for this reason, that some people actually think verses 5-14 are not Job's words but one of his friends.
5. But upon further consideration, I suggest they relate to each other by way of contrast—Job contrasts their inability to give him strength with God's power as evidenced in creation.
6. (b) I want to say a few brief summary statements about vv5-14: first, he describes God's power as evidenced both in creation and providence; second, he describes creation as a work of the Triune God; third, he uses highly poetic and figurative language (remember Job is 1 of 5 poetic books in our Bible).
7. V5—"The dead tremble, those under the waters and those inhabiting them"—it's unclear what is meant by "the dead."
8. The options are two; first, it's possible it refers to those who are physically and spiritually dead—in this way it fits with v6.
9. Second, it could refer not to dead people but dead things—that is, things within the water that have no life.
10. Thus, the KJV—"Dead things are formed under the water"—it likely refers to everything within the waters (for example, coral, vegetation, and all that's found in the depths of the waters, that has no life, properly understood).
11. Acts 14:15—"God made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them"—that is, in the heaven, earth, and sea.
12. V6—"Sheol is naked before Him, and Destruction has no covering"—this obviously refers to the grave.
13. Having described the inhabitants of the sea (v5), Job now goes further down and describes the inhabitants of the grave.
14. The Hebrew word rendered "Sheol" can either mean the grave or hell—either way, both are open before God.
15. V7—"He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing"—this refers to the creation account (there are several words used in vv7-13 that are also found in the first few verses of Genesis 1).
16. Thus, by "north" is meant the northern-most point of the universe—He then hung the earth on nothing (Heb.1:3 – 'He upholds all things by the word of His power').
17. This means, while vast, the universe isn't infinite or without limitation—there is an end to the universe.
18. Only God the Creator is infinite or limitless—all creation is finite or limited and that includes the universe.
19. V8—"He binds up the water in His thick clouds, yet the clouds are not broken under it"—this refers to the clouds in the sky.
20. "He binds up the water in His thick clouds"—He collects water within certain thick clouds or rain clouds.
21. V9—"He covers the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud over it"—there's a textual variant so that some of your Bibles has "moon" instead of "throne."
22. This is not a translational issue but a textual issue—thus, there's no absolute way to be sure which is correct.

23. Both fit the context—He either covers the moon with His clouds, or else, He covers the throne with His clouds (Isa.66:1 – 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool').
24. V10—"He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness"—this again recounts the first day of creation.
25. Gen.1:2-4—"The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness."
26. To "draw a circular horizon on the face of the waters" is a poetic way of saying, He made bounders for the waters on earth (He determined the boundaries of the waters as well as the boundary of light and darkness).
27. V11—"The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at His rebuke"—this is the second time we find the word "tremble."
28. The dead tremble (v5) and now the pillars of heaven tremble—this is obviously poetic and figurative language.
29. It's as if heaven was a temple or a house built upon pillars—thus, for the pillars to tremble is another way of saying heaven and all that's in it trembles.
30. This means—all things came to pass by the power of God's word—He spoke all things into existence.
31. V12—"He stirs up the sea with His power, and by His understanding He breaks up the storm"—to "stir up the sea" is to create a storm and to "break up the storm" is to end it.
32. V13—"By His Spirit He adorned the heavens; His hand pierced the fleeing serpent"—by the heavens is meant the stars and by adorned is meant beatified.
33. The word rendered "pierced" literally means "to pain or bring forth"—thus, the KJV renders it "formed."
34. It's possible that by "the fleeing serpent" is meant a constellation of stars (this is the view of Calvin and most commentators).
35. By His Spirit God adorned the heavens with stars—His hand formed them into various constellations.
36. V14—"Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?"
37. Job uses two imageries to illustrate this point: (a) a garment—"Indeed these are the mere edges of His ways."
38. The power and wisdom evidenced in creation and providence is but the outward edges of a massive garment.
39. If I were to show you the edges of a large blanket, you would have a small hint as to what the blanket entailed.
40. You would have a proper knowledge of the blanket in part—you could touch and examine the edges.
41. But your knowledge would be far from complete—you would have a partial (but real) knowledge of the blanket.
42. (b) A voice—"And how small a whisper we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?"
43. It's as if he says—within creation we only hear a whisper from God, in comparison to who God actually is.
44. "But the thunder of His power who can understand?"—no man can fully understand or grasp who Good is.
45. This doesn't deny we can understand God's power, but we are unable to fully grasp or understand that power.

46. Job 36:26 (Elihu)—"Behold, God is great, and we do not know Him; nor can the number of His years be discovered."
47. This brings us back to a term we've used before—God is incomprehensible—He cannot be comprehended.
48. This means, God cannot be contained within the limitations of our human compacity—He is beyond us.
49. John Calvin—"Can we do God a greater dishonor than to go about to enclose His mighty power within the capacity of our own wit? It is more than if a man would take upon him to shut up both sea and land in his own fist, or to hold them between a couple of fingers: surely it is a greater madness.

III. Observations

1. (1) We can strengthen others with words—the first 4 verses provide us with an important practical lesson.
2. If Job's friends were unable to strengthen him with their words, then, it's possible to strengthen others with our words.
3. Or perhaps I can say—the fact that Job needed to be strengthened by his friends, proves that others can strengthen us.
4. Most of not all of you are familiar with the means of grace—these are means, public and private, whereby God communicates grace to our souls.
5. Hearing the word of God preached, participating in the sacraments, prayer, and reading and meditating on Scripture.
6. But this doesn't mean these are the only ways God gives grace to His people—there are other ways that are not traditionally described as means of grace (but are in fact ways God gives grace to His people).
7. The first would be trials—as we learned back in Job 23:10, God was purifying Job through his trials.
8. But a second way would be fellowship—if not there have been a few Reformed theologians who've actually added fellowship as a means of grace.
9. Acts 2:42—"And they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."
10. This is what the early church did—they devoted themselves to hearing the word preached and taught; fellowshiped; partook of the Lord's Supper; joined in with the prayers (corporate prayer meetings).
11. (a) All Christians need help—keep in mind Job was "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil."
12. And yet, when it came time for him to endure the fires of affliction, he needed the help of three friends.
13. Ecc.4:9-10—"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up."
14. (b) All Christians must give help—the responsibility to help others is a universal obligation for all Christians.
15. This is actually a continuation or expression of the prophetic ministry of Christ—He helps His people through others.
16. And yes, in the first place this is true of the office of elder (Jer.3:15 – 'I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding').

17. But there is another sense in which Christ continues His prophetic ministry through His beloved people.
18. Prov.10:21—"The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom" 15:4—"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit" 15:7—"The lips of the wise disperse knowledge, but the heart of the fool does not do so."
19. 1Thess.5:14—"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all."
20. Eph.4:29—"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."
21. An effective counselor must know his Bible and be able to practical apply it to the various areas of life.
22. It matters little how many counseling or theological degrees you may have, if you don't have a practical knowledge of Scripture you will be unable to give help and wisdom to those around you.
23. (c) All Christians must receive help—by this I mean, they must actually believe and do the help offered.
24. Prov.10:21—"The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom"—that is, for lack of receiving the food fed them by the righteous.
25. There are two things necessary for us to receive help—someone must tell us the truth and we must believe it.
26. And you there's an additional thing necessary if these two things are to happen—Christ must bless His word with power.
27. Yes, we must seek to speak words of wisdom—yes, we must receive them with humility—but we must also pray for the Lord's blessing.
28. (2) We can see the majesty of God in creation—creation is a theater which displays the glory of God.
29. There is a sense in which the entire creation is one grand stage, upon which the glory of God is seen.
30. Ps.19:1-3—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard."
31. God speaks to us through two books—the first is the book of Scripture and the second the book of creation.
32. God tells us two things about Himself within the book of creation—He's outside of creation and concerned with creation (both of these reveal the majesty of God).
33. (a) He is outside of creation—this means, the fact of creation argues its Creator is distinct from creation.
34. This is another way of saying, as creation demands a Creator, this Creator must be distinct from creation.
35. He stretched out the north over empty space; He hung the earth on nothing; He set the boundary for the light and darkness.
36. Rom.1:20—"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."
37. Notice, creation doesn't merely reveal God's power but His "eternal power and Godhead"—that is, it tells us He's unlike us.
38. The fact of creation argues that its Creator existed prior to it—that He existed before all that we see.
39. It argues that He is different and distinct from creation—it reveals His Godhead (His Divinity or Divine Nature).

40. (b) He is concerned with creation—He's both outside of creation and yet, intimately concerned with it.
41. This is contrary to the error of Deism, which basically believes, God remains detached from creation.
42. Deism affirms that God made creation, but it denies that He continues to be intimately concerned with creation.
43. But again this is contrary to Job 26, for here we learn He fills the clouds with water and stirs up the sea with His power.
44. This is called God's providence and basically includes two things—preservation (whereby He sustains everything) and governance (whereby He directs everything).
45. Thus, Job focuses on both—God not only created all things in six days, but He sustains and governs it.
46. Every single atom is upheld by His mighty power, every storm is governed by His power and wisdom.
47. (3) We can never fully grasp the majesty of God—by majesty I mean His glory—all that He is and does.
48. God's majesty is too great for man to fully grasp—God and His ways are beyond our finite limitations.
49. Job 11:7—"Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?" Ps.145:3—"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable" Isa.40:28—"His understanding is unsearchable."
50. It's impossible for man to search out the depths of God—the finite creature can never contain the infinite Creator.
51. Dear brethren, a little boy can sooner contain the entire ocean in his bucket, before man can contain God.
52. The little girl can sooner gather all the rays of the sun in her hand, than man can contain the glory of God.
53. Older theologians distinguished between God as He is in Himself and God as revealed Himself in His works.
54. No man is able to know God as He is in Himself—He is too transcendent—but He can be known as He's revealed Himself in creation and Scripture.
55. Thus, God is unknowable and knowable—He's unknowable in Himself and He's knowable in His works.
56. This is another way of saying—we can but touch the edges of His garment, we can but hear a whisper of His voice.
57. (a) God and His ways can be truly known—the knowledge we have of God through His revelation is a real knowledge.
58. Matt.11:27—"No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."
59. 1Cor.2:11-12—"No one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God."
60. (b) God and His ways can be increasingly known, Ps.145:3—"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable."
61. Dear brethren, this verse is true now, and it will be true in heaven for all eternity—God's greatness will never be exhausted (it will never be comprehended or contained).
62. We will be forever increasing in our understanding of God's greatness, which will result in greater praise.