

I mentioned last week, if there's any evident difference between Eliphaz and Bildad, it's that Bildad was bolder in his accusations against Job. Fundamentally, Bildad's first speech could be summarized as follows: God is just and punishes sinners and hypocrites and because He's punishing you, you must be a sinner or hypocrite.

Job's response in chapters 9-10 is largely a response to Bildad's assertion. He does so by first stating a dilemma in verses 1-4, he illustrates that dilemma in verses 5-13, and then applies that dilemma in vv14 to the end of chapter 10 (we will only consider his complaint to the end of chapter 9, leaving the rest for next week).

I. The Dilemma Stated (vv1-4)

II. The Dilemma Illustrated (vv5-13)

III. The Dilemma Applied (vv14-35)

I. The Dilemma Stated (vv1-4)

1. Bildad asserted back in chapter 8, because God is just, He always acts justly toward His creation—Job here admits this.
2. V2—"Truly I know it is so"—I know God is just and acts justly—this is something we both agree on!
3. This then leads Job to his dilemma—"But how can a man be righteous before God?"—How can a man be righteous in God's presence?
4. This is a rhetorical question—the point being—no man can be righteous before God in and of himself.
5. Notice the contrast between man and God—"how can a man be righteous before God"—"man" who's natively sinful and "God" who's infinitely righteous.
6. Bildad suggested that Job was unrighteous and this was the reason God was inflicting him with sorrow.
7. The fact that Job was suffering was proof he was unrighteous, and to suggest otherwise, questioned God's justice.
8. We could summarize Bildad's thinking into this single proposition—"Because God who is punishing you is just, you must be unjust."
9. Job agrees with the first part—God is just—but it's the second part that creates his dilemma or problem.
10. V2—"But how can a man be righteous before God"—that is, in and of himself—"there's none righteous, no, not one."
11. I take Job to mean—"You claim that God is punishing me because I am unrighteous, but who's righteous?"
12. Thus, Job is not denying he was innocent—he's not agreeing with Bildad that he was a secret sinner or hypocrite.
13. He's merely stating a fact—"Who can be righteous before God? Not me, not you, Not Eliphaz, not my children."
14. Given the fact that God is infinitely holy; and given the fact that man is natively sinful; who has a chance?
15. He then, in vv3-4, expands upon his dilemma—God is not only infinitely righteous but perfectly wise and all-powerful.
16. V3—"If one wished to contend with Him, He could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?"

17. The imagery of vv2-4 is that of the courtroom—there's no way man can stand righteous before God.
18. V3—"If one wished to contend with Him (that is to argue or dispute with Him), we couldn't answer a single question.
19. V4—"Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?"—to harden is to resist or defy—"Who has resisted Him without harm?"
20. The point being—no man can stand before God without fault because He's too righteous, wise, and strong.

II. The Dilemma Illustrated (vv5-13)

1. To illustrate or underscore his dilemma, Job describes His powerful and wise work within nature and providence.
2. (1) His works are unstoppable (vv5-9)—within these verses, Job describes God's power over nature and providence.
3. V5—"He removes the mountains" v6—"He shakes the earth" v7—"He commands the sun" v8—He alone spreads out the heavens" v9—"He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades (likely constellations or else individual stars).
4. In each of these verses, the power of God is prominently displayed—God alone is the Creator and Governor of the world.
5. (2) His works are unfathomable (vv10-11)—because God is infinite, finite man cannot grasp God or His ways.
6. V10—"He does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number"—these phrases speak of the incomprehensible nature of God's ways.
7. They are "past finding out" and "without number"—they are simply beyond our limited and finite minds.
8. V11—"If He goes by me, I do not see Him; If He moves past, I do not perceive Him"—this verse says the same thing as v10.
9. Job isn't merely affirming God is invisible (as true as this is), but he's affirming God is incomprehensible.
10. I cannot see or perceive Him—that is, I cannot grasp or understand how and why He does what He does.
11. Brethren, if God Himself is incompressible then His works too are incompressible—they exceed us.
12. And this is nowhere truer than in the case of His providence—how and why God acts within this world.
13. Why does one person die as an infant; another person dies as a teenager; and another person dies as an old man?
14. Why does one Christian seem to suffer more than another; why does one person have good health and another bad health.
15. Now, as we've seen over the past months, there's two ways to answer these questions—there's second, and a First Cause.
16. For example, a person may die young because of a car accident (that's the second cause), but they ultimately die when God appointed (He's the First Cause).
17. So remember, while God works within providence in and through second causes, He does so as the First Cause.
18. (3) His works are unaccountable (vv12-13), v12—"If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?'"

19. God is not only all-wise and powerful, but He's sovereign—He doesn't have to give an account to anyone.
20. Ps.115:3—"Our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases"—He acts in harmony to His will.
21. God does as He pleases—this is the only determining cause behind His actions—His own sovereign will.
22. Now, let me say in passing, as much as I desire to, I'm going to refrain from making any specific applications on vv1-13).
23. And the only reason for this is—Job himself applies these truths to himself, to Bildad, and then to God.
24. In other words, the applications of vv10-13 are found in vv14 and following—these are inspired applications.
25. This is why I have chosen to consider these chapters as a whole (as much as I would rather preach them in pieces).

III. The Dilemma Applied (vv14-35)

1. Beginning with v14 to the end chapter 10, Job applies this dilemma to himself, Bildad, and then God.
2. Now, remember Job's dilemma can be summarized very simply—God is too just, powerful, and wise to contend with.
3. This is his problem or dilemma—there is nothing Job can do to render himself righteous before God.
4. There's nothing he can do to argue with God—there's nothing he can do in resistance to God—this is his problem.
5. (1) He condemns himself (vv14-21), v14—"How then can I answer Him, and choose my words to reason with Him?"
6. If God is all that He's described to be in the previous 13 verses, how can I stand before him or answer him?
7. Verses 15-16—"For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him; I would beg mercy of my Judge. If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice."
8. In other words—even if he were righteous, he could never be righteous enough; even if he could argue with God, he could never argue enough.
9. Verses 17-18—"For He crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause. He will not allow me to catch my breath, but fills me with bitterness."
10. V19—"If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong; and if of justice, who will appoint my day in court."
11. In other words—"If it comes down to strength, I be defeated, and if it's a matter of justice, again, I will lose."
12. V20—"Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse."
13. That is—"Even if I were righteous or blameless, it would never be enough. If I claimed to be righteous, my own mouth would betray me."
14. Again, the bottom line is this—"Claim to be righteous or blameless, only argues a lack of true understanding."
15. V21—"I am blameless, yet I do not know myself; I despise my life."—this is the conclusion of what's gone before.
16. When Job says "I am blameless" he means—"To the extent, I think I am blameless, I don't know myself."

17. Again, this doesn't deny that in one sense Job was blameless (God actually said Job was blameless and upright), but Job is here thinking in two ways: first, he's not blameless natively or in and of himself; second, nor is he blameless in the way he's responding.
18. (2) He corrects Bildad (vv22-24)—in this passage, Job seeks to correct a major flaw in Bildad's speech.
19. If you recall, he claimed that outward prosperity and inward piety are always connected (the one argues the other).
20. Here Job corrects Bildad and asserts—this is not always the case—if fact, oftentimes, it's the very opposite.
21. V22—"It is all one thing; therefore I say, 'He destroys the blameless and the wicked'"—this is Job's perception.
22. He sees that afflictions and suffering falls upon the blameless and wicked—there's no clear distinction.
23. V23—"If the scourge slays suddenly, He laughs at the plight of the innocent"—again, this is Job's perception.
24. By "scourge" is meant a chastisement—the point is, if an innocent person dies suddenly God laughs at them.
25. This of course, isn't true, but Job's point is true—"Evil befalls Godly people and ungodly people equally."
26. V24—"The earth is given into the hand of the wicked, He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, who else could it be?"
27. Job weds together two truths: first, he admits the world is unjust and unfair; second, he recognizes the sovereignty of God over the affairs of men.
28. (3) He complains to God (vv25-35)—beginning at v25 (till the end of chapter 10), Job directly addresses God.
29. His complaint in vv25-35, has three parts, and does well to bring all that he's said in this chapter to a head.
30. Generally speaking, Job attempts three things to remedy his situation—three faulty remedies for his dilemma.
31. (a) Positive thinking (vv25-28)—Job begins this section by describing the brevity and difficulty of life.
32. He does with the help of three illustrations—a fast runner (v25), a swift ship (v26a), and an eagle (v26b).
33. The point being—he describes his life as short and full of trouble—"they flee away, they see no good."
34. V27—"If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad face and wear a smile'"—that is, if I just try to forget my sorrow and be happy.
35. V27—"I am afraid of all my sufferings, I know that You will not hold me innocent"—that is, it doesn't work.
36. It's as if he said—"Though I try to ignore my pain and force a smile, I still dread all of my suffering and Your justice."
37. (b) Personal cleansing (vv29-31), v29—"If I am condemned, why then do I labor in vain?"—this reflects Job's despair.
38. If he was already condemned, and could do nothing to change it, then why does he continue to even try?
39. V30—"If I wash myself with snow water, and cleanse my hands with soap"—this is figurative imagery for cleansing.
40. It's as if his hands were so filthy, neither snow water or soap (lye) can clean them—they are beyond hope.

41. V31—"Yet You will plunge me into the pit, and my own clothes will abhor me"—we're not told what "pit" Job refers to.
42. It likely refers to a ditch or pit for garbage—even though the pit is filled with filth, his clothes would abhor him more than this filth.
43. Here's what he means—even though he would be in a pit full of filth, he would be the filthiest thing in it.
44. So much so, that his very clothing would abhor him, more than the filth in the pit; he would be filthier than the filth.
45. (c) Judicial mediating (vv32-35)—Job returns to the imagery of a courtroom with him and God at odds.
46. But the problem is they are far from equals—God is God and Job is a man—if they go to court Job will lose.
47. V33—"Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both"—the word mediator refers to an empire (to someone able to mediate between two parties).
48. The problem is—where is there a mediator qualified to mediate between God and man—to lay a hand on both.
49. Verses 34-35 describe what would happen if such a mediator was found—he would no longer dread God.
50. V34—"Let Him take His rod away from me, and do not let dread of Him terrify me. Then I would speak and not fear Him."
51. V35—"But it is not so with me"—that is—"Because there is no such mediator, I remain terrified of Him."
52. Now before come to some broad observations, let me first attempt to clarify the elephant in the room.
53. Why does Job talk the way he does throughout this chapter? Why does he conclude by saying, there's no qualified mediator?
54. How can Job say these things being a blameless and upright man? If Job was saved, and he was, then he had to know about the promised Mediator.
55. I mean, doesn't he speak of his Redeemer in chapter 19, who redeemed or delivered him from his sin?
56. How can Job end this chapter by saying—"But it is not so with me"—I have no such qualified mediator.
57. Well, let me say two things: first, Job was a justified man, who was right with God for the sake of Christ.
58. Second, he spoke like this because he lost sight of the truth—his sorrows overwhelmed him and temporarily blinded him.
59. This leaves me with two closing observations—the first is directed toward saints, the second to sinners.
60. Observation to saints—It's possible for Christians to be temporarily confused and lose sight of their salvation.
61. This might happen for several reasons: severe or prolonged afflictions, Satanic oppression, or fatherly chastisement.
62. First, severe or prolonged afflictions—when your world gets turned upside down quickly or all at once.
63. It's really easy to lose sight of things—it's difficult to know which way is up and which way is down.
64. The imagery that comes to mind is drowning—having fallen into deep water and lost sight of which way is up (this is how I see Job in this and the next chapter).

65. Second, Satanic oppression—when Satan has made you his target and relentlessly launches his fiery darts.
66. Perhaps he consistently attacks your mind with doubts about the Christian religion—"Is it really true? Is there really a God? Has He really spoken? Are you really forgiven?"
67. Thirdly, fatherly chastisement—this is what I called last week in Sunday School class—fatherly abandonment.
68. When God, for various reasons, allows His beloved people to temporarily lack the joy and comfort of their salvation.
69. For these reasons, it's possible (even common) for Christians to become temporarily confused and lose of their Savior.
70. In fact, if you think about it—Job was experiencing a mixture of all three—afflictions, oppressions, and chastisement.
71. But regardless of the immediate cause, the ultimate and final cause is the mysterious and sovereign providence of God (thus I want to briefly suggest two helps).
72. (i) Agree with Job—that is, agree with Job that left to yourself, you have no native merit or mediator.
73. Put another way, don't try to excuse or justify yourself and don't expect to understand the ways of God.
74. Now remember what I've said before—Scripture nowhere commands or commends the condition Job is in.
75. In other words, many of the things Job says are untrue or at times sinful—Job has lost sight of the truth.
76. Thus, I want to be careful when I tell you to "agree with Job"—because many of things he's now saying, he has to repent of at the end of the book.
77. Thus, Scripture never commands us to think as Job is thinking—it never commends unbelief or despair.
78. But what I am saying is this—when and if you find yourself in this condition, Job should become your friend.
79. Again, as I've said many times, this is one of the purposes of this book—to remind us we're not alone in this condition.
80. Agree with Job you cannot remedy your situation by positive thinking, personal cleansing, or judicial mediating (there's no one on earth who can effectively plead your cause).
81. (ii) Go beyond Job—by this I mean, you need to go beyond (as even Job himself will go beyond himself).
82. That is, the Job of upcoming chapters is reminded that he does have a Savior, who graciously pleads his cause.
83. It's true Christian, you cannot merely put on a smile, cleanse yourself, or find a mediator or helper on earth.
84. But it's also true, there is a fountain open for sin and uncleanness, you have a mediator in heaven, and God can restore the joy of your salvation.
85. Observation to sinners—God is unwilling to save sinners at the expense of His righteousness and justice.
86. And so in closing I would give you similar counsel as I gave saints—agree with Job and go beyond Job.
87. Agree with Job it's impossible for you to be righteous before God, that there's no help for you on earth.
88. But go beyond Job, and see that in Christ there is a Mediator between God and men in whom you can be righteous before God (1Tim.2:5 – 'for there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus').