

Bildad's First Speech

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Bildad's first speech, reiterating that Job suffers because he needs to repent of his sin
2. aim – To cause us to stand firm upon our new state by faith, regardless of the circumstances
3. passage – Job 8:1-22

b. outline

1. The Content of Bildad's First Speech
2. The Blunder of Bildad's First Speech
3. The Value of Bildad's First Speech

c. opening

1. I had **originally** intended to “lump together” Bildad's speech in **chap. 8** with Job's reply in **chaps. 9f**
 - a. but ... I realized while considering **chap. 8** that it deserved greater attention ... (**Calvin x3**)
2. **reminder: chaps. 4-14** represent **Round One** of Job's friends speaking to him
 - a. after each speech, Job will **reply** to his friend's **implied question**:
 1. **ITC**: Bildad will now speak, and Job will reply to the **assertion** (question) implied
 - b. **friend's thesis (in 4-14)**: it is Job's **moral failures** that account for his present plight
 1. the **character** of Job is being **questioned**, under a **horrible assumption by his friends**: since the wicked **always** get what they deserve, and because Job is suffering, therefore Job must be a reprobate man suffering for his “hidden” evil
 2. and ... to “right” the matter, he must go to God, confess his sin, and be restored
 3. so ... Bildad's speech is a **seriously straightforward accusation of the same** ...
3. **Calvin** notes the following that we will consider this morning in detail:
 - a. although Job's friend's **primary point** is wrong, they **do** say many truthful things that we ought to consider (**i.e.** they **stir together** a variety of truths to a wrong conclusion [**as Satan does**])
 1. **remember**: the book is in the Scriptures to remind us of how men, **outside of the full revelation of redemptive history**, attempt to “come to grips” with (sinful) reality all around them
 2. because men are made in the Image of God, they **do** possess “some” level of understanding about God and his ways (**i.e.** in **general revelation**; **Romans 1:19**)
 3. but ... they are **incapable** of fully understanding because **general revelation** does **not** supply the **fundamental answer** to man's problem: “**can a man be right with God?**” (**4:17**)
 4. so ... the book has value because a) it reveals the thinking pattern of men **outside** of special revelation and b) it demonstrates that **truth** does exist in the world, even when “suppressed”
 5. **IOW**: as **we** read this book, it shows us the **limitations** of natural human thinking **and** points us to the **fullness** of what God has revealed, **to which we must run**

I. The Content of Bildad's First Speech

Content

a. the (re)assertion of Bildad's first speech

1. **read 8:1-7, 11-13, 20-22**: Bildad reasserts that Job must repent to alleviate his suffering
 - a. **note**: Bildad is **much clearer and succinct** in remaking the point that Eliphaz did in his speech
 1. he does not “mince words” – he is **convinced** that Job's problem is unresolved sin
 - b. he calls the “response” of Job to Eliphaz “**a great wind**” (**v. 2**) = Job's “attempt” to vindicate himself is nothing but “hot air” – **i.e.** it is not a **substantial response**, for it fails to “admit the truth”
 - c. he **repeats** and **reasserts** a key point from Eliphaz's speech (**vv. 3, 20 cf. 4:7**) = “**can God pervert justice?**” and “**God will not reject a blameless man**”

“Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?” (4:7)

 1. **i.e.** can a **Holy God** “twist” his own **holy requirements**, such that the wicked escape justice?
 2. **note: v. 3** is the “mirror” of **4:7**: who that was “innocent” ever perished?
 - a. it is **not the innocent** who perish, but those who do evil in the sight of a holy God; God will not reject the blameless man, but he **most certainly will** reject the evil man
 3. **e.g.** Bildad uses Job's children as **an example** of this axiom (**v. 4**)
 - a. being dead, their judgment is now upon them – if they “sinned”, they have been “delivered” over to what they rightfully deserve; into “**the hand of their transgression**” (punishment)

- b. or (by implication), the reason Job's children are dead is because *they* were evil, thus God brought down his wrath upon them
- c. **IMO:** a rather "low blow," using one of Job's *greatest sadness's* to make a point
- d. he *appeals* to nature to bolster his point (**vv. 8-19**) = even the *natural world* shows this:
 - 1. men of old understood this truth (**vv. 8-10**; **e.g.** the men who died in the Flood)
 - 2. those who "*forget God*" have "*confidence*" like the strength of a "*spider's web*" (**v. 13**) or the memory of a heap of stones that *used to have* a plant growing over them (**vv. 16-18**)
 - 3. **point: God cannot allow the wicked to escape justice, which everyone knows!**
- e. so ... he *reasserts* Eliphaz's **conclusion** (**vv. 5-6**) = "*if you will seek God and plead .. for mercy ... he will rouse himself for you and restore [you]*"
 - 1. **i.e.** your problem is *your own sin* – go to God, repent, seek forgiveness, and all will be well
 - 2. which he repeats in **vv. 21-22**: *if you repent, God will "fill your mouth with laughter ..."* – he will restore you and remove your sufferings

II. The Blunder of Bildad's First Speech

Content

a. Bildad makes a valid point

- 1. **as above:** **vv. 3, 20** make a **valid point**, under a **valid assumption**: God, as *perfectly holy*, cannot allow the wicked to escape justice – because of his *inherent nature* as holy, God *must* punish the wicked (**i.e.** he *must* send them away from his holy presence as creatures *contaminated* with evil)
 - a. **IMO:** which makes this book *so hard* to understand ... (**see below**)
 - b. the justice of God may be **postponed** (for a while), but only for the *larger intention* of God showing his mercy to the elect (**Romans 9:22**)
 - c. **IOW:** God is holy, and only those who are *holy* can come into his presence (**Leviticus 11:45**)
 - 1. Bildad is **right**: God *cannot* "excuse" the wicked – he must act against the evildoer *out of his very nature as God* (**e.g.** a thought "missing" from much modern preaching!!)

b. Bildad misses the point

- 1. **however:** Bildad *starts* with a wrong **presupposition**, that can only be borne out through the advancement of redemptive history (**i.e.** one that will plague Israel throughout the OT)
 - a. **presupposition:** God judges the wicked *throughout their life*, rather than *in total* on the Day of Judgment (**i.e.** that God is "meting out" his justice upon the wicked *day-by-day*)
 - 1. **IOW:** the wicked get *in this life* what they deserve; the righteous too! (**read 4:8-9**)
 - a. "*As I have seen ...*" = Eliphaz *claims* that this is the *normal human experience*
 - 2. but ... this is **not** borne out by experience (**see Habakkuk**)
- 2. God can be *both* just *and* the justifier of (merciful to) the elect **by grace**
 - a. God does "forego" his wrath *in this life* over the wicked (often!) – there is not *necessarily* a "one-to-one" correspondence between wicked deeds and (God's) justice *in this world*
 - 1. **e.g.** if so, Adam *should have* fallen dead at the moment he ate of the fruit
 - b. God has *foregone* his justice *a little while* so that his *larger purpose* of rescuing a people *from his wrath* could be demonstrated (**Romans 3:25b-26**)
 - c. God has (also!) *foregone* his justice *a little while* so that the *fullness of his justice* might also be revealed over the reprobate (**Romans 2:2-5**)

"This [the redemption that was to come in Christ] was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

"We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice [what Paul lists in Romans 1:18ff]. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself [Bildad?]-that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed."

III. The Value of Bildad's First Speech

Content

a. Bildad does not understand justification

- 1. **we know:** the **gospel** of Christ is the **means** by which "*a mortal man can be in the right before God*"
 - a. **i.e.** justification *by faith* in the promises of God changes the *state* of man before God, such that God's wrath is *propitiated before him* and he is declared righteous (**Romans 3:21-26**)
 - b. justification comes to the elect as those promises are "realized" in the life, death, resurrection of Jesus = what God promised is imputed *from Christ* to the sinner – God takes the work of Christ and **imputes it** (by his Spirit) to all who trust in his promises

2. **question:** if the gospel of Christ is the means that God uses to justify men (**i.e.** make them righteous), how are those **in the OT** justified *if they never knew about Christ?* (**i.e.** how does it apply to Job?)
 - a. **ironically:** this question comes from a podcast someone sent to me this week, pointing to Job as an *example* of this conundrum
 - b. **note:** the question *plagues* the *synergist* (as the podcast demonstrates) – if it is *our choices and actions* that (ultimately!) determine our fate, how can those *before Jesus* be saved?
 - c. one of the podcasters makes the *classic error of Job's friends* (in reverse) = God “chose” Job (and pointed him out to Satan) because Job was the “most righteous man on the earth at the time”
 1. **i.e.** that Job was righteous *because of his own actions* = that God “selected” him because of what he was doing as a man
 - d. the other podcaster then (as a synergist!) agrees, suggesting that the reason Christ died “for everyone” (**i.e.** an “unlimited atonement”) is so men (like Job) *before Christ* could be saved, that Christ’s *unlimited* work could be applied (somehow!) to Job
3. **answer:** “the justification of believers under the Old Testament was, in all these respects, one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament” (1689, 11:6)
 - a. all men, of all time, who are *called* by God to faith in his promises are justified by the (eventual) completed work of Christ – God *imputes* the righteousness of Christ to **all that he sets apart to himself through election, predestination, foreknowledge, and calling**
 - b. **e.g.** Abraham (Romans 4) = justified by God because he believed what God promised him; God took the righteousness of Christ (still 2000 years in the future) *and applied it to the man*
 - c. **ITC:** Job stands *righteous* before God *because God declared him to be so* – he is not under the moment-by-moment wrath of God because **he has been elect and called by God**
 1. **again:** Job and his friends are *unaware* of this reality – they lived in an age when *mercy was visible* (**e.g.** Noah), but *before* the total picture of redemption was revealed
 2. **i.e.** they are not aware of God’s purposes here, **as revealed to us in chaps. 1-2**
4. **hard book:** Bildad’s speech contains some truths but, when considered through the lens of his *presuppositions*, the argument he makes *in total* is wrong
 - a. Job is not suffering because he is wicked; he is suffering because God has ordained it for a higher purpose, for his glory, and for the good of Job
 - b. the *correct* response to suffering (then!) is **to continue to trust in God, not confess some “false” sin in the vain hope that “the deity” will be appeased**
 - c. **IOW:** to maintain our security **in what Christ has done**, for what **he has done** fulfills the promises of God, **in which we stand**