***Job: A Study in Suffering…And Faith***

Lesson Four: Bildad’s First Speech and Job’s Reply

(Job 8:1-10:22)

***Objective(s):***

1. Be able to describe Job’s perception of his suffering.

2. Observe the frustration of both Bildad and Job.

1. **Bildad’s first speech (8:1-22)**
   1. Bildad affirmed the justice of the Almighty (vv. 1-7).
      1. Moved by the words Job had just spoken (7:17-21), Bildad began his speech with a sharp rebuke. It is certain that he considered Job’s words to be blasphemous and thus he moved to defend the justice of God (vv. 1-2).
      2. Bildad echoed the argument of Eliphaz: one who suffers must be wicked (vv. 4-7).
         1. He implied that since Job’s children had been “cast away,” they must have sinned (v. 4).
         2. He also suggested that God would “rouse himself” to Job’s pleas if Job were pure or if he would repent (vv. 5-7).
   2. Bildad appealed to the “wisdom of the ancients” (vv. 8-19).
      1. He defended his argument (already begun and to be continued in the last part of the chapter) by directing Job’s attention to the conclusions of past generations.
      2. Because of man’s short life, his wisdom must be augmented by that of the “fathers.”
      3. Bildad continued by suggesting a cause-and-effect relationship between unrighteousness and suffering. He demonstrates this principle with three illustrations:
         1. As papyrus cannot exist without water, so man cannot prosper without God’s favor (vv. 11-13).1
         2. The confidence of the godless is as flimsy as a spider’s web; he has nothing on which to lean (vv. 14-15).
         3. The ungodly man is like a plant which grows for a while, but which is destroyed from its place (vv. 16-19).
   3. Bildad reiterated the thought that God preserves the righteous, but will not “uphold” (NKJV) the wicked (vv. 20-22).
2. **Job’s Reply (9:1-24)**
   1. Commentators vary widely in their opinions about Job’s mood in his reply.
      1. Some would suggest that Job spoke with irony. He conceded Bildad’s point (really probably Eliphaz’s; cf. 4:17), but wondered how a man could prove to God that he was innocent.4
      2. Others would contend that Job was quite reverent in his discussion of God’s justice but puzzled because he couldn’t understand God’s treatment of him in view of what he knew about himself.5
   2. The power and majesty of God (vv. 1-12)
      1. Job described the power of God as evidenced in nature (vv. 5-10).
      2. He observed that man is incapable of calling God into account for his actions (vv. 1-4, 11-12).
   3. Job affirmed the futility of “answering” God, pleading his case before God (vv. 13-24).
      1. Note the following paraphrase of verses 16-20 by Archer:6
         1. *After He has crushed and wounded me for no known reason, I could hardly believe He was answering me, if afterward He should choose to do so. Tormented as I am, I would surely be speechless before Him, even if I could confront Him, and though I were innocent, I would be guilty of presumption even to offer my defense before Him, who is beyond the jurisdiction of any court.*
      2. Job claimed that God treated the wicked and the righteous alike. He even went so far as to say that God was indifferent to the suffering of the innocent and discriminated in favor of the wicked (vv. 21-24).
         1. Some commentators in their interpretation of the text try to soften Job’s words, but it seems obvious that Job lashed out at God in this section.
         2. We must remember that Job was not privy to all the information that we possess about God’s purposes.
3. **Job continued his speech (9:25-10:22).**
   1. In the latter part of chapter 9, it seems that Job directed his comments in part to God and in part to Bildad and the other two friends (e.g., “you” in vv. 28, 31 appears to be God; the NKJV concurs, capitalizing the personal pronoun).
   2. Having discussed God’s treatment of man in general in 9:22-24, Job turned to God’s treatment of himself (vv. 25-31).
      1. Using the figures of a runner, reed skiffs, and an eagle (or vulture), Job described the brevity of life (vv. 25-26).
      2. He spoke of God’s persistence in holding him guilty with the result that he was unable to be cheerful (vv. 27-31).
      3. Job felt the need for a third party to arbitrate the differences between himself and God (vv. 32-35).
         1. Job desired an “arbiter” (“mediator” – NKJV) between him and God. Some feel that verse 33 is a prophetic reaching out to the time when Christ would mediate for man.7
         2. Others suggest that the meaning of the word is actually that of a “judge,” one who is able to impose his authority on both parties and settle a question.8
   3. Feeling that he had nothing to lose, Job described what he would say to God (v. 2a), how he would demand to know why God was “contending with him” (v. 2b) and then offering possible reasons for God’s behavior (10:1-7).
      1. He asked if God derived pleasure by oppressing his own creation (v. 3).
      2. He asked if God had limited perception like a man and thus had judged him unfairly (v. 4).
      3. He questioned whether God’s lifespan is short like that of a man so that “He is in a hurry to seek out Job’s sin before it has been committed?” (vv. 5-7).9
   4. Disregarding the last two questions, Job continued his speech by pursuing the first possibility (vv. 8-22).
      1. He reminded God that he was God’s creation (vv. 8-12).
      2. And yet God seemed determined, as if from an eternal purpose (see verse 13), to persecute Job in any circumstance – a course seemingly inconsis­tent with his care in creating Job (vv. 13-17).
      3. Job again (see his soliloquy in chapter 3) expressed his wish that he had died at birth. Since God had not permitted that and his remaining days were few, Job asked God to leave him alone (vv. 18-22).
      4. Jackson’s comment on these verses is excellent:10
         1. *How thankful he should have been, and doubtless later was, that the gracious God did not leave him alone to die with such careless words still warm on his lips! Compared to a continued life of such misery, Job longed for Sheol, even though, as the ancients believed, it was a “land of darkness and of the shadow of death;” a place “dark as midnight” (21, 22). Job’s feelings regarding death thus far have been quite depressing (cf. 3:21-22; 7:21; 10:21-22), but of course he as yet had no glimpse of that land where “there is no night”(Revelation 21:23). In all of this we must keep reminding ourselves that Job has not turned away from God; but he is struggling with his faith.*

**Endnotes:**

1Gibson, p. 40. 2Jackson, p. 39. 3Driver and Gray, p. 82. 4Driver and Gray, pp. 83-4.

5Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977), pp. 143-5.

6Archer, p. 58. 7Andersen, p. 151. 8Gibson, p. 49. 9Driver and Gray, p. 96. 10Jackson, p. 41.

***Study & Discussion Questions:***

1. What did Bildad say about Job’s children?
2. What counsel did Bildad offer Job (8:5-7)?
3. What illustrations did Bildad use in 8:11-19 to describe the fate of the godless?
4. What did Job feel incapable of and why?
5. Explain Job’s words of 9:22-24? Did he sin in saying this?
6. How did Job challenge God in chapter 10 (vv. 3-7)?