

We get a more complete picture of our God when we read all of Romans 6:23:

*For the wages of sin is death,
but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

That's not justice—it's amazing grace.

DAY 1

- 1) Read the account of Bildad's first speech in Job 8. Consider the passage from an overall perspective, looking for main ideas.
- 2) What do you think is the central message(s) of Bildad's speech? Look specifically for what the speaker says about God, justice, and those who forget God.
- 3) How is Bildad's message wrong, incomplete, or misapplied?
- 4) Read verse 4 and record what you think Bildad is saying in your own words. What kind of a friend do you think he is at this point?
- 5) What does Bildad advise Job to do? What does he say will happen if Job follows his advice? (8:5-7, 21-22)
- 6) What does Bildad claim to be the source of his wisdom in 8:8-10?
- 7) Focus on 8:13-18. Bildad describes people "whose confidence is fragile." How does Bildad describe the wrong things people trust in?
- 8) Read Psalm 62:5-8. What do these verses tell us about our trust and confidence?

Selah

Bildad points out that God always does what is just and right. We know that in our heads. But still...

Do you ever look at your circumstances and think life isn't fair? Are there times when you doubt God's loving care for you? Ask Him to open your eyes to see His goodness in your life today.

DAY 2

- 1) Job's response to Bildad is found in chapters 9-10. This is a long section of scripture, so we are going to break it down into smaller sections. As you read each passage, write down the main idea Job expresses.

9:1-12

9:13-24—*Hint: This is not a reference to the prostitute of Jericho. Rahab is a poetical name of Egyptian origin that refers to mythical dragon-like monsters of the sea. Job's point is that even these fierce creatures cower before the anger of God.*

9:25-35

10:1-7

10:8-17

10:18-22

- 2) Write the references for three verses that stood out most in your mind as you read these chapters.
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
- 3) Job asks an important question in 9:1—*How can a man be in the right before God?* Read Ephesians 2:4-9 and write an answer to Job's question.

DAY 3

- 1) Read Zophar's first speech in chapter 11.

- 2) What do you think is the central message(s) of Zophar's speech?

- 3) How is Zophar's message wrong, incomplete, or misapplied?

- 4) What does Zophar advise Job to do? What does he say will happen if Job follows his advice?

- 5) Using a dictionary, commentary or other Bible study resources, write a definition for Sheol (vs 8).

- 6) What do you think Zophar means when he says, "Know then that God forgets a part of your iniquity" (vs 6)?

Selah

"Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty?" (vs. 7). It's too bad Zophar didn't take his own advice. His speech is full of presumptions regarding what was behind Job's suffering. Over and over he pretends to know the mind of God and to speak for Him.

Have you ever had someone try to tell you what God is doing in your life? Have you been guilty of doing this yourself? There is a time and a place for pointed discussions between believers; however, we need to be careful never to presume to know what is in the mind of God or in the heart of another.

Proverbs 12:15 says, "A wise man is he who listens to counsel." How can you tell when you are getting sound advice versus someone's opinion? How can you guard against presuming to know too much about God's purposes in your own life and the lives of family and friends?

DAY 4

- 1) Read Job's response in chapters 12-14. This is a long passage so we will focus on a few selections.

- 2) Focus on 12:13-25. How do Job's observations regarding the ways of God conflict with that of his counselors?

List the categories of people Job mentions as being under the power of God.

- 3) Focus on 13:2-12. What is Job's opinion of his counselors and their "wisdom"?
- 4) Focus on 13:15-24. Summarize Job's relationship with God. What are his requests and questions for God?
- 5) Focus on 14:7-14. What is Job's view of life after death?

Selah

"Make known to me my rebellion and my sin" (13:23). It takes courage and humility to lay oneself open before Almighty God. This is exactly what Job is doing. He longs to know what is causing God to turn His face away. While we know Job's understanding of the situation is incorrect, you have to admire his determination to be intimately connected with his God.

The psalmist expressed this same openness. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way" (Ps 139:23-24).

How long has it been since you've asked God to reveal any rebellion or sin in your heart? In our hectic world, we are often unaware of the ways we are falling short of God's desire for our lives. We so easily justify ourselves, making excuses for our unkind words, lack of self-control, little "white lies"... the list is endless. Ask the Lord to search your heart, to reveal any hurtful ways, and lead you in His everlasting way.

DAY 5

Read through the EXPOSITION & EXPLANATION section that follows.

EXPOSITION & EXPLANATION

Bildad's First Speech (chp 8)

Remember that a crowd has likely gathered around to listen. Perhaps anxious to catch the audience's attention, Bildad opens with a wicked three-punch volley.

| Scripture | Paraphrase |
|---|--|
| <i>How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind. (8:2)</i> | How long will you go on like this? You're nothing but a blowhard. |
| <i>Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right? (8:3)</i> | No matter what you say to defend <i>yourself</i> , you are getting exactly what you deserve. |
| <i>If your sons sinned against Him, then He delivered them into the power of their transgression. (8:4)</i> | You know those dead kids of yours? They got what they deserved, too. |

It's hard to imagine such cold-hearted treatment from someone you view as an enemy, much less a friend.

Bildad's Message (8:1-4)

Bildad's central message is simple and concise:

*God is always does what's right, so you deserve what you are getting.
Your suffering is proof of your sinfulness.*

Bildad's Advice: Name It and Claim It (8:5-7)

Bildad gives Job a formula for dealing with his sin and receiving God's blessing.

- Pray
- Purify your life
- Prosper

Sound kind of familiar? Who knew the "prosperity gospel" message had its start so many thousands of years ago?

We know from the first two chapters of Job that God had a plan behind Job's affliction that had nothing to do with his sin but actually was based on his blameless and upright walk. Still Bildad slaps his easy three-step plan on Job's life and then accuses him of being sinful when it doesn't work.

Sadly, we can still find people willing to offer (or sell) a quick fix to our problems. If we just pray enough, if we just have faith enough, if we just tithe enough, (the list goes on) we can make God do our bidding. How foolish!

Should we pray? Should we purify our lives? Of course—but as an act of love and honor to God, not as an attempt to twist His arm behind His back as if He doesn't want to bless us already. Then comes the hard part, the step you never find in any quick fix: waiting. "I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; Be strong and let your heart take courage; Yes, wait for the Lord" (Ps. 27:13-14). We can't promise one another that we will prosper materially in this world, but we can be assured that we will see God's goodness in our lives.

Source of Wisdom (8:8-10)

Bildad claims tradition as his source of wisdom. "Please inquire of past generations, and consider the things searched out by their fathers. For we are only of yesterday and know nothing" (8:8-9a). Bildad pleads with Job to consider ancient tradition. If he would only look to the past he would see that everything God does is right. Sinners are justly punished, and good men are blessed with health and prosperity.

This "ancient tradition" of health and prosperity continues as a popular belief in some American churches today. Just as in Job's day, it offers nothing but empty hope, multiplies the heartache of the suffering, and prevents believers from offering real help and compassion at the moment it is needed most.

Lessons from Nature (8:11-19)

All of Job's friends use lessons from nature to support their arguments. Bildad uses nature to demonstrate the destruction in store for "all who forget God" (vs 13). The word used for godless in this verse is *chaneph* (Hebrew) meaning hypocrite. Bildad illustrates how such people have no firm or lasting foundation for their lives.

Job's Response (chps 9-10)

Job cries out in frustration, *So tell me something I don't know!* (9:2). Job acknowledges that there is some truth in his counselors' words but disagrees with their conclusions.

The Ultimate Supreme Court

Job begins to think about his situation from a legal perspective using the language of a courtroom. More than anything Job longs to be vindicated by God. He wants to meet God face to face so he can plead his case before Him. He wants God to confirm his integrity, to prove to these sorry friends and all the world that these tragedies were not punishment for some secret sin. (If only Job knew that this was exactly what God was going to do.)

Sadly, Job's line of reasoning doesn't get him very far. He starts out with the same question Eliphaz asked in chapter 4, "How can a man be in the right before God?" (9:2). Job immediately recognizes serious problems with his plan to take God to court.

- God is smarter and stronger in every way every time (9:3-4).
- Job could never find the words to convince God, even though he's innocent (9:14-15).
- If God did agree to hear Job's case, He still wouldn't listen (9:16).
- You can't subpoena God (9:19).
- Job is certain God is going to declare him guilty no matter what (9:20, 27).
- Job can never face God man to man because he's Deity (9:32).

It's then that Job comes to an important realization:

- What he really needs is an umpire or arbitrator, a go-between to plead his case before God (9:33).

We are all guilty before God. We need more than a mediator—we need a redeemer. I Timothy 2:5-6a says: "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all."

The Problem of Evil (9:21-24)

Midway through his speech poor Job groans, "I despise my life" (vs 21). He begins to accuse God, charging Him with being morally indifferent (vs 22), mocking the despair of the innocent (vs 23), handing the reins of the world over to the wicked, and blocking the administration of justice (vs 24). Job wraps up his thoughts with these words, "If it is not He, then who is it?" (9:24). If God isn't responsible for this mess, who else could it possibly be?

We need to keep in mind that Job's thinking has been darkened by perhaps months of intense grief and suffering.

Not all Job's words are wrong... (rather they are) the half-truths of a man struggling to understand. They deal with the mystery at the very heart of the Book of Job: the problem of evil for which no human being has a logical explanation. So Job reasoned, as many have, that if God is sovereign, truly sovereign, he is responsible for all evil.

Job did not mention the corollary: If there is evil beyond God's control, then he is not truly sovereign. —*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

Job's recent experience told him that God crushes the innocent without cause (vs 17). From our vantage point, we know that there was a divine purpose behind Job's suffering, and there is great blessing to come. But Job knew none of this. He had to trust God while still in the dark. This is a central message of the Book of Job:

- God has power and purpose in all things.
- We often don't know what God's plan is.
- The righteous will cling to God in faith anyway.

Zophar's First Speech (chp 11)

Zophar proves to be more lacking in compassion and brutally judgmental than all Job's friends. He takes the others' accusations to a whole new level. *Not only are you guilty Job, you are only getting half of what you deserve!* (11:6). If Job wasn't so sick, you wonder if he would've hauled off and slugged this guy right about now.

The only basis Zophar has for believing Job has sinned so greatly is the extent of Job's suffering. He assumes this is God's way of exposing Job as a sinner and a hypocrite. In verse 11 he points to the omniscience of God seeing through false men. Zophar doesn't hold out much hope for Job, believing the chances of him wising up are about as good as a man giving birth to a wild donkey.

Overview of the Counselors

Now that we have heard from all three counselors, let's review who they are and what they've had to say so far.

| | Eliphaz | Bildad | Zophar |
|-------------------|---|--|---|
| Source of Wisdom: | Personal Experience | Tradition | Assumption |
| Message: | The innocent don't suffer, like this You are getting what you deserve. | God only does what is just and right. You are getting what you deserve. | We can presume to know the mind of God. You are only getting half of what you deserve. |
| Advice: | Accept God's discipline and you will be blessed. | Seek God and He will restore you. | Turn away from sin and your life will turn around. |

Job's Response (chp 12-14)

In his response, Job speaks first to his counselors (12:1-13:19) and then directly to God (13:20-14:22). Clearly losing patience with his "friends," Job returns their harsh sarcasm (12:1), calling them "worthless physicians" and wishing they would show real wisdom by not saying another word (13:4-5). Attaboy, Job!

The Dark Side (12:13-25)

This passage is a poem about the sovereign rule of God. Job opens by ascribing all wisdom and power to God, but then goes on to put all negative uses of His power on display. He holds back water creating a drought, then releases it to flood the land; He puts fools in positions of power, and weakens kings; He makes nations great only to destroy them.

Read by itself, the poem doesn't make sense; in fact it seems almost blasphemous. But if we put it in context with the speeches Job has just been pummeled with, we can begin to understand Job's meaning. The counselors have argued again and again that good things always happen to good people. Job's poem is a mockery of this narrow perception. He agrees with Zophar that the mysteries of God are beyond our understanding but demonstrates that he knows as much as they do.

Job believed the mystery was profound; and he was amazed that the "sages" should be so shallow (vs. 12). Job saw God so wise and powerful that he cannot be put in a box. He has sovereign freedom. Job illustrated this by drawing a word picture of the mystery of God's acts in the history of man. God humbles great men and nations, showing himself to be the only truly sovereign being (vs. 16-25).
—The Expositor's Bible Commentary

Beyond the Grave

What did Job and his contemporaries understand about life after death? The word Sheol (14:13) is the Old Testament designation for the grave—the unseen world or the abode of the dead. In and of itself the word does not refer to hell or a place of judgment but may take on this meaning depending on the context in which it is used. The following written by James Orr and taken from the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* provides a helpful summary.

The Abode of the Dead:

Into Sheol, when life is ended, the dead are gathered in their tribes and families. Hence, the expression frequently occurring in the Pentateuch, "to be gathered to one's people," "to go to one's fathers," etc. (Gen. 15:15; Deut. 32:50). It is figured as an under-world (Isa. 44:23), and is described by other terms, as "the pit" (Job 33:24), "Abaddon" or destruction (Job 26:6), the place of "silence" (Ps. 94:17; 115:17), "the land of darkness and the shadow of death" (Job 10:21)... It is a "land of forgetfulness," where God's "wonders" are unknown (Ps. 88:10-12). There is no remembrance or praise of God (Ps. 6:5; 115:17)...

Relation to Immortality—To apprehend fully the Old Testament conception of Sheol one must view it in its relation to the idea of death as something unnatural and abnormal for man; a result of sin. The believer's hope for the future... was not prolonged existence in Sheol, but deliverance from it and restoration to new life in God's presence (Job 14:13-15; 19:25-27; Ps 16:10,11; 17:15; 49:15; 73:24-26).

While a fully developed doctrine of bodily resurrection isn't found in Hebrew theological writings until around 300 BC, the possibility and hope of being raised by God clearly existed in the mind of Job, the patriarchs, and other writers of the Old Testament.

Isn't it remarkable that Job doesn't dream of being restored in this life—of regaining his health and wealth. His hope lies in being restored to fellowship with his Creator, whether in this life or the next. "You will call, and I will answer you; You will long for the work of Your hands" (Job 14:15).