

Calling the Kettle Black

The Hush of Heaven – Part V

Job 8

Introduction

God has a way of reminding us that His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. He most often, reminds us of this truth by clothing it in the lives of His sons and daughters. That there can be joy in sorrow, contentment in pain, trust in trials is a truth that is often learned best when seen played out in the lives of believers.

Has it occurred to you that when God wanted to encourage and challenge believers to realize they can be joyful in sorrow, contented in chaos, and trusting in trials, He did not give a theological treatise, He gave a biography – that we call the book of Job? The entire book is dedicated to the suffering of a man who lived in the land of Uz.

The Lord has more than likely placed people in your life who have demonstrated the perseverance of Job; who are living biographies of God's truth. They have marked you, inspired you, convicted you in your own response to life.

Think deeply about the things these people teach. Consider carefully the way they smile and the reasons they trust.

Some of the most impacting testimonies to me are those of two chaplains at Dallas Theological Seminary. I happened to be a student when the elder chaplain retired and a new chaplain was inducted.

The dignified, winsome leadership of Dr. Richard Seume in chapel was a weekly reminder to me that God was awesome and the worship of God was a privilege.

As a student, I was surprised to learn that this gracious, positive leader was in need of dialysis

several times a week due to kidney failure. I can still remember one afternoon watching Dr. Seume walk across the seminary parking lot toward the clinic where he would be treated. Dressed as always in his suit, his head held up and joy in his bearing, this distinguished man lived what he preached – and he positively impacted thousands of students.

In my last year at Dallas, a new chaplain was appointed. Talk about positive – this man made Dr. Seume and everyone else on campus seem like we needed a shot of adrenalin and a big dose of laughter and joy!

His name is Bill Bryan and he is still serving as the chaplain at Dallas Seminary after some twenty years. I remember that he loved to lead the students in singing and his trumpet usually accompanied the worship time in Chafer Chapel. I also remember his big laugh and jovial spirit. You never got close to Bill Bryan without a positive word and a big handshake.

I have been invited to preach to the faculty and students several times in Chafer Chapel this coming fall. It is going to be a wonderful privilege to sing under Chaplain Bryan's leadership – only this time, from the platform and without any worries of passing some Greek or Theology exam.

I was surprised to learn about his past as well, as I read Chuck Swindoll's commentary on Job. Swindoll has been the President and is now the Chancellor at Dallas Theological Seminary nearly as long as Bill Bryan has been the chaplain of the seminary. In his commentary, Swindoll revealed a behind-the-scenes look at Bill's childhood. One

would never imagine that his joyful spirit could come out of great sorrow.

Let me simply read a paragraph or two from a conversation between Bill and Chuck in which Bill revealed what few people know about his past.

Bill's story went back to when his dad's depression took him through a dark emotional tunnel. Back in those days, any kind of emotional or mental struggle was rarely brought out of the closet and there was very little known to do for people who suffered in this way.

Bill said he remembered going week after week to the medical arts building in Springfield, Missouri, where they would take the elevator to the sixth floor. He would sit and wait with his mother as his father went through counseling sessions with the medical personnel.

As a little boy he did not understand what was happening. He just knew his dad was troubled and that his dad's [spirit] was bleak and barren.

On one occasion, Bill recalls his father being escorted out of the doctor's office and asked to stay with little Bill (who was only four at the time), while the mother was asked to step into the private office of the physician. Since his father's depression was only getting worse, they were making plans to admit him to what was then called an "insane asylum." Unfortunately, every word could be heard in the hallway and his father overheard their conversation. In fact, [one of the doctors made the unfortunate comment that "this man will probably never get out".]

Bill said, "I remember as my mother walked out with several doctors, that my dad picked me up and held me close and said, 'I love you son.' He then put me down on the floor, turned and ran, jumping through the sixth story window as the glass shattered, and fell to his death."

These are the last, lingering memories Bill had of his father.

From that time on, Bill was primarily cared for by his grandparents and his aunt as his mother tried to recover from this terrible tragedy.

Swindoll writes what I surely felt as I heard this story,

All of us who know this joyful servant of God would have never expected a man like Chaplain Bryan to have emerged from such a sad, sorrowful beginning.ⁱ

I agree. I cannot imagine how joy and contentment and trust could be the distinguishing characteristics in a man's spirit who encountered such suffering.

Frankly, the more I learn about Job's suffering and the more I have studied the words of Job's counselors, the more amazed I am at the tenacity and endurance of Job; the more amazed I am that he did not turn and run away. The fact that he did not curse God and the fact that he stayed amaze me.

In addition to this, Job is experiencing the hush of heaven – God is silent; there is no word from above.

It is no wonder that James summarized this ancient man's testimony by writing,

. . . You have heard of the endurance of Job . . . (James 5:11)

Like the group of insensitive and tactless doctors whose words brought hopelessness and despair, Job is in the examining room and one doctor after another is giving him their diagnosis.

Dr. Eliphaz was first and we watched him leave Job bruised and beaten. His words hinted at Job's secret sins and he suggested that Job repent and bring his cause to God.

The second doctor is now ready to pronounce his prognosis. If you thought Eliphaz the Elephant was crushing enough, you are going to be shocked by Bildad the Brutal. This is the best way I can describe his treatment of Job.

Let us pick up our study at Job chapter 8.

Bildad's Counsel

Bildad's counsel can be divided into four sections.

1. Let me tell you who God is! (Job 8:1-7)

Look at Job 8:1.

Then Bildad the Shuhite answered, "How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?"

Moffatt translates this,

. . . [you are using] wild and whirling words."ⁱⁱ

As Job responded to Eliphaz, Bildad became angry and self-righteous, and was just waiting for Job to stop long enough for him to strike back.

Eliphaz began with at least a little tact when he said in Job 4:2,

[Job,] If one ventures a word with you, will you become impatient? . . .

Not Bildad, however.

Two questions of Job

Bildad immediately asks Job two questions.

- **Bildad’s first question of Job is simply, “When are you going to stop running your mouth?”**

With total arrogance and unconcern for his patient, Bildad effectively calls Job a windbag, as he says, “Job, you’re filled with hot air!”

Bildad is upset because Job did not accept the diagnosis of Eliphaz. Eliphaz had said that Job needed to repent and lay out his cause before God. Job had responded by saying, “God doesn’t seem to be fair and life seems to be futile.”

Bildad then concludes that Job’s view of God needs to be corrected – that is the problem.

- **Bildad’s second question of Job could be paraphrased, “When are you going to stop running down God?”**

Notice Job 8:3.

Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert what is right?

The Hebrew word for “pervert” means “to distort or twist”.

In other words, “Job, you’ve got to stop distorting and twisting the character of God. God is always fair and just, so somebody’s obviously sinned here.”

Listen to the brutality of Bildad’s counsel to this man who is in the midst of grieving the loss of his children.

Look at Job 8:4.

If your sons sinned against Him, then He delivered them into the power of their transgression.

In other words, Bildad says in black and white, “If Eliphaz is wrong and your children didn’t die because you sinned, then it’s obvious that they died because they sinned.”

You may remember that this was the great concern of Job. In chapter 1, Job is seen sacrificing for the possible sins his children might have committed as they gathered to celebrate their birthdays. Job 1:5 tells us that Job offered burnt offerings early in the morning for the unintentional sins of his children and,

. . . Thus Job did continually.

Job’s great concern was that his sons and daughters walked with God.

Bildad implied, “None of your sacrifices did any good, Job. You didn’t satisfy God with your burnt offerings on their behalf. Evidently they were such great sinners that they had to be delivered into the power of their transgressions. Sorry Job, it didn’t work!”

This is a knife directly into the heart of Daddy Job. This is the heartbreak of any godly parent – that their child will walk away from God and then face severe consequences because of their sin. Every committed, godly, praying, concerned parent is crushed at the thought that perhaps what they did was not good enough.

It is amazing to me that Job does not get up and run directly off some cliff.

Bildad says, “Listen, Job, you can’t pervert the justice of God. Somebody is paying for an awful lot of sin.”

In his arrogant counsel, Bildad effectively consigns Job’s children to perdition – they died in sin and because of sin too bad!

He then goes even further in his arrogance to speak for God. Look at Job 8:5-6.

If you would seek God and implore the compassion of the Almighty,

if you are pure and upright, surely now He would rouse Himself for you and restore your righteous estate.

In other words, “Job, I know everything there is to know about God. Trust me, I know what God will do if you just follow my advice.”

So first, Bildad effectively says, “Let me tell you who God is!”

In the second section of his counsel, Bildad is giving proof that he knows what he is talking about.

2. Listen to what our forefather’s believed! (Job 8:8-10)

Notice Job 8:8.

Please inquire of past generations, and consider the things searched out by their fathers.

Skip to Job 8:10.

Will they not teach you and tell you, and bring forth words from their minds?

Bildad is implying that all the forefathers would line up with Job's counselors in testifying that the righteous do not suffer and God only punishes the pagans.

"Besides, Job," Bildad says in Job 8:9 paraphrased,

"We were only born yesterday and we don't know anything and life is too short to ever figure anything out anyway."

In other words, "You don't live long enough to learn enough to prepare you for life."

In a way, this is true. By the time we have learned enough about parenting to do a decent job, our children are gone. This is the reason we cannot wait to be a grandparent – we have experience and we can make up for all our mistakes.

I read this quote some time ago, "Experience is the comb we receive after we have lost our hair."

I did not particularly like that quote.

Stephen Pile has written a book entitled *The Book of Failures*. It has an interesting story about the time in 1978 when the British Army had taken over emergency firefighting. They lacked experience and it showed. On January 14th, they were called by an elderly lady in South London to rescue her cat. They arrived with impressive haste, very cleverly and carefully rescued the cat, and started to drive away. But the lady was so grateful that she invited the men in for tea. Driving off later with fond farewells and warm waving of arms, they ran over her cat and killed it. What a shame!ⁱⁱⁱ

Someone wrote, "Experience is what it takes to recognize a mistake the second time you make it."

Another wrote, "The problem with learning by experience is that it charges so much for tuition."

Bildad is saying, "Job, you think you know something about God and life and suffering and trouble? You don't know anything. You think you're unique in this experience? It's old, man. Your fathers knew and your forefathers before them knew – this judgment is the result of sin."

All the experience of the ages proves – somebody sinned!

Let me tell you who God is!

Listen to what your forefathers believed!

Bildad continues, "Do you want more evidence, Job?"

3. Look at what nature teaches! (Job 8:11-19)

This third section of Bildad's counsel begins in Job 8:11 with three illustrations from nature itself.

*Can the papyrus grow up without a marsh?
Can the rushes grow without water?*

Obviously the answer is, "No," as Bildad continues in Job 8:12-13 to say, "for without water, it will wither, and Job, you are that stalk of papyrus. For a while you looked good, but the water dried up. Job, you're withering up and dying because you've forgotten God."

"Furthermore," Bildad goes on in Job 8:14, "a spider web looks magnificent, but try leaning on it and you'll collapse. We thought you were something, but you are falling over because your strength was supported by a flimsy web."

"And look at the gourd," Bildad says in Job 8:16 and 18, "it thrives in the sun, and its roots spread all over the garden . . . when it is uprooted, he will deny it, saying, 'I never saw you.'"

In other words, the vine and its roots will totally rot away, leaving no evidence that it was ever in the garden.

"Three parables I have for you, Job. Listen carefully to me, Professor Bildad the Blunt."

- You have run out of water and you are withering away.
- You are leaning on a spider's web and you have collapsed.
- You are a vine that God has uprooted and all the evidence that you ever existed is rotting away.

Look at what nature teaches us about the justice of God and the sinfulness of Job.

Thank you, Bildad the Bruiser.

One of the strangest war incidents I have read about was the arrest, trial, and imprisonment of an American serviceman in World War II. He struck no blow for the enemy; he was not disloyal to his country; he was just a discourager at a very critical time in the battle. The fate of his company hung in the balance and at night he would go along the lines and say discouraging words to the men on duty. ["We're not going to make it . . . We're all going to

get killed . . . This war is hopeless . . .,” etc.] The court martial judged it a crime to speak disheartening words at such critical times. He was sentenced to one year in military prison.^{iv}

Bildad should have been locked up!

At the most critical time in Job’s life – in the heat of the battle – Bildad comes along only to bring discouraging words. He has accused Job of being a windbag, but let me tell you, Bildad is the one full of hot air, not Job.

This is the pot calling the kettle black!

The pot has no reason to speak – he is just as covered with soot as the kettle. This is the person with a beam in his eye accusing the one with a speck in his eye. What blind hypocrisy!

Bildad is the windbag, not Job. It is Bildad who has blundered on and on and on:

- Let me tell you who God is!
- Listen to what our forefathers believed!
- Look at what nature teaches!

Finally, Bildad comes to the fourth section of his counsel.

4. Think of what lies ahead! (Job 8:20-22)

Look at Job 8:20.

Lo, God will not reject a man of integrity, nor will He support the evildoers.

Again, this is Bildad’s basic equation – along with Eliphaz and the others. It is this: sin equals suffering.

“Job, because you are suffering, you are in sin.”

“How do we know?”

. . . ***God will not reject a man of integrity...***

This is just the way it works!

“So confess, Job, and if you do, look at what lies ahead,” as Bildad says in Job 8:21,

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouting.

In other words, “Trust me, Job. Do what I say and you’ll be laughing again in no time.”

How arrogant! How tactless! Laughter is the furthest thing from Job’s heart. In fact, Job is probably convinced that he will never laugh again.

Bildad is like a doctor telling a man with acute appendicitis that he should try not to feel so much pain.^v

It is a wonder that Job did not get up and run.

For those who want to analyze this man’s false counsel, or what I will refer to as Bildad’s Blunders, there are several:

- Bildad’s arrogance led him to an unkind approach;
- Bildad’s lack of pity caused a severe lack of perspective;
- Bildad’s self-assured counsel eclipsed gracious correction.

Analysis of Bildad’s Counsel

Let us analyze several of Bildad’s sayings to Job in order to further learn. Like Eliphaz, much of what Bildad said was true – but his sayings were half-truths; incomplete truths that sounded clever, but led to error.

Let us begin with one of Bildad’s false sound bites.

1. Life is too short to grow wise.

Bildad proposed in Job 8:9, “Life is so short (that is true), you don’t have enough time to get wisdom on your own – especially at a young age (that is false).”

Solomon, another wise man from the east, inspired by God’s wisdom, counseled with these words,

My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commandments within you,

...the Lord [will] give [you] wisdom...

...[and] wisdom will enter your heart...

(Proverbs 2:1, 6, 10)

In Proverbs chapter 8, wisdom says,

By me kings reign . . . [older men]

By me princes rule . . . [young men]

I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me.

(Proverbs 8:15-17)

We do not have to grow old to grow wise.

Paul could tell Timothy with confidence that he should not be ashamed of his youthfulness, but that he could in fact,

. . . in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example [to] those who believe.

In other words, young Timothy could demonstrate wisdom – the application of truth to life.

We do not have to be old to be wise.

Let us look at another false sound bite from Bildad.

2. Only the perfect can approach God.

Bildad challenges Job to get God's attention by becoming pure before he approaches God (Job 8:6).

To someone who is desperately trying to figure out why God does not seem to be listening, this advice can be devastating.

This counsel led to the monastic order, asceticism, self-inflicting wounds, penance, purgatory – and a thousand other errors.

“You've got to get your act together before you can walk with Christ,” is false teaching. It belongs on the ash heap alongside of Bildad.

We do not pursue perfection in order to get God's attention.

Jesus Christ said in Matthew 9:12, “The healthy don't need a doctor, but the sick.”

If we need an appointment with the Great Physician, the only thing we need to understand is that we are sick and needy – then, c'mon!

Bildad the Discourager continues, so let us look at another saying.

3. The way things were, are the ways things will always be.

In other words, “Job, the past dictates the present.”

Bildad said, “Please, Job, get your cues from past generations.” (Job 8:8)

“If it was good enough for them, it is good enough for us,” is the same sound bite that discourages churches and defeats progress.

This is the person who says, “We've never done it that way before,” as if there is something sinful about trying something for the first time.

Warren Wiersbe wrote, “God never intended the past to become a parking lot. God wants the past to be a launching pad.”

The truth is that some things in the past should be forgotten.

Paul evidently thought so when he wrote,

. . . forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead . . . the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

Let us look at one more saying from arrogant, self-assured, self-enamored Bildad the Belittler.

4. We always get what we deserve.

Notice Bildad's words in Job 8:20 (NIV).

. . . God does not reject a blameless man or strengthen the hands of evildoers.

There are no exceptions to this rule, according to Bildad.

It is true that there is a principle of reaping what we sow! However, there are final and ultimate exceptions.

We are the exceptions, by the grace of God! We are the exceptions because we deserve hell. However, we have been redeemed by Christ, who was Himself an exception – receiving in His body the punishment for our sins. As we read,

. . . He Himself bore our sins in His body... so that we might . . . live to righteousness... (I Peter 2:24)

He got what He did not deserve, so we could get what we do not deserve.

Bildad said,

. . . God does not reject a blameless man . . .

Oh, but He did – for Christ was forsaken by the Father – an innocent man. Because He was forsaken, we can be forgiven.

Bildad, grace has opened up an eternity of exceptions.

We are some of them today. Even today, Christ is the ultimate answer.

A man in Dundee, Scotland, in the late 1800s, was confined to bed for forty years, having broken his neck in a fall at the age of fifteen. However, his spirit remained unbroken, and his cheer and courage so inspired people that he had a constant stream of guests.

One day a visitor asked him, “Doesn't Satan ever tempt you to doubt God?”

“Oh, yes,” replied the man, “he does try to tempt me. I lie here and see my old schoolmates driving along in their carriages, and Satan whispers, ‘If God is so good, why does He keep you here all these years? Why did He permit your neck to be broken?’”

The guest asked, “What do you do when Satan whispers those things to you?”

“Ah,” replied the invalid, “I take him to Calvary and show him Christ, and say, ‘You see, He does indeed care for me.’”^{vi}

Bildad, you are wrong – thank God.

- We do not have to be perfect to approach God.
- We do not have to be old to be wise.
- The way things were, are not always the way things have to be.

- One day, we who believe by faith in Christ alone, will receive entirely what we do not deserve.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 4/29/2007 by Stephen Davey.

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ⁱ Charles R. Swindoll, Job: A Man of Heroic Endurance (W Publishing, 2004), p. 56.

ⁱⁱ The Bible: James Moffatt Translation, quoted by David McKenna in Mastering the Old Testament: Job (Word Publishing, 1986), p. 78.

ⁱⁱⁱ Charles R. Swindoll, The Tale of the Tardy Ox Cart (Word Publishing, 1998), p. 191.

^{iv} J. Allen Blair, Living Patiently (Loizeaux Brothers, 1966), p. 54.

^v Mike Mason, The Gospel According to Job (Crossway Books, 1994), p. 89.

^{vi} Robert J. Morgan, Nelson's Complete Book of Illustrations (Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 170.