

The Truth, but not the Whole Truth **Job 8:1-10:22**

We are currently in the section of Job that focuses on the first round of speeches or remarks from Job's friend. Last week we looked at Job's interaction with his friend Eliphaz and found that even though a friend may have good intentions, their attempt at help may actually hurt. Therefore, it is imperative that we don't jump to conclusions or place too great an emphasis on our own experiences when we attempt to counsel others. Tonight, we are going to look at the comments of the second friend to speak, Bildad.

Have you ever stopped to think about the oath that an individual must recite before testifying in court?

“Do you solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?”

It is an interesting statement because our initial takeaway is often simple – the judge wants the court to hear the truth and not lies. That is a given. What is interesting is the phrase – “the whole truth.” Why is that phrase there? It implies that one can tell the truth while withholding some information. While not lying, an individual can still fail to paint the whole picture and doing so puts the court at a disadvantage. We see something similar happening in the life of Job in chapters 8-10. Bildad is going to tell Job (and us) the truth and yet it isn't the whole truth and that does both God and Job a huge disservice.

Job 8:1-22

Again, it is easy to see right out of the gate that Job's friends have forgot their self-proclaimed mission from Job 2:11. Bildad's opening statement does not provide any sympathy or comfort. Instead, Bildad calls Job's behavior and speech out by asking him, how long are you going to blow hot air? Shut up already! I'm going to share some truth and you need to listen!

I. Is God Just? (v.3-7)

Bildad begins his speech by asking rhetorical questions. He essentially has already asked Job to shut up so he doesn't expect a response. Does God pervert justice? Does He pervert the right? In other words, God is a just God – He is going to do the right thing – In the face of wrong, nobody gets off the hook.

In case you weren't sure if Bildad had any compassion or sympathy for Job, verse 4 assures you that he does not. The only thing worse would be if he called Job's children out by name. He tells Job – IF (an apparent sarcastic if) your kids have sinned against God, they have only gotten what they deserved. Bildad is using Job's worst fears against Him. Remember 1:5? Bildad is insinuating there is no IF here – their sin is an apparent fact – deal with it Job!

He goes on to say, you are on the wrong side of God Job and you are only getting what you deserve. God is just, why would you expect Him to act otherwise. Here is what you need to do, seek Him, plead with him for mercy and He will come to your side and restore you.

Bildad is correct, God is just, but what he is proclaiming isn't the whole truth and it doesn't apply to Job's situation – there is a lot of assuming going on and none of these friends appear to care to find out the whole story. Bildad also wanders into prosperity gospel preaching 101 – If you do this, God will bless you and restore you. From an eternal perspective, Bildad is correct, but this theology doesn't necessarily apply to the here and now. We will see God restore Job but it is not because of his actions, it is because of God's choice and purpose.

II. Are Experiences/Traditions of the Past Helpful (v.8-10)

Last week, we saw Eliphaz place a great deal of emphasis on personal experience – we talked about that danger. This week, Bildad introduces us to another danger. Instead of personal experience, Bildad leans too heavily on tradition. He tells Job, you need to listen to the wisdom of those that have come before us. They lived a full life and have filled us in – why are you not paying attention to that? We haven't lived very long compared to them. They wrote the guidebook and yet you cast it aside. If you want to understand your situation, why don't you lean on their wisdom?

Once again, does Bildad provide some truth? Yes. Does he provide the whole truth? No. Is wisdom and tradition valuable? Absolutely. However, good wisdom and tradition should not serve as our ultimate source and guide. Even worse, there is plenty of poor “worldly wisdom” and flat out wrong tradition that exists. This truth is a present reality in the church today. In recent weeks, A Southern Baptist church has come under fire for allowing members of the LGBTQ community to become full-fledged members of the church. The world sees this as a non-issue but the word of God does not. The choice made in a situation like this by multiple parties has the potential to set “tradition” for years to come and either solidify or fray the church. This is only one example that proves, our doctrine, theology, and application must be grounded in the Word of God and not the traditions or “wisdom” of men.

III. Do Those Who Reject God Prosper?

In verse 13 to the close of Bildad's speech, he attempts to give Job an object lesson using a plant as his example. He argues that a plant cannot be sustained without water our nourishment. Even if it is flowering and in good health (a picture of Job's life before this calamity struck), the plant will quickly wither if no water. Bildad then tells Job that those who forget God are just like this plant. They have no hope and are doomed to perish. Why? Because without God there is no true confidence. Everything this man clings to is temporary at best. He compares this trust to a spider web – it is easily torn down. There is no real substance here. Bildad is painting a picture of James' double minded man – unstable in all his ways. It is only a matter of time until this man comes to ruin.

This truth spoken by Bildad also comes with an implication. What Bildad is saying is:

- Job you are that plant

- Job you are that man
- You have forgotten God and are enjoying the fruit of your labors
- Many just like this have come before you and many will come after you as well

Bildad has spent his entire speech blasting Job but attempts to recover it at the end by telling Job that God will surely not reject a blameless man nor take the hand of those who sow evil. Those who follow after God will be blessed.

Again, more of the prosperity Gospel with a huge implication.

*If God will not reject a blameless man nor take the hand of evildoers, guess what Job? You must not be blameless, you must be an evil doer.

Bildad has spoken truth, but it is truth that does not apply and it is not the whole truth.

*Charles Spurgeon - Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.”

Job 9:1-35

IV. Is God All Powerful?

Job answers Bildad generously by saying that he understands the truth in Bildad’s statement. God is just. However, Job is frustrated because he feels mistreated. He still clings to his belief that he is blameless and yet he perceives to be in the midst of extreme judgement. If he can’t escape the judgement of God, Job isn’t sure how anyone can. Several times in this his reply to Bildad, Job speaks of the power and might of God.

v.4 – wise and mighty

v.5 – removes mountains

v.6 – shakes the earth

v.7 – commands the sun and seals up the stars

v.8 – stretched out the heavens and trampled the sea

v.9 – made the constellations

v.10 – does great things in number

Job recognizes his weakness and his place in comparison to the might and majesty of God. Though he clings to his innocence, he doesn’t see a way to contend with such a powerful God.

In verse 13, Job claims that God will not turn back his anger. It is interesting that Job feels as though God is against him. Again, Job isn’t privy to what is going on behind the scenes. He doesn’t know God’s purpose in the scenario he finds himself in. In Job’s defense, it would be hard to imagine a purpose (beyond judgement) when you have experienced such heartbreak, loss, and pain.

Job describes himself as being crushed – unable to get his breath (remember how messenger after messenger came all in a row). He states in verse 19, if this is a contest of strength – He loses, for who is stronger than God. What Job appears to be describing is a hopeless situation.

That leads us to the major question posed in this conversation:

- How can a man be in the right before God? (v.2)

V. How Can Man Be Justified?

In verses 20-22, Job appears to push back on Bildad's theology. It's an interesting war of words. Job has stood by the fact that he believes he is innocent but if that is the case, then what are we to make of verse 20? How can one be innocent and guilty at the same time?

Remember, early on that Job was described as a blameless and upright man. He was a unique man – one that God took delight in. In fact, it was stated that there was no other man like Job. He was blameless and upright, but he was not perfect – he was not sinless. Job is making the argument here that he does not believe that he has done anything that warrants the judgement he has received. It's almost as if Job believes he could have been caught speeding but he received a judgment of life in prison. In his mind, although he doesn't recognize a crime, he acknowledges one could have been committed – it just doesn't fit the punishment he has received.

That is what Job means when he says, "though I am in the right, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse."

In verse 22, Job goes on to push back against Bildad's theology by claiming that God destroys both the blameless and the wicked. In one sense, Job is saying that bad things can and do happen to people that are perceived as "good" (blameless). In another, Job somewhat makes the argument that none are good.

Job's argument falls in line with what we see in 1 John 1:8 and Romans 3:23. All have sinned and fall short of God's standard – If we say that we have no sin we are only lying to ourselves.

Job could defend himself to no avail, even if he could get an audience with God.

Job recognized this and the fact that God was the ultimate judge. He has the power and authority.

All Job could hang his hat on was the mercy of God.

Bildad hangs his hat on God's justice, Job requires God's mercy. The whole truth is that both are necessary

In verse 33, Job longs for an arbiter - a mediator speaking on his behalf (Courtroom language)

The beauty of these chapters from our perspective is that both men are correct and that God's ultimate plan through Jesus will fulfill both of their arguments.

Exodus 34:6-7

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands,^[a] forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

This is the character of God – He is merciful and gracious. He is patient and slow to anger. He does abound in steadfast love and forgive sin, but he is also a just God.

God’s character forces us to entertain the same question Job poses – How can a man be right before God. How can God be both merciful and just? Can those qualities co-exist?

Romans 6:23 – the wages of sin is death. A just God cannot let sin go unpunished. Although Job knew of no blatant sin in his life, he recognized he was not perfect. This is the place he found himself in and it was pure misery. That is why he longed for a mediator, someone who could argue on his behalf. This is exactly what God provided us in Christ.

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world,^[a] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

God sent Jesus to serve as our mediator. To do so, He would have to be perfect and He was. Being 100% God and 100% man allowed Christ to take on Himself the punishment that our sin deserved. He was and is the mediator that Job longed for.

1 John 2:2

Jesus was the propitiation (wrath-bearer) for our sins. His sacrifice fulfills God’s characteristics of mercy and justice completely. It is by his sacrifice alone that a man can be in the right before God. Right here in Job 9 is an allusion or shadow of the gospel that is to come and has come for us!

Job 10:1-22

VI. An Honest Desire For God’s Purpose

In chapter 10, we get more pure honesty from Job. He is struggling through his affliction and is desperately seeking understanding. He continues to ask why he was born. In other words, he is struggling to see any purpose through his situation.

Job’s feelings are understandable. He continues to beg for mercy – (just leave me alone so I can die), but through it all, he never turns his back on God.

Think about all we have heard from Eliphaz and Bildad up to this point. We will surely bring this point up again, but how many times have we heard them speak to God? We have heard them speak of God, but not to Him. Job on the other hand, petitions God. He desires understanding from God, not from men.

The big takeaway from this chapter is that Job seeks God's purpose even when he cannot see it. Think about the number of people today that maybe you know who see no purpose in the world. Some give up any hope of purpose when they encounter difficulty. Job, on the other hand, recognizes that God has a purpose. In verse 13, Job says as much: "I know that this was your purpose." Even though Job cannot understand it or see it, he knows God acts with purpose.

We see hints of the man that we saw in Job 1:5 – "It may be that my children have sinned", as he looks at his own life. He wants to be in right standing before God and in his affliction he continues to move toward God and not away from Him. This is an example that we would all do well to follow.

VII. Personal Implications

1. Don't misrepresent God – Eternity hangs in the balance

Bildad presented Job with truth, but not the whole truth. He focused on God's requirement for justice while neglecting any mention of God's steadfast love and mercy. As a result, Bildad misrepresented God.

As we interact with the lost we must be careful not to do the same. We must be true to Exodus 34:6-7 and the gospel message. To place too great an emphasis on God's justice will push the lost away while placing too great an emphasis on God's love and mercy can provide the lost with a false sense of security.

The whole truth is that God is both completely just and full of grace and mercy – just as Jesus demonstrates.

2. A man can only be right before God when covered by the blood of Christ

Job's own words demonstrate to us that none are good. How we view ourselves – our own personal defense before God will not stand. He knows who we truly are. In other words, the argument that I am a good person doesn't hold water. My comparison of myself to others doesn't matter. All that matters is my comparison to God's standard.

While Job was not being judged, his story does teach us that mankind standing on its own merit cannot be right before God. Job recognized the need for a mediator arguing on his behalf. The good news for us is that God did provide that mediator in Jesus. His death and sacrifice on the cross is what satisfies our sentence.

Job asked, how can man be made right before God and the answer to that question – the only answer – is through Jesus. He alone satisfies both God's justice and mercy.

3. God has a purpose in all things

There will be times in your life when nothing makes sense. The pain, suffering, and loss that Job experienced didn't make sense to him. In moments like this, it is nearly impossible to find any purpose – How can God use this? How can good come from this?

Joseph – Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people^[a] should be kept alive, as they are today.

Job hurt. His pain was real. His confusion was real. However, through it all he recognized that God had a purpose. There is a connection here between Ch. 9 and 2:10. If we only see God in the good, and refuse to recognize his presence and purpose in the bad, then we begin to place limits on God. Our God is limitless. He is always working, even when we can't see it. As believers, there will be times when we must place what we want to the side and trust that what God is doing in our lives and situation is working for our good.