

The Fate of the Wicked:
Bildad's Second Response
Job 18

If you've seen the movie, "Fiddler on the Roof" you'll remember the main character, Tevye. Tevye struggles with the conflict between his traditions rooted in the teachings of God and the changing culture of Anatevka, Ukraine in 1905 where he lives. If one words marks "Fiddler on the Roof," it is "Tradition!"

How do you reconcile your traditions when you live in a culture opposed to your traditions? How do you reconcile your traditions when events occur in your life that impact you in such a way that challenge your traditions? That is the situation in Job 18. That is the situation we face in America today. For many Christians, our fast-paced madly driven culture challenges our firmly held traditions.

Bildad is defending his traditions. In Bildad's day, tradition says that if you do good things, then God will bless you with good things. If you participate in evil deeds, then God will punish you by bringing terrible things on you. Is that the same as good and bad karma? Do many who live in the west believe that same philosophy today? Tradition!

Job is defying tradition when he insists on discussing his situation with God. Tradition says God has established His way of doing things through Divine retribution. The universe in which we live also has its built-in retribution. If you do something bad, then something bad will happen to you. This is known as dynamistic retribution. Consequently, in the eastern culture of Job's day, a person had two forces working against him, one Divine, the other natural. Tradition!

Thus, the traditionalist, Bildad, addresses Job in this second speech (Job 18) with the purpose of bringing Job to his senses, of bringing Job to repentance and hopefully, restoration. We cannot forget Bildad's purpose because his speech appears to be very caustic and antagonistic against Job. Bildad is a friend. His purposes are noble.

With Friends Like Bildad, ...

There sat the three friends of Job: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. They came to comfort him, to console him, to be with him as friends. Yet, after one entire round of speeches with Job rejecting the traditions of the culture and the aged, the three friends unleashed venom like a snake biting your leg as you walk through the grass. The snake strikes fiercely intending to kill you. I don't think the three friends wanted to kill Job, but I do believe they were ready to strangle him to silence his mockery of tradition.

Bildad says to Job:

"You speak before you think" (18:2).

"You treat us like stupid animals" (18:3).

As iron sharpens iron,
so a person sharpens his friend
— Solomon

“Your anger destroys you” (18:4).

“You expect the earth and our traditions to be altered just for you” (18:4)

Stop! It appears that Bildad is attacking rather than comforting Job. What kind of a friend would treat you this way? Bildad is a friend trying to help another friend realign his thinking with that of their traditions, the traditions that serve as the foundation for all thinking and relationships in creation. Traditions structure life with sensibility. By confronting Job critically, Bildad attempts to rescue Job from non-traditional and non-sensical thinking that will eventually take Job’s life away from the blessings of God.

Tradition!

In Bildad’s way of thinking five retributive reprisals await those who flaunt the traditions of God and His divinely created universe. Non-traditionalists are wicked and unrighteous. God will punish them.

1. Darkness Marks the Life and Death of the Non-Traditionalist (Job 18:5-6).

“Indeed, the light of the wicked is put out,
and the flame of his fire does not shine.
The light is dark in his tent,
and his lamp above him is put out.

In other instances throughout Job, darkness is equated with death ([3:5](#); [10:21](#); [17:13](#)). Wickedness brings about death. Separation from this life. Separation from loved ones. Separation from God. Death is separation. The lights are out. No one is at home. This is Job’s lot in life if he continues to maintain his innocence and righteousness. This is Job’s lot in life if he does not repent. Confess your sins and be saved.
Tradition!

2. The Non-Traditionalist Falls into His Own Trap (Job 18:7-10).

His strong steps are shortened,
and his own schemes throw him down.
For he is cast into a net by his own feet,
and he walks on its mesh.
A trap seizes him by the heel;
a snare lays hold of him.
A rope is hidden for him in the ground,
a trap for him in the path.

Like a wounded and tired animal, the wicked becomes weakened as his shortened and beleaguered steps eventually bring him to destruction in a mesh covered pit. Or, a debilitating trap clamps down on the foot of the non-traditionalist as he walks along. Or, perhaps, like a calf in the rodeo ring, the contestant lassoes his hind legs, tripping him up and bringing him down to humiliation. In any of these cases, the wicked non-traditionalist falls because he will not bow to God’s laws. If you do good things, then God blesses you with goodness. If you do evil things, then God curses your evil life. Job’s present circumstances demonstrate that he has done something to upset God and the universe. Tradition!

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3. *The Non-Traditionalist Is Afraid, Weak and Dying (Job 18:11-13).*

Terrors frighten him on every side,
and chase him at his heels.
His strength is famished,
and calamity is ready for his stumbling.
It consumes the parts of his skin;
the firstborn of death consumes his limbs.

Taking his paint brush in hand, Bildad artistically paints a picture of the life of the rebel. No matter where he goes or what he does, fear fills his life. You can see it in his face, his sudden and jittery movements. Imagine always looking over your shoulder, wondering when the “long arm of the law” will catch up with you, wondering when one of your many enemies will not only get even with you, but get ahead. When your enemy or the sheriff comes to take your life from you, you will have no strength to fight back.

Bildad insists that fear not only consumes your thoughts and physical strength, it also consumes your body. Because your bodily systems are like lasers focused on your defense, your auto immune system silently succumbs to disease and attacks you when you least expect it. If the sheriff does not get you, if your enemy does not find a way to move ahead of you, then disease will silently attack and kill you like a soldier engaged in guerilla warfare. Tradition!

4. *The Destruction of His Tent (Job 18:14-15)*

He is torn from the tent in which he trusted
and is brought to the king of terrors.
In his tent dwells that which is none of his;
sulfur is scattered over his habitation.

Up to this point, Bildad speaks in generalities. The punches cause pain to Job’s heart and mind, but they are just that, painful punches. With these last two retributive reprisals, Bildad scores big points in the boxing ring. With an upper cut to the chin, Bildad slams into Job the reminder that Job’s home is gone. Momentarily Job staggers. He remembers. The oxen, the cattle, the sheep and camels are gone along with his servants. What used to be a place of security and order is now a habitat of insecurity and bewilderment, a place of never-ending sadness. Just like Sodom and Gomorrah, Job’s secure surroundings are now sulfuric smoldering ashes. This is how God treats the unrighteous and wicked. Tradition!

5. *His Memory Is Obliterated from the Earth (Job 18:16-20)*

His roots dry up beneath,
and his branches wither above.
His memory perishes from the earth,
and he has no name in the street.
He is thrust from light into darkness,
and driven out of the world.
He has no posterity or progeny among his people,

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and no survivor where he used to live.
 They of the west are appalled at his day,
 and horror seizes them of the east.

Bildad opens and closes this last section by using a literary tool known as merismus. A merismus uses two parts of an object to represent the entirety of the object. Bildad describes the entirety of a tree by using its roots and branches in verse 18, while verse 20 describes all the inhabitants of the earth from west to east. Job's friend attempts to demonstrate to Job that his actions will result in the complete removal of his name and memory from his community and the earth. Job will go to the grave unremembered, a man of insignificance.

This second upper cut stuns Job again. His thoughts immediately return to the day when a servant came running up to him and delivered the debilitating news that all ten of Job's children were dead, their lives extinguished from this earth by a great wind ([Job 1:18-19](#)). Not only does Job lose his children, but he loses the hope of having any grandchildren and great grandchildren. A man without children and grandchildren fades into history as though he never existed. Bildad projects a life portraying Job as insignificant and forgotten. This is the punishment of the wicked, of the unrighteous person. "Job, you are that person." Tradition!

Too Much to Take In?

Bildad covers a vast array of illustrations to defend his traditional outlook on Divine and dynamistic retribution. Hunting down the unrighteous like animals, God totally obliterates the wicked and unrighteous from His view. The memories of the righteous inhabitants of the community and the earth are no more. They never were and they will never be remembered.

Is Bildad correct? Do you see governments carrying out justice against the wicked in our society or in the world at large? Is it only the wicked and unrighteous that are swept away quickly and forcefully in a tsunami or suddenly buried and swallowed in an earthquake? Would you agree with Bildad? If not, how would you answer him? How does Job answer him in the next chapter?

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