

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO JOB 8

In this chapter Bildad enters the discussion with Job; proceeding upon the same lines as Eliphaz, he reproves him for his long and loud talk, (~~Job~~ Job 8:1,2); asserts the justice of God in his providence, of which the taking away of Job's children by death for their transgression was an instance and proof, (~~Job~~ Job 8:3,4); and suggests, that if Job, who had not sinned so heinously as they had, and therefore was spared, would make his submission to God, and ask forgiveness of him, and behave for the future with purity and uprightness, he need not doubt but God would immediately appear and exert himself on his behalf, and bless him and his with prosperity and plenty, (~~Job~~ Job 8:5-7); for this was his ordinary way of dealing with the children of men, for the truth of which he refers him to the records of former times, and to the sentiments of ancient men, who lived longer, and were more knowing than he and his friends, on whose opinion he does not desire him to rely, (~~Job~~ Job 8:8-10); and then by various similes used by the ancients, or taken from them by Bildad, or which were of his own inventing and framing, are set forth the short lived enjoyments, and vain hope and confidence, of hypocrites and wicked men; as by the sudden withering of rushes and flags of themselves, that grow in mire and water, even in their greenness, before they are cut down, or cropped by any hand, (~~Job~~ Job 8:11-13); and by the spider's web, which cannot stand and endure when leaned upon and held, (~~Job~~ Job 8:14,15); and by a flourishing tree destroyed, and seen no more, (~~Job~~ Job 8:16-19); and the chapter is concluded with an observation and maxim, that he and the rest of his friends set out upon, and were tenacious of; that God did not afflict good men in any severe manner, but filled them with joy and gladness; and that he would not long help and prosper wicked men, but bring them and their dwelling place to nought; and this being the case of Job, he suggests that he was such an one, (~~Job~~ Job 8:20-22).

Ver. 1. *Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said.*] This was the second of Job's friends that came to visit him, (~~Job~~ Job 2:11); and is mentioned next to Eliphaz there, and takes his turn in this controversy in the same

side; which no doubt was agreed upon among themselves, as well as the part each should bear, and the general sentiment they should pursue, which was the same in them all. Some have observed, that Job's friends were like the messengers that brought him the tidings of his losses, before one had done speaking another came; and so as soon as one of his friends had delivered his discourse, and before Job could well finish his reply, up starts another to charge him afresh, as here Bildad did, who said as follows.

Ver. 2. *How long wilt thou speak these [things]?* etc.] Either what he had delivered in the "third" chapter in cursing the day of his birth, and wishing for death, in which sentiments he still continued, and resolutely defended; or those expressed in the "two" preceding chapters, in answer to Eliphaz; this he said, as wondering that he should be able to continue his discourse to such a length, and to express himself with such vehemence, when his spirits might be thought to be so greatly depressed by his afflictions, and his body enfeebled by diseases; or as angry with him for his blasphemy against God, as he was ready to term it, his bold and daring speeches of him, and charge of unrighteousness on him, and for his disregard to what Eliphaz had said, his contempt of in and opposition to it; or as impatient at his long reply, wanting him to cease speaking, that he might return an answer, and therefore breaks in upon him before he had well done, (see ~~1888D~~ Job 18:2); or as despising what he had said, representing it as idle talk, and as mere trifling; and so some render the words, "how long wilt thou trifle after this sort?" ^{f337} or throw out such nonsense and fabulous stuff as this?

and [how long shall] the words of thy mouth [be like] a strong wind? blustering, boisterous, and noisy, to which passionate words, expressed in a loud and sonorous manner, may be compared; and so we say of a man in a passion and rage, that he "storms". Bildad thought that his speeches were hard and rough, and stout against God, and very indecent and unbecoming a creature to his Maker, and not kind and civil to them his friends; and yet they were like wind, vain and empty, great swelling words, but words of vanity; they were spoken, and seemed big, but had nothing solid and substantial in them, as Bildad thought.

Ver. 3. *Doth God pervert judgment?* etc.] In his dealings with men in the way of his providence; no, he does not; here Bildad opposes himself to Job, who he thought had charged God with injustice in dealing with him, and his

children, in the manner he had done: the same thing is intended in the following question,

or doth the Almighty pervert justice? for judgment and justice are the same, and often go together in Scripture, as being done either by God or men, when righteousness is executed by them, and this is never perverted by the Lord; there is no unrighteousness in him, neither in his nature, nor in his ways and works, either of providence or of grace; he is the Judge of all the earth, that does and will do right; to subvert a man in his cause, he approves not of in others, and will never do it himself; to justify the wicked, and condemn the just, are both an abomination to him, and therefore neither of these can ever be thought to be done by him; for though he justifies the ungodly, he does not justify their ungodliness, nor them in it, but from it, and that by the perfect righteousness of his Son; whereby the law is fulfilled, and justice satisfied, and so he is just while he is the justifier of him that believes in Jesus; though he is gracious and merciful, he is also righteous, and will not clear the guilty, or pardon sin without satisfaction to his justice; and such as are truly just or righteous, he never condemns here or hereafter; he may afflict them, but he delivers them out of their afflictions, nor are they ever forsaken by him; and, on the contrary, he punishes wicked men in this world, and in that to come, as he has the angels that sinned, the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, and many others, and all wicked men will be punished with everlasting destruction; yea, even so strict is his punitive justice, that the sins of his own people being laid and found on his Son as their surety, he has most severely punished him for them; he awoke the sword of justice against him, spared him not, but delivered him to death for us all; and though he forgives the iniquities of his children, he takes vengeance on their inventions, and chastises them for their sins, that they may not be condemned with the world; and, on the other hand, he is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love, which he rewards in a way of grace, as well as it is a righteous thing with him to render tribulation to them that trouble them: the righteousness of God is known by the judgments he executes on wicked men, and especially will be manifest in his judgments on antichrist; and though the justice of God in the course of his providence, in some instances, may not now be so clear, his judgments will be made manifest, and especially at the great day of judgment, when everything shall be brought to account, and God will judge the world in righteousness; all which, we may be assured of, is and will be executed by him, from the

consideration of his nature and perfections, and particularly from the name he goes by in this passage, being El, the mighty God, who is able to save and to destroy, to save the righteous, and destroy the wicked; and is Shaddai, all sufficient, stands in need of nothing; nor can he receive anything that is not his own, and therefore incapable of being bribed to the perversion of justice and judgment.

Ver. 4. *If thy children have sinned against him*, etc.] As no doubt they had, and, as Bildad thought, in a very notorious manner, and therefore were righteously punished for them; this instance is produced as a proof of God's not perverting, but doing justice, and the rather, because it was on account of this that it was supposed that Job charged, or was ready to charge, God with injustice; this was so far from it, that it was a righteous thing to do it, "if" or "seeing" his children had sinned; or "because" they have sinned, or "though" they have sinned, as the words ^{f338} are by some differently rendered; and either way shows that God did not pervert justice, but acted agreeably to it. Mr. Broughton renders them, "as thy children have sinned against him, so hath he sent them into the hand of their trespass"; as a righteous retaliation for it: that Job's children had sinned, there is no question to be made of it; they were born in sin, though born of godly parents; and though they had a religious education, yet no doubt were guilty of sin in their younger years, as well as when grown up; and even though good men, as there may be reason to conclude they were, yet daily sinning, for there are none without sin; and also it is true, that all sin is against God, contrary to his nature and will, a breach and transgression of his law, and an act of hostility against himself, and a trampling under foot, or at least a neglect, of his legislative power and authority, which is an aggravation of it; yet it does not appear that Job's children were guilty of any notorious sins or atrocious crimes, or lived a sinful course of life, for which the judgments of God came upon them; nor is it a clear case that they were taken away by death in the manner they were on account of their sins, but rather purely for the trial of Job's integrity, faith, and patience:

and he have cast them away for their transgression; or "by the hand of it" ^{f339}; by means of it, because of it, being provoked with it. Bildad represents them as abandoned sinners, as castaways and reprobates, rejected of God with abhorrence, and utterly ruined. Some render it, "hath sent them into the hand of their transgression" ^{f340}, or trespass; that is, delivered them up to the power and dominion of sin, gave them up to their hearts' lusts, and

to vile affections, to do things not convenient, and which they pursued to their ruin; the Targum is,

“he sent them into the place of their transgression ^{f341} ;”

into hell, which their transgressions deserved, and for which they were fitted by them. Some a little more mildly render the words, “he sent them away” ^{f342} ; that is, dismissed them out of the world, took them out of it by death; which dismissal is sometimes in peace, as good old Simeon prayed for, and sometimes in wrath, as Saul was taken away, (see ^{<4129>} Luke 2:29 ^{<2831>} Hosea 13:11); the latter is the meaning here.

Ver. 5. *If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes*, etc.] Here Bildad seems to think more mildly, and speak more kindly to Job, that though he had sinned, yet not in so gross a manner as his children, since he was spared, and they were not; and therefore if he would apply himself to God, and supplicate his grace and mercy, and live a godly life, it might yet be well with him, and he be restored to his former or to better circumstances; his sense is, that he would advise him, as Eliphaz had done before, (^{<1818>} Job 5:8); to seek unto God “by prayer”, as the Targum adds, and of which it is explained in the next clause, and that he would do this “betimes”, or “in the morning” ^{f343} ; which is a proper time for prayer, and was one of the seasons good men in former times made use of for that purpose; (see ^{<1918>} Psalm 5:3 55:17); or that he would seek him in the first place, and above all things, take the first opportunity to do it, without any procrastination of it, and that with eagerness and earnestness, with his whole heart and soul; for God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and those that seek him early shall find him:

and make thy supplication to the Almighty: not pleading any merit of his own, as deserving of any blessing on account of what he had done; but ask what he should as a favour, as a free gift, in a way of grace and mercy, as the word ^{f344} signifies; call for the pity of the Almighty, as Broughton renders it.

Ver. 6. *If thou [wert] pure and upright*, etc.] By which he tacitly intimates that he was neither; though the character given of him is, that he was perfect and upright, feared God and eschewed evil, and which is confirmed by God himself, and even after he had been tried by sore afflictions. Bildad’s meaning is, if he was pure in heart, and upright in his life and conversation, then things would be well with him. Men’s hearts are

naturally impure; no man is pure of himself, or can make his heart pure; nor is there any good man that is so pure as to be entirely free from sin; but such are pure in heart, who have clean hearts created, and right spirits renewed in them; or have new hearts and new spirits given them; have their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and so keep the faith in a pure conscience; having their hearts purified by faith in the blood of Christ, whose blood cleanses from all sin; and in this sense Job was pure, having an interest in a living Redeemer, and in his blood, and a partaker of his grace; and that he was upright is before testified of him, though now called in question, an if being put upon it, as well as on the former, having in the course of his life walked uprightly, according to the will of God revealed unto him:

surely now; directly at once, without delay, as Sephorno interprets it; it need not be doubted of, verily so it would be:

he would awake for thee; who though he neither slumbers nor sleeps, yet seems to be asleep when he suffers his people to be afflicted, distressed, and oppressed, and therefore they cry unto him to awake to their judgment, and their cause; (see ^{<9008>}Psalm 7:8 35:23 44:23); the sense is, that he would stir up and exert himself, and show himself strong on his behalf, and appear to be on his side, and work deliverance and salvation for him; or awake his mercy, grace, and goodness, as some Jewish commentators ^{f345} interpret it; that is, bestow his favours upon him:

and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous; which some understand of his body, the earthly house of his tabernacle, which if his soul was pure and upright that dwelt in it, might be called the habitation of righteousness; which, were this the case, would become healthful that was now covered with worms, and clods of dust: others interpret it of the soul, as Aben Ezra and Ben Gersom, the seat of righteousness, and of all the graces of the Spirit; which is in a prosperous condition when these graces are in lively exercise, and the presence of God, and the light of his countenance, and communion with him, are enjoyed; but rather his dwelling house in a literal sense, and all his domestic affairs, are here meant; and it is signified that all would be again in peace and prosperity, and he should enjoy great plenty of good things should he behave well; and here is a tacit intimation as if his habitation had not been an habitation of righteousness, but had been filled with the mammon of unrighteousness, with goods ill gotten, such as were obtained by rapine and oppression, and

neither he nor his family righteous; a very unjust and iniquitous insinuation: the Targum paraphrases it, “and, shall make the beauty of thy righteousness perfect”^{f346}; but Job had a more beautiful righteousness than his own; his was but as rags, and neither pure nor perfect; even the righteousness of Christ, which is perfect and beautiful, and makes such so, that are arrayed with it; (see ^{<381D>}Psalm 50:2) (^{<3814>}Ezekiel 16:14).

Ver. 7. *Though thy beginning was small*, etc.] When, he first set out in the world; and which though it greatly increased, and he was the greatest man in all the east, yet Bildad suggests, should he behave well, that was comparatively small to what it would be with him hereafter; and which was fact, for he had double of what he before enjoyed; so Mr. Broughton renders the words, “and thy former state should be little to thy latter”: or rather the sense and meaning is, “though thy beginning should be small”^{f347}; be it so that it is; or rather that though he should begin again in the world with very little, as indeed at present he had nothing to begin with, and when he did it was but with little; one gave him a piece of money, and another an earring of gold:

yet thy latter end should greatly increase; as it did, for the Lord blessed his latter end, and he had more than at the beginning, even double to what he had in his most flourishing circumstances; (see ^{<3821>}Job 42:11,12), etc. Bildad seems to have spoken under a spirit of prophecy, without being sensible of it, and not imagining in the least that so it would be in fact; for he only affirms it on supposition of Job’s good behaviour for the future, putting it entirely upon that condition, which he had no great expectation of it ever being performed.

Ver. 8. *For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age*, etc.] With respect to the truth of what he had said, or should say; he does not desire Job to take his word for it, but inquire how it was in former times; by which it would appear, that when good men have been in affliction and trouble, and have behaved well under it, as became them, they have been delivered out of it, and have been afterwards in more flourishing and comfortable circumstances, as Noah, Abraham, Lot, and others; and that wicked men and hypocrites, though they have flourished for a while, yet destruction has sooner or later come upon them, and they have utterly perished, as the descendants of Cain, the builders of Babel, and the men of Sodom, and others; whereas good and upright men are never cast away by the Lord, no instance can be given of it; all which would appear, if inquiry was made

into what had happened in the “former age” not the “first age”, as the Septuagint version, the age or generation in which the first man and woman lived; for who were “their fathers”, mentioned in the next clause? but the age or generation preceding that in which Job and his friends lived; and the knowledge of things done in that might with some application and diligence be more easily obtained:

and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers; of the fathers of the men of the former age, who lived in the age preceding that, and from whom their posterity had received the knowledge of many things by tradition, as they had received from their fathers that lived before them and so upwards; things being handed down in a traditionary way from father to son; and though these fathers were dead, yet, by their traditions that were preserved, they were capable of teaching and instructing men; and their sayings and sentiments deserved regard, and were had in much esteem; but yet being uninspired and fallible men, were not to be received without examination; for though truth is of the greatest antiquity, and to be revered on that account, yet error is almost as old as that; and therefore great care is to be taken how any thing is received purely upon the score of antiquity; and great pains, diligence, and circumspection, are necessary to a due search of the fathers, and coming at their sense and sentiments; and so as to distinguish between truth and error, and get a true knowledge of facts done in ancient times; such a search is to be made in like manner as one would search for gold and silver, and hidden treasures.

Ver. 9. *For we [are but of] yesterday*^{f348}, etc.] Which is not to be understood strictly of the day last past, but of a short space of time backward; and especially when compared with the antediluvian fathers, who lived the far greater part of them upwards of nine hundred years; otherwise Bildad and his two friends were men in years; Eliphaz says, that with them were the gray headed and very aged men, much older than the father of Job, and Elihu speaks of himself as a young man, and of them as very old; (see ^{<8150>}Job 15:10 32:6);

and know nothing; which is not to be taken in an absolute sense, for they knew much of the things of nature, providence, and grace; they were men of great understanding in things natural, civil, and religious, as appears by their discourses; but in a comparative sense, or when compared with the long lived patriarchs, who through the length of their days had much time and opportunity to make their observations on things, to learn the arts and

sciences, and improve themselves in all useful knowledge, human and divine; for which reason Job is sent to inquire of them; whereas they had been but a little while in the world, and knew but little, to whom might be applied that saying, as now to men since, “ars longa, vita brevis”; and they knew nothing as it is to be known, or perfectly, or in comparison of the saints in heaven; for they that know most here know but in part, see through a glass darkly; but in the other world they see face to face, and know as they are known. Moreover, Bildad might say this of himself and his friends, in a modest manner, having learned to know themselves, their weakness, and their folly; and the first and great lesson of wisdom is to become fools in men’s own apprehension, in order to be truly wise, having the like sense of themselves as Agur had, (¹⁸¹²Proverbs 30:2); (see ⁴¹⁸³1 Corinthians 3:18); or rather this might be said as being the sense of Job concerning them, who had a very mean and indifferent opinion of them; (see ¹⁸¹²Job 12:2 13:2); and therefore Bildad would not have him take their sense of things, but inquire of persons older and wiser:

because our days upon earth [are] a shadow; man’s time is rather measured by days than by months and years, being so short; and these are called “days” on earth, to distinguish them from the days of heaven, which are one everlasting day, in which there is no night of darkness, either in a literal or figurative sense, and which will never end; but the days of this life are like a “shadow”, dark and obscure; full of the darkness of adversity and trouble, as well as greatly deficient in the light of knowledge; there is nothing in them solid and substantial; the greatest and best things of this life are but a vain show; in heaven there is a better and more enduring substance: every thing is mutable and uncertain here; man is subject to a variety of changes in his mind and body, in family and outward estate and circumstances: and life itself is but a vapour, which appears a while and soon vanishes away; or rather like a shadow, that declines, is fleeting, and quickly gone; (see ¹³⁹⁵1 Chronicles 29:15).

Ver. 10. *Shall not they teach thee, [and] tell thee*, etc.] That is, the men of the former age, and their fathers before them, Job is directed to inquire of, and to prepare for a search into their records and traditions; from whom he might reasonably expect to be taught and told things that would be very instructive and useful to him in his present circumstances:

and utter words out of their heart? such as were the effect of mature judgment and long observation, and which they had laid up in their hearts,

and brought out from their treasure there; and, with the greatest faithfulness and sincerity, had either committed them to writing, or delivered them in a traditionary way to their posterity, to be communicated to theirs; and which might be depended upon as true and genuine, being men of probity, uprightness, and singleness of heart; who declared sincerely what they knew, and spoke not with a double heart, having no intention to deceive, as it cannot be thought they would impose upon their own children; and therefore Job might safely receive what they uttered, and depend upon it as truth and fact; and what they said, as Jarchi observes, is as follows; or what follows Bildad collected from them, and so might Job, and think he heard them “saying”, as Piscator supplies the text, what is expressed in the following verses, if not in their words, yet as their sense.

Ver. 11. *Can the rush grow up without mire?* etc.] No, at least not long, or so as to lift up his head on high, as the word signifies ^{f349}; the rush or bulrush, which seems to be meant, delights in watery places, and has its name in Hebrew from its absorbing or drinking up water; it grows in moist and watery clay, or in marshy places, which Jarchi says is the sense of the word here used; the Septuagint understands it of the “paper reed”, which, as Pliny ^{f350} observes, grows in the marshy places of Egypt, and by the still waters of the river Nile:

can the flag grow without water? or “the sedge” ^{f351}; which usually grows in moist places, and on the banks of rivers; this unless in such places, or if without water, cannot grow long, or make any very large increase, or come to maturity; so some ^{f352} render it, “if the rush should grow up without”, etc. then it would be with it as follows.

Ver. 12. *Whilst it [is] yet in its greenness,* etc.] Before it is come to its full height, or to a proper ripeness; when as yet it has not flowered, or is about it; before the time usual for it to turn and change; it being without moisture, water, or watery clay, will change;

[and] not cut down; by the scythe, or cropped by the hand of man,

it withereth before any [other] herb; of itself; rather sooner than such that do not require so much moisture; or in the sight and presence of them, they looking on as it were, and deriding it; a poetical representation, as Schultens observes: next follows the accommodation of these similes to wicked and hypocritical men.

Ver. 13. *So [are] the paths of all that forget God,* etc.] Who forget that there is a God; he is not in all, and scarce in any of their thoughts, and they live without him in the world; who forget the works of God, of creation and providence, in which there is a glorious display of his being and perfections; who forget the benefits and blessings of his goodness they are every day partakers of, and are not thankful for them; and who forget the word, worship, and ordinances of God, and follow after and observe lying vanities, idols, and the works of men's hands, and worship them, being unmindful of the rock of their salvation: now such men, as well as the hypocrites in the next clause, are like bulrushes and flags, or sedge, being unfruitful, useless, and unprofitable; and, for their sensuality and worldly mindedness, standing in the mire and clay of an unregenerate state, and of carnal and worldly lusts; and though, especially the latter, may carry their heads high in a profession of religion, and make a fair show in the flesh while it is a time of outward prosperity with them, but when tribulation arises on the account of religion, they are presently offended, and apostatize; being destitute of the true grace of God, and having the root of the matter in them, they wither of themselves; they soon drop their profession in the view of all good men, comparable to herbs and green grass, which abide in their verdure, when the other are gone and are seen no more:

and the hypocrite's hope shall perish; who are either the same with those before described, who, being in prosperous circumstances, forget the God of their mercies they make a profession of, like Jeshurun of old, or different persons, as Bar Tzemach thinks, the former designing open profane sinners, these secret ones, under the appearance of good men: an "hypocrite" is one whose inside is not as his outside, as the Jews say; who is outwardly righteous, but inwardly wicked; has a form of godliness, but not the power of it; a name to live, but dead; that makes a show of religion and devotion, attending the worship and ordinances of God in an external way, as if he had great delight in him and them, when his heart is removed far from him: and such have their "hope", for the present, of being in the favour of God, and of future happiness, which is founded on their outward prosperity their esteem among men, and more especially their external righteousness, and profession of religion; but this will "perish", even both the ground of their hope, the riches and righteousness, which come to nothing, and the hope that is built thereupon sinks into despair; if not in

life, as it sometimes does, yet always at death, (see ^{<1812>}Job 11:20 27:8); Bildad seems to have Job in view here, whom he esteemed an hypocrite.

Ver. 14. *Whose hope shall be cut off*, etc.] The same thing as before, expressed in different words, and repeated for the certainty of it; signifying that it should be of no manner of use, should be wholly lost, and issue in black despair: the word has the signification of loathing, and is differently rendered, either, “whom his hope shall loathe” ^{f353} or, “who shall loathe his hope” ^{f354}; he shall fret and tease, and vex himself that he should be such a fool to entertain such a vain hope, or to place hope and confidence in such vain things, finding himself most sadly disappointed:

and whose trust [shall be] a spider’s web; or “a spider’s house” ^{f355}; and such its web is to it; having made it, it encloses itself in it, and dwells securely: very fitly is the hope and confidence of an hypocrite compared to a spider’s web, which is a very nice and curious piece of workmanship, as are the outward works of righteousness, done by hypocrites they are wrought out and set off to the best advantage, to be seen of men; yet very slight and thin, and will bear no weight; such are the best works of carnal professors; they make a fine appearance, but have no substance, do not flow from principles of grace, nor are done in the strength of Christ, or to the glory of God; are but “splendida peccata”, as one calls them, and fall infinitely short of bearing the weight of the salvation of the soul: as the spider’s web is spun out of its own bowels, so the works of such persons are wholly of themselves; they are their own, done without the grace of God and spirit of Christ; and such webs are not fit for garments, are too thin to cover naked souls; insufficient to shelter from divine wrath and vengeance; cannot bear the besom of justice, one stroke of which will sweep them all away; and though they may think themselves safe enclosed in them as in a house, they will find themselves in the issue wretchedly mistaken; for there is no shelter, safety, and security, in such cobwebs; there is none but in Christ and his righteousness.

Ver. 15. *He shall lean upon his house*, etc.] Either the spider or the hypocrite, or the hypocrite as the spider; that is, that which is the ground of his confidence, which is as the spider’s house, on that he shall depend, either on his riches and outward prosperity, which he promises himself a long continuance of, and from whence he concludes himself to be high in the favour and good will of God; or on his works of righteousness, his outward profession of religion, attendance on external worship, and a

round of duties performed by him; in these he trusts, on these he depends, in such webs he enwraps himself, in such a house he dwells, and imagines himself safe; which is only making flesh his arm, leaning upon a broken reed, and building an house upon the sand: the Septuagint version is, “if he prop up his house”, by repeated outward acts of religion:

but it shall not stand: whether it be riches, these are uncertain things, of no continuance; there are no riches durable but the unsearchable riches of Christ and his grace; or whether it be a man’s own righteousness, which he endeavours to establish, or “make to stand”, as the phrase is in (~~401B~~ Romans 10:3); but in vain; it is but a sandy foundation to build on; or the hope and confidence laid upon it is like a house built on the sand, and, when rain falls, floods come, and winds beat upon it, it falls; and great is the fall of it, (~~402B~~ Matthew 7:26,27);

he shall hold it fast; as the worldling does his wealth, his gold and his silver; but it is snatched out of his hand by one providence or another, or however at last death obliges him to part with it; and the self-righteous man holds fast his righteousness, it is his own, he is fond of, an house of his own building, and cannot bear to have it demolished; an idol of his own setting up, and to take it away is to take away his gods; and what has he more? wherefore he holds it as fast as he can, and will not let it go till he can hold it no longer; or, “he shall fortify himself in it”^{f356}, as in a castle or strong hold, which he thinks impregnable, yet will soon and easily be battered down by divine justice:

but it shall not endure; gold perishes, riches come to nought, wealth is no enduring substance, nor is a man’s righteousness lasting; only Christ’s righteousness is everlasting; true grace endures to eternal and issues in it; but external gifts, speculative and rational knowledge, and a mere profession of religion, fail, cease, and vanish away.

Ver. 16. *He [is] green before the sun*, etc.] Which some understand of the rush or flag, of which a further account is given, as setting forth more fully the case of wicked men and hypocrites; but to either of these do not agree the situation of it in a garden, the shooting forth of its branches, and the height of it, and its striking its roots deep in stony places: Cocceius interprets it of the “herb” or grass before which the flag withers, (~~408D~~ Job 8:12); but the same objections, or most of them, lie against that also; rather, from the description of it, a tall large tree is designed, to which hypocrites in their most flourishing circumstances are compared, and yet

come to nothing, (^{<1957>}Psalm 37:35); that is “green” in its leaves, and looks beautiful, so they in a profession of religion, which is like green leaves without fruit; they make in it a fair show in the flesh, take up and hold the lamp of a profession, and retain it bright and fair for a time; or, like a tree full of sap, or “juicy”^{f357}; or, as Mr. Broughton renders it, “juiceful”; denoting, not a fulness of the spirit and his grace, or of faith, hope, love, etc. and of righteousness and goodness, but of, outward prosperity, having as much as heart could wish, and great plenty of good things laid up for many years: and this tree is said to be green and juicy “before the sun”; either in the presence and through the influence of it, as hypocrites flourish, even in a religious way, while the sun of prosperity shines upon them, and no longer; or openly and publicly, in the sight of all men, as this phrase is used, (^{<1021>}2 Samuel 12:11,12); and as such men do, in the view of all men, professors and profane, doing all they do to be seen of men, and before whom they are outwardly righteous, and reckoned good men; or, “before the sun” rises, as the Targum and Aben Ezra, so hypocrites flourish, before the sun of persecution arises and smites them, because of their profession, and then they drop it; (see ^{<1016>}Matthew 13:6,21);

and his branch shooteth forth in his garden; or “over”^{f358} it; and branch may be put branches, which in a flourishing tree spread themselves to cover a considerable piece of ground: Mr. Broughton renders it, “and his suckers sprout over his orchard”; all which may denote the increase of a wicked man, in his family, in his wealth and substance, and particularly in his posterity, which are as branches and suckers from him; and Bildad, if these are his own words, may have respect to Job, and to his large substance and number of children he had in his prosperity, when he had an hedge set about him, and was enclosed as in a garden: and whereas the church of God is sometimes compared to a garden, (^{<2042>}Song of Solomon 4:12); it agrees very well with hypocrites, who have a place there, and are called hypocrites in Sion, where they have a name, and flourish for a while: many interpreters, both Jewish^{f359} and Christian^{f360}, interpret this, and what follows, of truly righteous and good men under afflictive providences, who notwithstanding continue, and are not the worse, but the better for them; their leaf of profession is always green, and withers not; and that “before the sun”, even of adversity and affliction; and though that beats upon them, and smites them severely, they are like green olive trees, or the cedars of God, full of sap, full of the grace of God, and continually supplied with it; and so patiently endure temptation and affliction, bear the heat and burden

of the day, and are not careful in the year of drought; (see ²⁰⁰⁶Song of Solomon 1:6 ⁴⁵¹⁸Psalms 52:8 ²⁴⁷⁸Jeremiah 17:8); such are planted in the garden and house of the Lord by himself and shall never be rooted up; where their branches spread, and they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of all divine things, and are filled with the fruits of righteousness.

Ver. 17. *His roots are wrapped about the heap*, etc.] The heap of stones where the tree stands; it strikes its roots among them, and implicates and twists them about them, and secures itself and grows up notwithstanding them: and this expresses the seeming stable state and condition of hypocrites for a season, who not only flourish, but seem to take root; and who maintain their ground amidst some difficulties; this fitly agrees with and describes such hearers of the word, and professors of religion, comparable to the seed sown on stony ground, (⁴⁰³⁵Matthew 13:5,6,20,21);

[and] seeth the place of stones; or, “the house of stones”^{f361}; a house built of stones, high and stately; yet this tree rises higher than that, overtops and overlooks it; and is represented as viewing it thoroughly, or looking down upon it, and all around it, being so high and so spreading; the Targum renders it, implicateth the house of stones; “platteth”, as Mr. Broughton, or twists about them, and so many of the Jewish writers; but this seems to be designed in the former clause: all this suits very well with good men, whose “roots are wrapped about the fountain”^{f362}; as the words may be rendered; about the love of God, in which they are rooted and grounded, and are like trees planted by rivers of water, the river of divine love, which refreshes, revives, and makes them fruitful; and about Christ, the fountain of gardens and well of living waters; in whom they are rooted and built up, increase, flourish, and are established; and though they are among stones, and attended with many difficulties, yet they abide and surmount all; believe in hope against hope, and see and enjoy, yea, even dwell in the house of stones, the church of God, built on a rock, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail.

Ver. 18. *If he destroy him from his place*, etc.] If the sun when he is risen strikes the tree with such vehement heat that it withers and utterly perishes from the place where it grew; or roots it up, so the Targum and Nachmanides; or, if God destroys the hypocrite from his place, or he is by one means or another removed out of the garden, the church, being detested and rejected by good men; or from all his worldly enjoyments, his

honour, credit, and esteem with men, which are all precarious, fickle, and inconstant; or out of the world, being cut down as a cumber ground:

then [it] shall deny him, [saying], I have not seen thee; that is, either the tree shall deny that it ever was planted in such a place, or rather the place shall deny that the tree ever was planted there; the sense is, that it shall be so utterly destroyed, that neither root nor branch shall be left, nor anything to show that it ever grew there; its place shall know it no more, (see ^{<870>}Job 7:10 20:9); or God shall deny the hypocrite, and say he never saw him nor knew him; he never belonged to him, nor was under his care; he never looked upon him with a look of love, grace, and mercy; he never had any delight and pleasure in him, nor regarded him as one of his; he was no tree of his planting, watering, and keeping, (see ^{<1072>}Matthew 7:23); this seems most difficult to accommodate to a good man, and those who carry it that way seem to be most puzzled with this; some render it, “shall he be swallowed?” or, “shall anyone in, allow him up?” ^{f363} destroy or root him out of his place? none shall: the root of the righteous cannot be moved, nor they from that; not from the everlasting love of God, in which they are rooted, nor from Christ, in whom they are fixed: others understand this of the digging up of a tree, and transplanting it to another place, where it grows as well, or better; and so the people of God, though they have many stripping providences, and are removed from place to place, and from one condition to another, so that their former state and place know them no more; yet all things work together for their good.

Ver. 19. *Behold, this [is] the joy of his way,* etc.] Of the state and condition of the hypocrite, who, while he is in outward prosperity, exults and rejoices, but his joy is but short, it is but for a moment, (^{<8305>}Job 20:5); and this is what it comes to at last, and issues in, even entire destruction from his place; which, because it may seem strange and wonderful, and is worthy of notice and consideration, as well as to express a certainty of it, the word “behold” is prefixed; though this also is understood, by some, of good men who have much spiritual joy in their present state and condition, be it what it will; they have joy and peace in believing, even joy unspeakable, and full of glory; they have joy in the Lord, and in his ways in which they walk, when they have trouble in the world; they rejoice and even glory in tribulation, and are cheerful be they where they will, though removed from their native place and country; and especially this will be their case when they are transplanted from earth to heaven, the better and heavenly country:

and out of the earth shall others grow; in their room and stead; where the tall flourishing tree once stood, but now utterly destroyed, other trees should grow; signifying, either the children of the hypocrites and wicked men, that should spring up in their place and imitate them, and come to the same end; or rather such as were strangers to them, that should inherit their substance and estates; and it may be good men that should succeed them, and come into the possession of all their wealth, even such as were before in mean circumstances, and so may be said to come “out of the earth”: it may be rendered, “out of another dust” or “earth shall they grow”^{f364}; signifying, that the wicked should be utterly destroyed, they and theirs; and that such as were of another family, and as it were of another earth and country, should stand in their place; (see ^{<182716>}Job 27:16,17); this may be interpreted of good men, who, though they die, others are raised up in their stead; God will have a seed to serve him as long as the sun and moon endure; though they are forced to fly from their native place, being persecuted, to strange cities, or removed into the heavenly regions, yet God raises up others to till up their places, and oftentimes out of other families, even of the ungodly, to support his cause and interest; and understanding the whole of truly righteous persons seems best to connect the sense with the following words.

Ver. 20. *Behold, God will not cast away a perfect [man]*, etc.] A sincere, upright, good man; one that is truly gracious; who, though he is not “perfect” in himself, yet in Christ; and though not with respect to sanctification, which is as yet imperfect in him, yet with respect to justification, being perfectly justified by the righteousness of Christ, and all his sins pardoned for his sake: such an one God will never “cast away”; not out of his sight, being engraven on the palms of his hands, nor out of his heart’s love; or will not “loath”^{f365} him, as the Targum, or reject him with abhorrence and contempt; he will not cast him out of his covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure; nor out of the hands of his son, where he has put him, and from whence none can pluck; nor out of his family, where the son abides for ever; or so as to perish eternally, this would be contrary to his love, to his foreknowledge, and to his covenant; so far is he from it, that he has the greatest regard for such, delights in them, admits thereto nearness to himself, sets them as a seal on his heart, keeps them as the apple of his eye, and preserves them safe to his kingdom and glory:

neither will he help the evil doers; meaning, not everyone that does evil, or sins, but such who live in sin, make a trade of sinning, are frequent and

constant in the commission of it; such God will not help, or “take by the hand”^{f366}, in order to deliver from evil, as Gersom observes; to help them out of mischief and trouble their sins have brought upon them; or to strengthen them, support and uphold them, in their present circumstances, and much less so as to admit them to fellowship and communion with him: these words, with what follow, are Bildad’s conclusion upon the sayings and sentiments of the ancients, which may be supposed, and are thought by some, to end at the preceding (^{ⓀⓀⓀ}Job 8:19).

Ver. 21. *Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing.*] Directing himself to Job; and suggesting, that if he was a perfect, sincere, and upright man. God would not cast him away utterly, but help him out of his present circumstances, and restore him to prosperity; and not leave him until he had filled his heart with so much joy, that his mouth and lips, being also full of it, should break forth in strong expressions of it, and in the most exulting strains, as if it was a time of jubilee with him; (see ^{ⓀⓀⓀ}Psalm 126:2); but Bildad tacitly insinuates that Job was not a perfect and good man but an evil doer, whom God had cast away and would not help; and this he concluded from the distressed circumstances he was now in; which was no rule of judgment, and a very unfair way of reasoning, since love and hatred are not to be known by outward prosperity and adversity, (^{ⓀⓀⓀ}Ecclesiastes 9:1). Bar Tzemach interprets “laughing” as at his own goodness, and “rejoicing” as at the evil of the wicked.

Ver. 22. *They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame,* etc.] The Chaldeans and Sabeans, who had plundered him of his substance, when they should see him restored to his former prosperity, beyond all hope and expectation, and themselves liable to his resentment, and under the displeasure of Providence: the phrase denotes utter confusion, and such as is visible as the clothes upon a man’s back; (see ^{ⓀⓀⓀ}Psalm 132:18);

and the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to naught; or, “shall not be”^{f367}; shall be no more; be utterly destroyed, and no more built up again; even such dwelling places they fancied would continue for ever, and perpetuate their names to the latest posterity; but the curse of God being in them, and upon them, they come to nothing, and are no more: thus ends Bildad’s speech; Job’s answer to it follows.