

**Job 17-18**  
**June 21, 2026**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: Bildad describes the wicked's destruction using language that mirrors Job's own experiences, then concludes such things happen to those who don't know God. It almost feels like Bildad is implying that Job perhaps doesn't know God. And if you were Job, how would you respond to an offensive judgment like that? It's like a friend potentially suggesting you must not be a Christian.

**Transition:** There's a difference between saying "the wicked will suffer" versus saying "anyone who is suffering is wicked." Making this distinction is critical when we are called to comfort the suffering. And poor Job feels his friends have become hostile mockers, and he believes God has made him an object of ridicule. His friends hold the assumption he is suffering because of wickedness. So Job will appeal to God to "accept a pledge" for him—essentially asking Him to vouch for his integrity.

Let's continue the journey with Job as he wrestles with his emotional and spiritual state alongside his friends' increasingly rigid theology. Let's begin.

**BOOK:**

17 My spirit is broken,  
my days are cut short,  
the grave awaits me.  
2 Surely mockers surround me;  
my eyes must dwell on their hostility.  
3 "Give me, O God, the pledge you demand.  
Who else will put up security for me?  
4 You have closed their minds to understanding;  
therefore you will not let them triumph.  
5 If a man denounces his friends for reward,  
the eyes of his children will fail.  
6 "God has made me a byword to everyone,  
a man in whose face people spit.  
7 My eyes have grown dim with grief;  
my whole frame is but a shadow.  
8 Upright men are appalled at this;  
the innocent are aroused against the ungodly.  
9 Nevertheless, the righteous will hold to their ways,  
and those with clean hands will grow stronger.  
10 "But come on, all of you, try again!  
I will not find a wise man among you.  
11 My days have passed, my plans are shattered,  
and so are the desires of my heart.  
12 These men turn night into day;

in the face of darkness they say, 'Light is near.'

<sup>13</sup> If the only home I hope for is the grave,  
if I spread out my bed in darkness,

<sup>14</sup> if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,'  
and to the worm, 'My mother' or 'My sister,'

<sup>15</sup> where then is my hope?

Who can see any hope for me?

<sup>16</sup> Will it go down to the gates of death?

Will we descend together into the dust?"

### *Bildad*

**18** Then Bildad the Shuhite replied:

<sup>2</sup> "When will you end these speeches?

Be sensible, and then we can talk.

<sup>3</sup> Why are we regarded as cattle  
and considered stupid in your sight?

<sup>4</sup> You who tear yourself to pieces in your anger,  
is the earth to be abandoned for your sake?

Or must the rocks be moved from their place?

<sup>5</sup> "The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out;  
the flame of his fire stops burning.

<sup>6</sup> The light in his tent becomes dark;  
the lamp beside him goes out.

<sup>7</sup> The vigor of his step is weakened;  
his own schemes throw him down.

<sup>8</sup> His feet thrust him into a net  
and he wanders into its mesh.

<sup>9</sup> A trap seizes him by the heel;  
a snare holds him fast.

<sup>10</sup> A noose is hidden for him on the ground;  
a trap lies in his path.

<sup>11</sup> Terrors startle him on every side  
and dog his every step.

<sup>12</sup> Calamity is hungry for him;  
disaster is ready for him when he falls.

<sup>13</sup> It eats away parts of his skin;  
death's firstborn devours his limbs.

<sup>14</sup> He is torn from the security of his tent  
and marched off to the king of terrors.

<sup>15</sup> Fire resides (*Nothing he had remains*) in his tent;  
burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling.

<sup>16</sup> His roots dry up below  
and his branches wither above.

<sup>17</sup> The memory of him perishes from the earth;  
he has no name in the land.

<sup>18</sup> He is driven from light into darkness

and is banished from the world.

<sup>19</sup> He has no offspring or descendants among his people,  
no survivor where once he lived.

<sup>20</sup> Men of the west are appalled at his fate;  
men of the east are seized with horror.

<sup>21</sup> Surely such is the dwelling of an evil man;  
such is the place of one who knows not God.”

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

**Hold on to hope when life seems dark.** In Job 17, Job feels helpless and overwhelmed, yet he continues bringing his pain before God instead of walking away from Him. When circumstances seem bleak, keep talking to God honestly. Faith is not pretending everything is fine; it is continuing to seek God even when you don't understand what He is doing.

**Let truth shape your words.** Bildad speaks many true things about the fate of the wicked (Job 18), but he applies those truths incorrectly to Job. Even biblical truth can be harmful when used without wisdom, humility, and love. Before speaking to someone in pain, consider not only whether your words are true, but whether they are timely and compassionate.

### **Close in Prayer**

### **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

***Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). Be Patient. (pp. 62-70) Victor Books***

***A plea for death (Job 17:1–16).*** One reason Job wanted his heavenly Advocate to act quickly was because he sensed that death was very near, “the journey of no return” (Job 16:22, NIV). When people suffer so much that their “spirit is broken” (17:1, NIV, NASB), then they lose their “fight” and want life to end.

Job's friends were against him and would not go to court and “post bond” for him (vv. 3–5). People treated Job as if he were the scum of the earth (v. 6). His body was only the shadow of what it had been (v. 7), and all of his plans had been shattered (v. 11). His friends would not

change their minds and come to his defense (v. 10). In fact, they would not face his situation honestly, but they kept telling him that the light would soon dawn for him (v. 12). Is it any wonder that Job saw in death the only way of escape?

However, at no time did Job ever consider taking his own life or asking someone else to do it for him. Life is a sacred gift from God, and only God can give it and take it away. On the one hand, Job wanted to live long enough to see himself vindicated; but on the other hand, he didn't know how much more he could endure. Once he was in Sheol, the realm of the dead, he could not be vindicated on earth unless God brought him back.

Job pictured Sheol as his home, where he would lie down in the darkness and be at rest (v. 13). Since he had no family, he would adopt the pit (or "corruption") as his father and the devouring worm as his mother or sister. They would give him more comfort than his friends!

But would there be any hope in the grave? Could Job take his hope with him to Sheol? Paul answers the question: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:19–20, NKJV). *Our hope does not die, nor is it buried and left to decay; for our hope is a "living hope" because Christ has won the victory over death and the grave!* Christians sorrow, but they must not sorrow "as others who have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13).

God did not answer Job's plea for death because He had something far better planned for him. God looked beyond Job's depression and bitterness and saw that he still had faith. When I was a young pastor, I heard an experienced saint say, "I have lived long enough to be thankful for unanswered prayer." At the time, I was shocked by the statement; but now that I have lived a few more years myself, I know what she was talking about. In the darkness of despair and the prison of pain, we often say things that we later regret; *but God understands all about it and lovingly turns a deaf ear to our words but a tender eye to our wounds.*

If only the next speaker would have expressed compassion to this hurting man! But Bildad is all primed to frighten Job out of his wits with the most vivid pictures of death found anywhere in Scripture.

## INTERLUDE

The best way to help discouraged and hurting people is to listen with your heart and not just with your ears. It's not what they say but *why they say it* that is important. Let them know that you understand their pain by reflecting back to them *in different words* just what they say to you. Don't argue or try to convince them with logical reasoning. There will be time for that later; meanwhile, patiently accept their feelings—even their bitter words against God—and build bridges, not walls.

In his book about his wife's death, *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis wrote from his own painful experience: "Talk to me about the truth of religion, and I'll listen gladly. Talk to me about the duty of religion, and I'll listen submissively. But don't come talking to me about the consolation of religion, or I shall suspect you don't understand" (p. 23).

There is true consolation in our faith, but it is not dispensed in convenient doses like cough medicine. *It can be shared only by those who know what it's like to be so far down in the pit that*

*they feel as though God has abandoned them.* If you want to be a true comforter, there is a price to pay; and not everybody is willing to pay it. Paul wrote about this in 2 Corinthians 1:3–11. John Henry Jowett said, “God does not comfort us to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters.” God’s comfort is never *given*; it is always *loaned*. God expects us to share it with others.

## **JOB 18–19**

*“Death is the great adventure, beside which moon landings and space trips pale into insignificance.”*

### **Joseph Bayly**

*Will the Real Enemy Please Stand Up?*

Bildad opened his second speech with the same words he used in his first speech: “How long?” (Job 18:2; 8:2) and Job said the same thing when he replied (19:2). The friends were growing impatient with each other because their conversation seemed to be getting nowhere. George Bernard Shaw compared the average conversation to “a phonograph with half-a-dozen records—you soon get tired of them all.”

Bildad blamed Job for the stalemate and admonished him, “Be sensible, and then we can talk” (18:2, NIV). It never dawned on Bildad that he and his two friends were playing the same tunes over and over again: (1) God is just; (2) God punishes the wicked and blesses the righteous; (3) since Job is suffering, he must be wicked; (4) if he turns from his sins, God will again bless him. They were going around in circles.

Bildad said that Job was not being sensible, nor was he being respectful. He was treating his friends like dumb cattle instead of like the wise men they really were (v. 3). Job was also being irritable and displaying anger instead of humility (v. 4). “Is God supposed to rearrange the whole world just for you?” Bildad asks. “Should He ravage the land with war or even send an earthquake just because of you?” Eliphaz wasn’t the only one who knew how to use sarcasm! However, Bildad planned to use a stronger weapon than sarcasm. His weapon was *fear*. If the three friends could not reason with Job, or shame Job into repenting, perhaps they could frighten Job by describing what happens when wicked people die.

Before we study Bildad’s terrifying speech, we should note that fear is a normal human emotion and there is nothing wrong with it. We use the fear of sickness, injury, or death to teach children to wash their hands, stay away from power lines, and look carefully before crossing the street. Fear of financial loss motivates people to buy insurance, and fear of death encourages them to have an annual physical checkup.

Fear of death (and the judgment that follows) is a legitimate motive for trusting Jesus Christ and being saved. “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul,” said Jesus. “But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28, NKJV). Jesus preached a gracious message of love, but He also preached a stern message of judgment. Paul wrote, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). When Jonathan Edwards preached his sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” he did not

violate any psychological or biblical principles. The emotions of nonbelievers must be stirred before their minds can be instructed and their wills challenged.

However, Bildad made two mistakes when he gave this speech about the horrors of death. To begin with, he preached it to the wrong man; for Job was already a believer (Job 1:1, 8). Second, he preached it with the wrong motive, for there was no love in his heart. Dr. R.W. Dale, the British preacher, once asked evangelist D.L. Moody if he ever used “the element of terror” in his preaching. Moody replied that he usually preached one sermon on heaven and one on hell in each of his campaigns, but that a “man’s heart ought to be very tender” when preaching about the doom of the lost. Bildad did not have a tender heart.

### **1. The terrors of death (Job 18:5–21)**

In this address, Bildad painted four vivid pictures of the death of the wicked.

*A light put out (Job 18:5–6).* Light is associated with life just as darkness is associated with death. Since God is the author of life, He alone can “light our lamp”; for “He gives to all life, breath, and all things,” and “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28, NKJV). The picture here is that of a lamp hanging in a tent and a fire smoldering in a fire pot. Suddenly, the lamp goes out, and the last spark of the fire vanishes, and the tent is in total darkness (Prov. 13:9; 24:20).

Like the flame of the lamp or the spark in the coals, life is a precious but delicate thing. It doesn’t take a very strong wind to blow it out. “There is but a step between me and death” (1 Sam. 20:3). The American newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst would never permit anybody to mention death in his presence. Yet on August 14, 1951, the flame of his life went out, and he died. “The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord” (Prov. 20:27), and God can blow out that lamp whenever He pleases.

*A traveler trapped (Job 18:7–10).* Frightened, the man leaves his tent and starts down the road, looking for a place of safety. But the road turns out to be the most dangerous place of all, for it is punctuated by traps. Bildad used six different words to describe the dangers people face when they try to run away from death:

*a net*—spread across the path to catch him

*a snare*—branches covering a deep pit

*a trap*—a “gin” (snare) with a noose that springs when touched; he is caught by the heel

*a robber*—another pitfall

*a snare*—a noose hidden on the ground

*a trap*—any device that catches prey

These devices were used to catch birds and animals, not people; but the wicked person is like a beast because he has left God out of his life.

No matter what schemes the traveler invents, he cannot escape the traps; and the more he tries, the weaker he becomes (Job 18:7). Darkness and danger surround him, and there is no hope.

*A criminal pursued (Job 18:11–15).* Death is “the king of terrors” (v. 14), determined to arrest the culprit no matter where he is. If the escaped criminal runs on the path and escapes the traps,

then death will send some of his helpers to chase him. Terror frightens him, calamity eats away at his strength, and disaster waits for him to fall (vv. 11–12, NIV).

The frightened criminal gets weaker and weaker but still tries to keep going. If he goes back to his tent to hide, the pursuers find him, arrest him, drag him out, and take him to the king of terrors. They take everything out of his tent, burn the tent, and then scatter sulfur over the ashes. The end of that man is fire and brimstone!

*A tree rooted up (Job 18:16–21).* Sometimes death is not as dramatic and sudden as the arresting of a criminal. Death may be gradual, like the dying of a tree. The roots dry up, the branches start to wither, and the dead branches are cut off one by one. Soon the tree is completely dead, and men chop it down. The death of a tree illustrates the extinction of a family, a “family tree.” Not only is the wicked man himself cut down, but all the branches are cut down too; and he leaves no descendants to carry on his name. (Remember, all of Job’s children had been killed by the great wind.) In the East, the extinction of a family was viewed as a great tragedy.

Job had used a tree as an illustration of the hope of resurrection (14:7–11), but Bildad did not agree with him. According to Bildad, once the tree is down, that is the end; the wicked man has no future hope.

Though Bildad was talking to the wrong man and with the wrong motive, what he said about death should be taken seriously. Death is an enemy to be feared by all who are not prepared to die (1 Cor. 15:26), and the only way to be prepared is to trust Jesus Christ (John 5:24). For the Christian believer, death means going home to the Father in heaven (John 14:1–6), falling asleep on earth and waking up in heaven (Acts 7:60; Phil. 1:21–23), entering into rest (Rev. 14:13), and moving into greater light (Prov. 4:18). None of the pictures Bildad used should be applied to those who have trusted the Lord for salvation.

**Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 739-740) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

16:22–17:2. Since Job thought his life was drawing to a close (**only a few years.... my days are cut short**; cf. 7:6, 9; 9:25–26; 10:20; 14:1–2, 5; 17:11), with death being final (**no return**; cf. 7:9; 10:21; 14:12), he needed an intercessor’s help right away. He was depressed (**my spirit is broken**), for all he could see around him with his tear-filled **eyes** (cf. 16:16, 20; 17:7) were his friends (whom he called **mockers!**) with **their hostility**.

17:3–5. Though God was against him (cf. 16:7–9, 11–14), only **God** could provide a **pledge** for him in court, a bond given to the defendant as a guarantee that no advantage would be taken against him. To **put up security** is literally, “to strike hands,” a practice by which an agreement was ratified (cf. Prov. 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 22:26). This arrangement with God was necessary since Job’s cohorts were mindless of his innocence and even denounced him, hoping to gain some **reward** for supposedly defending God. Such faithless friendship meant that instead of a reward, judgment might come on their **children** in the form of blindness.

**d. Job’s dilemma (17:6–16)**

17:6–9. Job’s wish for a court spokesman and for bail from God was followed by another expression of hope and then a note of pathos. People sneered at him, speaking of him in a **byword** (lit., “a proverb”; cf. 30:9), and they spat (cf. 30:10) on his **face**, a most insulting, abhorrent act. So intense was his **grief** (*ka’as*, “agitation”; cf. 5:2, “resentment”; 6:2, “anguish”; 10:17, “anger”) that even his eyesight was dimmed, possibly by tears (cf. **eyes** in 16:16, 20; 17:2, 5), and he was emaciated (a **shadow**; cf. 16:8).

Anyone who was **upright** and **innocent** would be **appalled at** (cf. 18:20) such outlandish treatment of Job. By this Job implied that his disputants were *not* upright. Even so, he would **hold to** and even grow in his convictions, certain of his **righteous** position before God.

17:10–16. Job sarcastically challenged the trio to **try again** to find some wrongdoing in him, but he knew they could not, partly because they were **not ... wise** (cf. 12:2). His life was fading and his **plans** and **desires** were unfulfilled, even though the friends had held out hope to him (by appealing for his repentance). However, such hope of restoration, saying **light** was coming (cf. Zophar’s words in 11:17–18) was unrealistic. Job thought his only **hope** was **the grave** where there is **darkness** (cf. 10:21–22) and **corruption by the worm** (cf. 21:26; 24:20) which would be closer to him in the tomb than his dearest relatives. As Job had said three times before (6:11; 7:6; 14:19), he had no **hope** of ever recovering. The hope they held out to him would vanish with him in the grave.

### 3. **bildad’s second speech (chap. 18)**

Bildad repeated many themes his senior had spoken (chap. 15; see Roy B. Zuck, *Job*, pp. 81–2 for details). In describing the wicked’s fate Bildad emphasized their being trapped (18:8–10). Also he spoke of their experiencing calamity (vv. 11–12); being diseased (v. 13); and losing serenity (v. 11), possessions (vv. 14–16), and fame (vv. 17–18). Such a fate, Bildad implied, awaited Job.

#### *a. His denunciation of Job (18:1–4)*

18:1–4. Indignant at Job’s insolent words, **Bildad** berated him. Job had expressed surprise that Eliphaz attacked him a second time (16:3), but Bildad wondered when Job would stop talking. The first line of 18:2 is literally, “How long (cf. ‘How long’ in 8:2) will you hunt for words?” (cf. 18:2, NASB) Later Job came back with the same, “How long?” (19:2) Job had said Bildad and the others were not wise (17:10), but Bildad replied that *Job* was the one who was not **sensible**. Job had said **stupid** animals had more know-how than his advisers (12:7–9), but Bildad resented such strong language. Job had said God tore at him in His anger (16:9), but Bildad responded that Job was tearing *himself* by *his* **anger**. How could Job expect God to alter reality for *his* sake? Would everything give way to him, as if he were the only man on **earth**? Would God bend His ways just for Job, removing even firm things such as **rocks**? (Cf. Job’s words in 14:18 about a rock.)

#### *b. His description of the fate of the wicked (18:5–21)*

18:5–12. Bildad, with Job in mind, gave a ruthless account of the misfortunes that come on **the wicked**. His **lamp**, burning in his house and symbolizing life and prosperity (cf. 21:17; Prov. 13:9; 20:20), goes **out**, plunging him into total darkness and confusion. He is **weakened**

physically, defeated by his boomeranging **schemes**. In fact, dangers await him like **a net** (for catching birds; cf. Prov. 1:17) and **its mesh** (the covering over a pit), **a trap**, **a snare ... a noose ... on the ground**, and **a trap ... in his path**. Here Bildad used six Hebrew words for traps, more synonyms for these objects than in any other Old Testament passage. Whatever Job would do, Bildad affirmed, would ultimately ensnare him. So Job would be terrified wherever he turned (cf. **terror[s]** in Job 9:34; 13:21), with **calamity** and **disaster ... ready** to pounce on him **when he fell**.

18:13–21. Bildad’s reference to a sinner’s **skin** being eaten **away** obviously alludes to Job’s skin problem. Diseases are **death’s** children for they serve death; so death’s **firstborn** meant the worst of those diseases. **Torn from ... his tent**, as Job was (cf. “tent[s]” in 4:21; 8:22; 15:34; 21:28), the reprobate is **marched off to the king of terrors**, that is, death. The houses of the wicked are burned and their security is gone. (Bildad’s references to **roots** and **branches** recall his comments on botany in 8:11–19; cf. Job’s words in 14:8 and Eliphaz’s in 15:32.) No one remembers a wicked person who is in **darkness** (cf. 12:25; 15:30; 18:5–6), **banished**, and with no **descendants** to carry on his name, a terrible fate in the Middle East.

Job had said upright people would be appalled at his condition (17:8), but Bildad retorted that people everywhere **are appalled** not so much by the grief of the wicked as by their troubles and horrible end. With a note of finality, Bildad punctuated his point: **An evil man** (*‘awāl*, “an unrighteous person,” used later by Job three times: 27:7; 29:17; 31:3) will get what is coming to him. Amazingly Bildad insinuated that Job did not even know **God**. Since Job refused to repent, how could he possibly be righteous?

**Garrett, D. A. (1998). *The Poetic and Wisdom Books*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 207-208). Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

**Job Laments and Prays (16:1–17:16).** Job vented his frustration over his pain, his confusion about what God had done to him, and his anger at the empty words of his “comforters.” But the careful chiasm (a pattern repeating ideas in inverted order) shows that there is more here than an emotional outburst, and a confession of hope stands at the very center of the whole.

That confession returns to the theme of the heavenly Arbitrator or Intercessor. Job was now certain of the reality of the Intercessor. He had previously only wished that such an Intercessor existed (9:33–34). Job had already far surpassed his friends in the understanding of God’s ways, and his sufferings would drive him deeper still.

**Bildad’s Second Response (18:1–21).** Bildad angrily replied and gave Job another fairly conventional poem on the fate of the wicked (18:5–21). Most significant is the point in 18:20 that men from east and west would be appalled at the fall of the wicked. Surely no one was more famous than Job (1:3), and Bildad here took up Job’s own words (17:8). Bildad’s slightly concealed meaning was that Job had not only sinned but was one of the proverbial wicked. Job’s friends were progressing in bitterness toward him.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job 17-18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**