

August 18, 2024

Job 14:13-17:

Oh That You Would

- I. The First "Oh That You Would."
- II. The Second "Oh That You Would."
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- IV. He Does.

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Dear Friends in Christ,

It was through Malachi that God said, "For I the Lord do not change...(Mal.3:6a)." That was written approximately 2500 years ago. It was around 500 years after Malachi that God said through the writer of Hebrews, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb.13:8)." God does not change with the times; His love, forgiveness of sin and promise of eternal life to those walking with Christ are always there.

But then it hits: the unknowns of life for this fallen world bring great conflict and change. We don't like that! We don't want that! We want to run away from troubles, but we can't. Sometimes we might want to think that David's words apply only to him: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death (Ps.23:4)." However that's where we live; the valley of uncertainties, dying, and death. And the Holy Spirit had Paul say to God's people, "...through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God (Acts14:22)." That's God's Word to His people, then and now! One way or another, we cry out to God . . .

OH THAT YOU WOULD...

I. The First "Oh That You Would."

Here's the first part of the "Oh that you would": "Oh that you would hide me in sheol...(v.13a)." I would be surprised if there is anyone here not familiar with Job. Even many unbelievers are familiar with the account of Job. We remember that before Satan went after Job God said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life (Job 2:6b)."

Even before giving Satan permission to test Job, God asked Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil (1:8)?" Well, we know the journey of Job. We know the questions and concerns he expressed. And we remember the outcome: "And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning (42:12)."

But it's that first part of *Oh that you would* that calls for consideration: "Oh that you would hide me in Sheol." The grave. Have you ever said anything similar to that? Has the thought ever passed your mind in these words: "I wish I was dead?" I recall a dear brother from some years ago who expressed that while in the hospital. He wasn't serious, just tired of the difficulties. He ended up in the Psych Ward - but just for a brief moment.

Jeremiah, in the midst of persecution, cried out: "Why did I come out from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame (Jer. 10:18)." Has the thought ever passed through your mind: "I wish I had never been born?"

It was David who cried out: "Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. And I say, 'Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yes, I would wander far away; I would lodge in the wilderness; I would hurry to find shelter from the raging wind and tempest (Ps.55:5-8)." Has the thought ever passed through your mind in these words: "I just want to run away and hide?"

You see, Job, David, and Jeremiah, among a multitude, faced the sorrows and sufferings of life. The Lord had their innermost thoughts and words written down for us. God does hear us. He listens. He understands.

II. The Second "Oh That You Would."

Here's the second "Oh that you would": "Oh that you would...conceal me until your wrath is past..." What's important about that statement is that God was not angry with Job. What's important is the fact that though we struggle with sin, for the sake of Christ God loves us and forgives us

As always, we want to note the words, "though we struggle with sin." There is a difference between the struggle with sin and purposely pursuing what is wrong with the thought that it's okay because God will forgive. Sadly, we sin. It hurts. But a broken and contrite heart will not be despised by the Lord. And remember these words; 'For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives (Heb.12:6)."

Our comfort is found in the words of Jeremiah: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer.13:34b)." And with that this promise for those in Christ; "He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities...(Ps.103:10)."

III. The Third "Oh That You Would."

Here's the third "Oh that you would.": "Oh that you would...appoint for me a set time, and remember me!" Job echoes thoughts most have expressed in such words as, "When is this going to end? Has God forgotten me?"

More than likely, most everything Job said has poured out of the heart of every child of God. The tensions, the fears, the concerns and unknowns are always in front of us. We can run but we can't hide. After all, this is a fallen world. Troubles don't go away, but, of course, neither does God's Word; specifically this:

Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands (Is.49:15-16a).

Engraved! Permanently there - in God's hands!

IV. He Does.

And so, the "Oh that you would..." is answered: He does! Job says,

If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come. You would call, and I would answer you; you would long for the work of your hands. For then you would number my steps; you would not keep watch over my sin; my transgressions would be sealed up in a bag, and you would cover my iniquity (vv.14-17).

Everything Job speaks here is answered in the affirmative. Yes, we shall live again. As Scriptures promise, "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rm.6:23)."

Yes, our renewal will begin here and will be fulfilled in eternal heaven. As Paul writes, "The first man (Adam) was from earth, a man of dust; the second man (Jesus) is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as the man of heaven, so are those of heaven (that is, those who believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sin and eternal life) (I Cor.15:47,48)."

Yes, God longs for us. If he had not, then why did God send His Son to willingly suffer and die to cancel the debt of our sin and give us salvation? David says, "How precious are your thoughts, O God! How vast the sum of them (Ps.139:1)." God's thoughts are always on His people. The Scriptures teach, "we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1b)."

Yes, He numbers our steps, as Scriptures teach: "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps (Prov.16:9). And this most wondrous truth to carry with us each day: "All the days formed for me were written in your book when as yet there was none of them (Ps.139:15)." He's already in our tomorrow's!

At the beginning of this sermon I referred to Psalm 23, the first words of verse 4. Here's the entire verse, "Even though I walk through the valley of shadow and death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." The shepherd's rod protects and wards off predators. The staff keeps the flock in check; helps to keep the flock from wondering away.

As a rod the Word gives us what we need and must know in our battle with Satan, and we must know this Word: "Be sober minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (I Pt. 5:8)." The Word is a rod that can ward off Satan, the great predator. As a staff, the Word and Sacraments comfort us, assure us of God's love. The Law reminds of what we should do and not do to live a God pleasing and stable life. The Gospel comforts and assures us of God's love, forgiveness and promise of eternal life in Christ. It's what the Scriptures say, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path (Ps.119:105). And this: The Gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...(Rm.1:16)."

And all of this lifts us from this world of growing sorrows and death to these most wondrous and powerful truths expressed by Job:

For I know that my redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom
I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another; My heart
faints within me! (Job 19:25-27).

It's not "Oh That You would...". **HE HAS!**

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott