

Job 14:13-17

Dear Friends in Christ,

There's that statement God makes as recorded in Malachi: "I the Lord do not change." That's good, isn't it? What God says of Himself in Scripture is sure and without change. His love, forgiveness, promises for help and comfort are always there.

But, as we see it, when it comes to the unknowns of life - well - those can cause us deep conflict. Do you know what I mean? You're going through a very difficult time of life and the outcome isn't there. You know God knows the outcome. You know the Scripture: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28) But, still, there's the *what about what's to come*; the impatience connected with wanting to get out of a mess. Have you been there?

We might echo the words of Job . . .

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..." (vs. 13a)

I would be surprised if there was anyone here not familiar with Job. Even unbelievers are familiar with the account - or, as they call it, "the story" - of Job. It wasn't that long ago when he was the subject of a sermon. And before God allowed Satan to do whatever Satan wanted to do with him God said "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life." (Job 2:6b)

And what's remarkable are these words God spoke to Satan prior to the testing: "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 what he went through. We know the questions and concerns he had about God, at moments. And we remember the final outcome: "And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning." (Job 42:12)

But it's that first part of the "Oh that you would..." that gives us pause. "Oh that you would hide me in Sheol." The grave. Have you ever said anything like that? Has the thought ever passed your mind in these words: "I wish I was dead."?

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. 20:18) Has the thought ever passed your mind in these words: "I wish I hadn't been born."?

And David 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 your mind in these words: "I just want to run away and hide."?

You see? Three of God's greats faced the sufferings and sorrows of life. The Holy Spirit records their innermost words and thoughts for us. God does hear us. He does listen. And He does understand.

II. The Second "Oh that you would."

But look at the second part to the "Oh that you would": "Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past...". What's important about this statement is the fact that God was not angry with Job. And what's important about this statement for us is the fact that even though we struggle with sin, for the sake of Christ God forgives and loves us.

Please note, I said “though we struggle with sin.” There’s a difference between the struggle, the constant battle, the sins that are always there - there’s a difference between that and purposely, maliciously, knowingly pursuing what is wrong with the thought that it’s okay because God will forgive!

Job’s comfort, as well as yours and mine, is rooted in this Word of God: “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:34b) 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.”

And that brings us to the third “Oh that you would.”: “Oh that you would...appoint for me a set time, and remember me!” Job echoes thoughts most of us have expressed in such words as, “When is this going to end?” - and - “Has God forgotten me?”

Everything Job says has, more than likely, poured out of the heart of every child of God. The tensions, the fears, concerns, unknowns are always in front of us. You can run all you want, but you can’t get away from them. They don’t go away. But, then, 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! Carved! Permanently there - in God’s hands!

IV. Oh, He Does!

And then, these words from our text:

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 transgression would be sealed up in a bag, and you would cover over my iniquity. (vss. 14-17)

Everything Job speaks here is answered in the affirmative. Yes, we shall live again. As Jesus promised, “whoever believes...has eternal life.” (Jn. 3:16) As the Holy Spirit impresses upon us: “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 6:23)

Yes, our renewal will begin when we enter eternal life. And the fulness of that will be realized at the resurrection of our bodies. As Paul writes, “The first man (Adam) was from the 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 also are those who are 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 did not, then why would God the Son willingly suffer hell and death for our sin and salvation? David says, “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast the sum of them!” (Ps. 139:17) That is to say, God’s thoughts are always on His people in Christ. 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 we should carry with us day by day (and I’m quoting this from the “old” NIV translation): “All the days ordained for me were written in the your book before one of them came to be.” (Ps. 139:16)

And, yes, He does not hold our sin against us - “keep watch over sin”. Our transgressions have been sealed up in a bag. Our iniquity is covered. The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. David says, “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity.” (Ps. 32:1-2a)

And so, Job cries out, “Oh, that you would...”. And, oh, He does. He does everything for broken, miserable sinners such as you and me. He redeems us. Purchases us for Himself through the Blood of Christ. Removes the guilt of our sin. Grants us eternal life.

And isn't it most significant that five chapters later Job would write these most powerful and comforting words:

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus 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)

This world is full of unpleasant moments. All the rose colored glasses in the world won't change the suffering, conflicts, war, sorrow, disease, disappointment, dying and death every human must endure. These are not “natural” events. They are the result of human sin. But, glory be to God, in Christ God has lifted us from this world and granted us the world to come.

We learn much from Job. We learn what we love to hear: “God so loved the world” us.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

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- II. *The Second “Oh that you would.”*
- III. *The Third “Oh that you would.”*
- IV. *Oh, He does!*

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