

JOB'S EPITAPH

Job 19:25-27

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This morning as we celebrate the resurrection of Christ, I want to look at the doctrine of resurrection from an Old Testament passage that has always intrigued me. The text is Job 19:25-27. I believe this is probably the oldest text in the canon dealing with the subject of bodily resurrection. It's certainly one of the earliest and most profound confessions of faith in the whole Bible.

(If you have trouble finding the book of Job, it's just before the book of Psalms in the order of the canon--and you can easily find Psalms, of course, by opening to the very center of your Bible. Then just turn a few pages backward till you find Job. Job 19, starting in verse 25.)

Let me read the text, and the thing to notice as I read it is that Job is in extreme agony. Satan is sifting him like wheat. Job was, according to Job 1:8, "a blameless and upright man, who fear[ed] God and turn[ed] away from evil." He was "blameless" in the sense that he was a justified man--a believer--who feared God, hated evil, and lived an upright life. The text isn't suggesting that Job was sinless, because Scripture clearly teaches that no one is sinless. But he was a believer, and therefore *counted* perfectly righteous in the sight of God, and he lived his life as a faithful man in submission to God.

In fact, in that same verse (Job 1:8), God himself acknowledges Job's uprightness and testified that there was "none like him in the earth."

The devil's response was full of evil cynicism (Job 1:9-10): "Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side?" So Satan sought and obtained permission to put Job to the test to see if he would still glorify God if he lost every earthly blessing God had given him. Satan then unleashed wave after wave of personal assaults against Job. In a single day, Job's flocks and herds and his herdsmen all perished in what sounds like a violent volcanic eruption; His camels were captured and stolen by some regiments of marauding Chaldeans. And while Job was still receiving the report that everything he valued was being destroyed or taken from him, he

got news that the house where his sons and daughters had gathered to hold a celebration had been destroyed by a rogue wind, and his children were now dead. Everything he had was instantly taken from him in a single day.

Job's famous response to all that disaster was an affirmation of God's righteousness. Job 1:21: "He said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.'" Then Job 1 closes with these amazing words: "In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong."

Still, despite everything Job had suffered, it wasn't enough for the devil. So in chapter 2, Satan shows up in the court of God, still cynical and still burning with hatred for Job. And he wants to up the ante (Job 2:4-5): "Then Satan answered the LORD and said, 'Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.'" So verses 7-8 say Satan "struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes." So (v. 11) three of Job's friends "made an appointment together to come to show him sympathy and comfort him." And you know the story: As comforters, these three guys were seriously lame, and their counsel was so bad and so judgmental that it only added to Job's sufferings. Chapter 2 closes with an understatement (v. 13) "[Job's] suffering was very great."

Now with that as background, we turn to our text, starting in chapter 19, verse 25. Job is well into his trial at this point. Disease and disaster have caused his body to waste away to virtually nothing. He literally looks like skin and bones, and he feels like the only thing left intact in his body is the surface of his teeth. Verse 20: "My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth." The counsel of his friends has been so hurtful to him that he feels as if they view him as an enemy (v. 19): "All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me." He pleads with them for pity (v. 21): "Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me! Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?" That's a common Hebrew expression ("not satisfied with my flesh"). It means their

accusations against him are slanderous. As if they weren't satisfied to see his body destroyed, they were trying to destroy his reputation as well. At least that's what it felt like to Job.

This is unimaginable sorrow, the distilled essence of every conceivable kind of human anguish--pure misery, physical pain, unrelenting grief, the deepest kind of emotional distress, and on top of that, Job had to endure cruel barbs and accusations from these unbelievably insensitive friends who hadn't a clue what was in Job's heart--but they were certain he must be hiding some gross evil secret. By now Job had reached the deepest, most distressing point in his trials. A person of lesser faith might have contemplated suicide, or turned against God, since it seemed clear to everyone from an earthly perspective that God was already against him. In fact, isn't that the counsel Job's own wife gave him? Job 2:9: "Curse God and die."

And yet, in the midst of a heartbreaking plea for pity, Job utters one of the most amazing, triumphant, definitive expressions of ultimate assurance ever recorded anywhere. What Job affirms here, I believe, is the very core and the marrow of faith itself. The juxtaposition of eternal hope alongside human agony is what makes *authentic* faith different from temporary faith, hypocritical piety, phony self-righteousness, and every other type of counterfeit religion. Nowhere is the triumph of true faith sounded with a clearer note than in our text. And it is not without significance that the truth that becomes an anchor for Job in all his suffering is the promise of bodily resurrection.

Listen to what he says (Job 19:25-27):

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth.

26 And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,

27 whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. [and then he punctuates that confession of faith with another expression of the agony he was feeling at that moment] My heart faints within me!

Perhaps I should mention that when I say this is one of the earliest credos in the Bible, I'm speaking in chronological terms. I'm not talking about how far it is from the front cover. Based on clues in the text itself, the story told in the book of Job clearly pertains to

one of the earliest eras of human history--the patriarchal period, or perhaps even earlier.

In other words, Job seems to have lived during the time of Abraham or before. That seems clear from the fact that according to Job 42:16, Job lived for more than 140 years *after* suffering all the trials described in the book of Job. That was a typical lifespan in Abraham's time. Abraham himself was 175 years old when he died, and that would have been considered a *short* lifetime by most of Abraham's ancestors. Abraham's father lived 205 years, and his great grandfather, great-great grandfather, and great-great-great grandfather each lived between 230 and 240 years. Go back a generation earlier, and Abraham's fourth great-grandfather lived 464 years. He even outlived Abraham.

But you see a clear, steady pattern of decline in the human lifespan after the flood, extending from Noah to the time of Moses. Moses was 120 when he died, according to Deuteronomy 34:7. But Moses wrote Psalm 90, and in Psalm 90:10, he said, "The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty." And ever since the time of Moses, the typical human lifespan has been about that--70 or 80 years (give or take a few decades based on the health and hygiene of the culture we live in).

So if you take the trajectory of human life-spans as a clue by which we can date the life of Job, he seems to have lived during Abraham's era, and he may have even been born a hundred years or more before Abraham.

Furthermore, it is significant that Job carried out the priestly function in his own family, according to Job 1:5. That's something no believer would have done after the time of the Exodus. As a matter of fact, Job's story gives us the clearest picture of patriarchal religion--devoid of any institutionalized ceremony and ritual, without priesthood or temple--but with a burnt offering at the heart of it. Job 42:8 describes the kind of sacrifice Job made for his family--"seven bulls and seven rams"--so it was a bloody sacrifice, anticipating the Mosaic priesthood, which in turn foreshadowed Christ.

There are many other clues in the book of Job itself that Job was a close contemporary of Abraham and the early patriarchs. For example, his wealth is measured in livestock rather than gold and silver. The Chaldeans are mentioned in chapter 1:17 as marauding nomads rather than city dwellers. So the book of Job

clearly covers a very early period of human history. There's no record of who wrote it, but if it was written close to the events it describes, it *must* be the oldest book in the Bible.

In our text, Job himself is speaking. As we've seen, he is at the very low point of his life. Because Job rejected the bad counsel of his friends, they have basically given up on him, and their accusations are getting more sordid and more insistent. Job himself has in essence given up all hope for this life.

But Job *still* declares his innocence from the kind of wrongdoing his counselors had accused him of. Having given up any hope for survival, he still longs to be vindicated, and his faith is such that he knows he *will* ultimately be vindicated, even though he is (to all human appearances) about to die.

Verses 23-24 are a prelude to Job's confession of faith. It's an emphatic declaration that what he is about to say is of the utmost importance. He wants his words to be noted and recorded and preserved. Verse 23: "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!" He wishes what he is about to say could be memorialized and inlaid in iron on a stone monument--and frankly, I think he was thinking in terms of a gravestone that he wanted erected over his already-withering corpse.

And think about this: Job's plea was answered exceeding abundantly beyond anything he ever imagined--because the words he wanted preserved are recorded for all eternity in a form that will not pass away, even when heaven and earth pass away--because they are now part of "the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Furthermore, the first phrase of Job's confession has literally been inscribed on hundreds of thousands of blocks of granite and engraved in brass letters in countless places, because it's a common epitaph on people's gravestones: "I know that my redeemer liveth."

You recognize, I'm sure, that verse 25 was also adapted by the librettist who compiled the texts for Handel's oratorio *Messiah*. And that is fitting, because it's a text that has clear Messianic significance. It is--it *must* be--a prophetic reference to Christ, and it includes a specific affirmation of bodily resurrection.

Here, then, is a very early expression of Messianic hope, along with an declaration of Job's confidence in the idea of a bodily

resurrection from the dead. Let me read the text once more, this time in the more familiar words of the King James Version (Job 19:25-27):

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:

26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:

27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.

I love old commentaries. In fact, I prefer really old commentaries over most of the ones that are being published today because sometime in the early part of the nineteenth century, commentators began to worry more about sounding scholarly than they did about commenting on the sense of the text. Modernism was just gaining popularity in seminaries and academic conclaves. German rationalism and cold British detachment began to creep into religious scholasticism. And commentators sometimes took on a more and more skeptical tone. For that reason I prefer the older Puritan commentaries. I always like to see what men of God saw in a text before the academic impulse got hold of it.

So I was perusing some of the older public-domain commentaries that you can download for free, and I looked this text up in Adam Clarke's commentary. He was a British Methodist, a follower of John Wesley but about a generation after Wesley. If you can get past his Arminianism, he sometimes has very good observations about the biblical text. But his ministry straddled the 18th and 19th centuries, and he was sometimes beset with that tendency to approach to the text as an academician rather than as a believer. And if I can be candid with you (knowing we have some seminary students who might not like to hear me say this), I think that kind of scholastic approach to Scripture--driven by a concern for impressing academic minds--sometimes makes it hard for an educated individual to see things that are pretty easy to see with the eyes simple, childlike faith.

So anyway, I looked up this passage in Clark's commentary, and here's what he said about it. These are his first words of comment on verse 25 ("I know that my Redeemer liveth"). He writes: "*Any attempt to establish the true meaning of this passage is almost hopeless.*"

Seriously? When I read it just a minute ago, did you have a hard time grasping what Job was saying? When you hear the soprano sing that aria from Handel's *Messiah*, do the words mystify you? The problem is not that the meaning of this text is so obscure--but that the truth it contains is so stunning and so much at the heart of the *Christian* message that someone who approaches the text with academic detachment--or worse, skepticism--finds it hard to believe that someone of Job's era could express so much of the truth we associate with the New Testament. In fact, this text has been deliberately translated in the Jewish Masoretic text in a way that attempts to tone down both the Messianic significance of Job's statement, and the reference to resurrection. A Jewish interpreter would say the text is nothing more than Job's wish for vindication after he dies.

Now, to be fair, this is a difficult passage to translate from the Hebrew, but no matter how you translate it, the meaning is still clear, and there's no way Christians who believe in the inspiration of Scripture should doubt the prophetic significance of this text as a reference to bodily resurrection. Here's a *literal* rendering of the Hebrew: "But as for me, I know that my kinsman lives, and that he will at last stand forth upon the dust. This will happen when my flesh has been stripped off, but in my flesh I will see God."

The King James translators added two nouns in verse 26 to try to make the meaning more clear. It says, "And though after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God." The words *worms* and *body* aren't in the original, but the sense is the same without them. Here's the ESV: "And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God." Now, if Job had died and been buried in the conventional Old Testament manner, worms would soon finish the destruction disease had already unleashed into his body. Job doesn't expressly mention worms. He doesn't have to. It ought to be clear that when his skin was utterly and completely destroyed, he would be dead. He was near death already. And although no help for him was on the immediate horizon, he was very clearly expressing a confident expectation that after his skin was destroyed he would nevertheless see God through real eyes of human flesh.

This is an amazing confession of faith from a man who was already on the cusp of death. His friends had given up on him. His wife had urged *him* to give up on *God*. He had lost every possession

he ever had, and worst of all, it seemed as if God was against him. He didn't know what we know from chapters 1-2, that Satan was sifting and testing him. But God was sustaining Job's faith, so that it did not fail. And this powerful confession is an expression of that divinely-empowered faith. Coming just when we might expect Job to cave in to utter discouragement, it's a powerful statement of confidence and conviction. It's rich with theological implications, full of prophetic understanding, and abounding with the most confident kind of hope.

Whenever I read this text, it reminds me how drastically different biblical theology is from every other religion. Where do you think Job got his knowledge, his confidence, and his perseverance? Those things weren't the product of Job's free will or native intelligence. They were expressions of God's lavish grace to Job. *God* was the one who sustained Job in these horrible trials--the same God "who is able to keep you [and me] from stumbling and to present [us] blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy" (to borrow words from Jude 24). Just like when Satan desired to have Peter in order to sift him like wheat, but Jesus told Peter (in Luke 22:32): "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail." And although Peter's courage failed him, his faith never did--because God answered Christ's prayer and upheld Peter, certainly not because Peter found strength in himself to keep believing. It's painfully obvious that Peter was as weak as me and you. But in the words of Romans 14:4, "The Lord is able to make [us] stand." God does on our behalf what we cannot do for ourselves. That emphasis is the distinctive feature of biblical religion. It's the very thing we mean when we speak of God's grace.

In other words, as Christians we know that truth is revealed by God, not merely "discovered" (and certainly not imagined or made up) by the worshiper. We also know that faith is a gift of God, not a virtue or an energy concocted by us out of our own free will. And we know that perseverance is a work of God, not a fleshly achievement we're left to earn through our own merits.

It was God who revealed these truths to Job. It was God's Spirit who inspired this utterance. One of the facts of divine inspiration is that there is sometimes a depth of meaning in the inspired text that is not fully understood by the human author. Peter says (1 Peter 1:10-12), "The prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what

person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you." How much Job knew about his Redeemer we have no way of knowing. But it is absolutely clear that he understood far more than he could possibly have figured out on his own. He did not *discover* these truths; they were *revealed* to him by God.

And there are three aspects of Job's confession that I want to focus on this morning. Three facets of his hope that are as relevant to me and you as they were to Job. These are also three truths that Job could not possibly have known apart from some special revelation. They are three realities Job anticipated, all of which assured his final vindication: redemption, resurrection, and reward.

Although Job's comforters had become his accusers, because it seemed to them (and even to Job himself) as if even God had turned against him, he believed--or rather he knew--he would be vindicated. He would be redeemed, resurrected, and ultimately rewarded with an unhindered view of God in His glory.

That may be the easiest outline I have ever given you. Three points, one word each: *redemption*, *resurrection*, and *reward*. Three future spiritual realities everyone who trusts Christ can count on. And there is perhaps no better time than Easter Sunday to consider those three things. So let's look at them in our text. First--

1. REDEMPTION

Remember what leads into our text from the verses immediately preceding. Job is pleading with his friends for pity (v. 21). He also entreats divine Providence (vv. 23-24), wishing that the words he was about to utter could be preserved for posterity: "Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!" That plea implies that Job knew the supreme importance of what he was about to say.

And then our text a simple but profound distillation of the very heart and soul of Job's faith--impressive faith indeed, when you remember that none of the Bible had been written yet, so Job had no inspired volume full of promises or prophecies. And yet the

simple promise he cites here is sufficient to answer all his distress. No wonder he wants it written for later generations to see and learn from.

It is an amazingly robust affirmation of faith, coming as it did from such a broken, frail, and anguished man (v. 25): "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth."

Notice, first of all, that Job is looking into the far-off future: "at the last." That speaks of the end of time--eternity future. It's the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek expression Jesus uses in John 6, during the Bread of Life discourse, where He says (John 6:39): "This is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day." "At the last." "On the last day." The phrases are exact equivalents, and they refer to the same eschatological era: the end of this world and the dawn of eternity. More specifically, it is sometimes called "the Day of Christ" (you see that in Philippians 1:10 and 2:16); or even more frequently, "the Day of the Lord" (like in 1 Corinthians 5:5). "The Last Day"--which Jesus twice referred to as a day of resurrection (also in John 6, verses 44, 54): "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. . . . Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

So Job likewise had this expectation that on the last day he would be totally vindicated--redeemed, resurrected, and rewarded.

"For I know that my Redeemer lives." I love that. It just reverberates with a confidence that absolutely defies Job's circumstances. Spurgeon said, "*To reach the marrow of consolation you must say, 'I KNOW.' Ifs, buts, and perhapses, are sure murderers of peace and comfort. Doubts are dreary things in times of sorrow. Like wasps they sting the soul! . . . A feeble hope is like a flickering smoking flax, just making darkness visible, but nothing more. I would not like to die with a mere hope mingled with suspicion. I might be safe with this but hardly happy.*"

Amazingly, while it is clear that Job is looking into the future at the end of days, he uses the present tense. Not, "*My Redeemer will live.*" Present tense: *He lives.*

The Hebrew word for "Redeemer" is a vital biblical term, full of significance. It's the Hebrew word *go'el*, and it refers to a kinsman-redeemer, like Boaz in the story of Ruth, or like Abraham, rescuing

Lot from marauding kings who had taken him captive. The Law of Moses spelled out in detail the duties of a *go'el*--a kinsman-redeemer.

Because each family's land was so vital to the next generation's inheritance, if poverty or some other crisis ever made it necessary to sell family lands in Israel, such sales were never regarded as permanent. Every fiftieth year--after a cycle of seven Sabbaths, or 49 years--there was a Jubilee year, which was a kind of extended Sabbath. And in the year of Jubilee, sold lands were returned to their ancestral owners' families. But if circumstances forced you to sell family land, there was a way to get the land back without having to wait for the Jubilee year. Those lands could be redeemed (or purchased back) at any time by a relative with means, someone willing to act as *go'el*, or kinsman-redeemer.

Likewise, the *go'el* could redeem unfortunate relatives from slavery. Not only did he redeem property and thus protect the family inheritance; he sometimes redeemed the people of his family from servitude, bondage, captivity, or other similar difficult circumstances.

And in extreme cases, when the *go'el* could not redeem with money, he could redeem by might. That's what happened in the case of Lot. Abraham literally went to war to free Lot from his captors.

Job was confident that God had appointed a Redeemer to do all of that for him--One who would not only pay the price of Job's forgiveness, but one who would go to battle against Job's enemy and accuser and utterly destroy him. That is, in fact, the very role Christ takes as Redeemer of His people. Hebrews 2:14-15: Christ took on human form and surrendered to the cross so "that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." Christ, of course, is the living Redeemer whom Job spoke of. He is the only One who could possibly fulfill Job's hope.

I love how Job describes him as *standing on the earth*--and he uses a word that means "dust." You could literally translate it this way: "at the last he will stand upon [this pile of dust]." Remember that according to Job 2:8, Job himself was sitting in a pile of ashes, scraping his boils with a broken piece of pottery. And he pictures his Redeemer standing there in triumph. The language

Job uses anticipates Zechariah 14:4, a famous prophesy about the return of Christ: "On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives." Such an image of triumph! coming from a man who had been reduced to nothing by unthinkable affliction, calamity, and the sudden loss of everything he loved. Spurgeon says, *"I think very much of the pith of Job's faith lay in this, that he had a clear view that the worms would after his skin destroy his body, and yet that in his flesh he should see God."*

And that gets us to the very heart of this text, the thing we celebrate this morning, and (to me) the most amazing aspect of Job's testimony. This is the second aspect of Job's hope--

2. RESURRECTION

The hope of resurrection is the theme and the centerpiece of Job's confession of faith. It is frankly astonishing to find such a clear and explicit text on the doctrine of bodily resurrection here in what is undoubtedly the oldest book in the Old Testament canon.

We know from Paul's experience in Athens (Acts 17) that the idea of bodily resurrection--the Christian belief that our actual, physical human bodies will be raised to life even after decaying--that idea struck the best philosophers of first-century Greece as dangerously subversive, ridiculously novel, and utterly bizarre. Most of them mocked Paul for preaching it.

Jewish theologians also tended to be unsure and uncomfortable with the idea of bodily resurrection. One of the hallmarks of Sadduceeism was their denial that the dead can be resurrected. That led to a denial of practically everything supernatural. According to Acts 23:8, "the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all." So there was a conflict between Sadducees and Pharisees over the idea of resurrection--but it's noteworthy that the Sadducees held most of the reigns of Jewish power in Jesus' time. The high priest and all the chief priests were Sadducees, and they regarded the Pharisees' belief in resurrection as mere speculation.

But here in their Sacred Scriptures was a clear affirmation of the doctrine of bodily resurrection. And in all candor, on this doctrine *Job's* faith seems sounder to me than the faith of many Christians I know. Many Christians in our era seem to think of life after death as some kind of permanent, ethereal, disembodied

spiritual existence in some cloudy, immaterial dimension that is nothing like this world.

That's not what biblical eschatology teaches. The resurrection spoken of in the New Testament is distinctly and emphatically *a physical resurrection*. These same bodies you and I now inhabit will one day be raised and glorified. We'll be changed, but it is these present bodies that will be raised, reconstituted, transformed--glorified. If you think we will float around heaven for all eternity in some totally different form of existence, you need to adjust your thinking.

The New Testament proclaims the resurrection of the *body*--not just the eternality of the believer's soul. Your body, the same physical body in which you now sit, will be changed in a moment--glorified, given properties like Christ's resurrection body. You'll be completely transformed and flawless--from weakness to strength, from an earthly state to a heavenly state. Everything corruptible will put on incorruptibility. But it will be the same body, changed, not a whole new and different entity. That is one of the distinctive ideas of authentic Christianity, in contrast to every religion invented by humans or demons. We don't achieve nirvana by escaping our bodies or shunning the physical realm. Our bodies themselves will be redeemed and made fit for heaven. I can't imagine all that entails, but I am looking forward to running marathons again someday.

Remember that Christ was resurrected in the same body that went to the cross. Even His wounds were still visible--in some glorified form that you can be certain was not morbid or creepy. It's true that Jesus' appearance was changed enough that Mary and the disciples on the road to Emmaus at first failed to recognize Him. John describes His appearance in Revelation 1:14-15: "The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters." And yet it was the same body, still recognizable enough that when the witnesses saw who it really was, all their doubts evaporated.

If you struggle with understanding how resurrection bodies can be the same as *these* bodies and yet so different, just consider how our bodies change in the normal course of life. This is the very same body I had when I was an infant. Same fingerprints; same

pattern in the iris of my eyes. Same genetic makeup. And yet, few if any of the actual molecules that make up my body today were present when I was a baby. My features have changed enough that you if you had only known me then, you would not recognize me today. My hair, in places, is already turning white (though not as rapidly as some of you).

In the resurrection my body will be glorified--perfected in every sense. I presume that all the things that look like scars and flaws at the moment will be removed or somehow transformed into enhancements. But it is this body--these very hands and feet and ears and eyes--that at the last day, despite whatever state it has disintegrated into, no matter how scattered my dust might be, it will be brought to life and made fit for heaven.

Somehow, Job got that. The fulness with which he expresses his hope of resurrection is stunning. Verses 26-27: "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."

There is no way Job figured out that truth by studying natural theology. He didn't arrive at it by the scientific method, either. He could not have read it in Scripture, because not a page of the Bible was written yet. But it *had* to come to him through some kind of direct special revelation. As I said earlier: he did not "discover" it; God had to reveal it to him.

Now it was the only hope he could cling to--his last hope of being fully vindicated. And it's important, too, that what Job craved was full vindication, not merely an escape from his trials. Because without the hope of bodily resurrection, Job could never be truly and fully vindicated.

Think with me about this: Why would someone who had been through everything Job went through *want* a bodily resurrection as opposed to a spiritual existence in some heavenly realm? If Job ever had any reason to set his affections on earthly things, Satan had unwittingly torn that temptation away from him. Every earthly possession was gone, and for Job that alone was a sizable loss. His body was sick and a constant source of pain, humiliation, gnawing hunger, and relentless fatigue. The longer he stayed in that body, the longer he was prolonging his own anguish. There may have even been a note of misguided compassion in his wife's suggestion that he should just go ahead and die. That would have at least brought relief from the physical suffering.

But there would be no full vindication--no complete redemption--in that. In the words of one commentator: *One hope alone was left [to Job], which the Spirit revealed--a vindication in a future life: it would be no full vindication if his soul alone were to be happy without the body. . . . It was his body that had chiefly suffered: the resurrection of his body, therefore, alone could vindicate his cause: to see God with his own eyes, and in a renovated body . . . would disprove the imputation of guilt cast on him because of the sufferings of his present body.* To see God with his own eyes, in a resurrected and glorified body--that was the vindication Job craved.

There's prophetic significance in that, too, I think. Christ on the cross was placed in the very same situation as Job--suffering innocently (though Jesus was innocent in a pure, sinless way; whereas Job was innocent of all the secret sins his friends and others suspected of him). But vindication of Christ's righteousness--a full exoneration of His innocence, His deity, the sufficiency of His atoning work, and the ultimate proof that He was God's Son--all of that was publicly declared and forever settled by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Even though Christ died between two thieves, looking for all the world like a guilty criminal, God vindicated Him by raising him from the dead. And when the apostle Paul writes the church at Rome, he opens his epistle with that very truth (Romans 1:3-4)--that "[Jesus Christ our Lord] was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead."

Job hoped for a similar vindication by the resurrection power of God. *He* knew he was innocent of any sin that might have unleashed the fury of God against him like this. Yet he looked to all the world like someone "stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." True vindication would only come when God resurrected Job's tortured body and somehow made it whole again. Job *knew* such vindication must eventually come, because he knew God is just. And his own great wish was to stand before God and see the Almighty with redeemed, glorified new eyes.

That is really the third element of Job's faith that we want to take note of. He longed for Redemption; he hoped for Resurrection; and now finally, he craved--

3. REWARD

Juxtaposed alongside Job's wish for physical, bodily resurrection is his hope of heavenly reward. That perspective is exactly right. The reward Job hoped for was exactly the right kind of prize, too. It wasn't the restoration of his wealth or the recovery of any of his earthly comforts. He wanted one thing, and that was to see God with his own eyes.

Verses 26-27: "Yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. The sense of that last phrase is ambiguous. Does he mean, "I shall see God . . . and not [some other image]"? Or should it be read like this: "I [and not another person] shall see [God] for myself." Or even "my eyes [and not another person's eyes] shall behold Him." I think both the context and the words themselves work best if we understand Job to be stressing the reality that he shall see God for himself, with his own eyes, and not in some ghostly or spiritual sense of seeing, but with these very eyes.

It's an amazing hope, but as I have said very often, that is the deepest longing and greatest desire of every truly redeemed person. It will be our greatest reward in heaven to see the glory of God with our own eyes. It's what Moses desired to do on the mountain--and because of the infirmity of his fallen flesh, God allowed him to see only a tiny glimpse of the glory as it receded, while Moses was held in a cleft of the rock, covered with the hand of God.

David, likewise, wrote in Psalm 17:15: *let the wicked have all the earthly blessings, but* "as for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness." Paul echoed the same expectation (1 Corinthians 13:12): "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face." And the apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:2, "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure." That is the reward all true believers long for most of all: to see God's glory, and to be transformed by that glory into the very likeness of Christ.

These truths lie at the core of the gospel message. That's why the gospel is such good news. I think Job understood the ramifications of what he was writing only in a very dim and shadowy sense. But Second Timothy 1:10 says "Christ Jesus . . .

abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." The *way* Jesus "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light" was by dying and then bursting the bonds of death for Himself and for all who are united with Him by faith. That is the truth we celebrate today, and it is the very pinnacle of triumph in the gospel narrative.

The life of Christ--and the historical basis of the gospel itself--culminates in two related events, which we remember especially this weekend: the cross, where sin was atoned for, and the empty tomb, where death was defeated and abolished forever. That's how life and immortality were brought to light "through the gospel." The glorified body of the risen Christ put "life and immortality" on display in physical, tangible form. The apostle John described it as "That . . . which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled" (1 John 1:1). "Life and immortality" were thus brought to the bright light of day so that "through the gospel" we have a far better conception of what eternity entails and what heaven will be like than any Old Testament saint ever dared to hope for.

And Scripture makes this promise to every authentic Christian (Philippians 3:21): that Christ "will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." So life and immortality have been brought to life by the gospel, specifically revealed to us in the resurrection body of Christ. And here in our text, Paul is telling Timothy that this is the heart and soul of Christian conviction. This is the truth that gives us courage to live for Christ in a hostile world--or to *die* for Him if He calls us to that.