

How to Have Hope in a World of Hopelessness

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3-Year Bible Reading Plan

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Bible Text: Job 19:23-27
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"For I know my redeemer lives." Those are not the words of a great hymnwriter, they're not the words of a pastor, an evangelist, a preacher, even a theologian, those are actually the words straight out of the book of Job in your Bible. In fact, when you think about that phrase, "I know my redeemer lives," you might think, "Well, that was the early apostles when they realized that the tomb was empty. That was the early church when they began to see the world turned upside-down and lives being changed, but the setting is much different. In fact, if you're new with us and a first-time guest, we're in a Bible reading plan where we find ourselves in the book of Job, one of the easiest books in the Bible to find. Go to the middle of the book of Psalms, turn to the left.

Chapter 19 he makes this statement, "For I know my redeemer lives." There is probably not a position in Scripture more destitute than where Job was when he made that statement. For those of you that are not familiar with his story, he was a man with a large family and a massive fortune. In the blink of an eye, they are both gone. Then the health that he prided himself on was removed from him. He is sitting on a heap of ashes. He's covered in boils from head to toe. He's scraping them with a piece of pottery and those who you would think would come to defend him are actually accusing him of being the one in the wrongdoing. He finds himself in a hopeless situation.

Allow me to share with you what the dictionary says about hopelessness. It says where there can be no opportunity of favorability. That's what hopelessness means and yet you and I realize today that there's some hopelessness around us, is there not? You look at the culture around us, you look even at your own personal lives, let's look at it in light of that definition. The last six months we've walked through a global pandemic we're still walking through. We've had societal uprising. We're making our way toward one of the most significant elections in recent time period. In the last 48 hours the political verbiage is even gonna increase more. Oftentimes you read the news, you watch the news and you say, "This is hopeless. There is no way there can be any favorable outcome here." What about your own personal life? Maybe it's your own personal health. Maybe it's your own personal financial resources. Maybe it's your family. Maybe it's your marriage. Maybe it's your children. Maybe it's your job. Maybe it's your future. And you look and say, "There's no way this can turn out favorable." Allow me to give maybe not the dictionary definition but a practical brass tack definition of what hopelessness is: hopelessness is

when you're staring down a light at the end of the tunnel and it can't be anything but an oncoming train. That's what hopelessness is. Or you find yourself at the bottom of a bucket and it's taking on water and you can't get out. That's what hopelessness is and when we look at our culture, oftentimes we feel hopeless. When we look at our own lives, we feel hopeless, and yet here is a man who embodies what we know as hopelessness and he makes one of the most hopeful statements in all of the Bible.

Here in Job 19, he has been surrounded by his used-to-be friends, if you read the story you know why I say used-to-be friends. They have begun to barrage him with accusations, claiming that he is in the wrong and there's no way that this is gonna work out favorably. In verse 23 of chapter 19 he says,

23 Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! 24 [Oh] That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! 25 For 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.

So as you and I oftentimes walk through situations that we would define and deem as hopeless, how do we experience the hope that Job has in this passage? I think the first thing we have to address is the petition that he is making. He is pleading before God there in verse 23. He says, "Oh, if it were just written in a book!" Here's what he's desiring, "God, I wish that there was a record of these conversations," which by the way, we find out later there is. "Oh, I wish that the truth would come out. Oh, I wish." You know, there's an old adage we say, at least the legal world says, "If it's not written down, it didn't happen." And that's why he's saying, "Oh, I wish this were written down. I wish there could somehow be a record of this." Have you ever felt like that in your life? Have you ever felt like if people really knew the truth how it would exonerate you? If people really knew what the facts were, the decisions they would actually make? Have you ever been in a situation in life where you just throw your hands up and say, "God, are you the only one who sees this for what it really is?"

That's where Job was in this situation. In fact, he finds himself a whole lot like the character known as Nathanael in the gospel of John 1. Nathanael is one of the early apostles and yet he doubted, he questioned whether Jesus Christ could truly be who his friends said he would be. There in John 1, Andrew takes his brother whom we know as Simon Peter, and then Philip, a fisherman in Bethsaida right around the corner, goes and grabs a buddy by the name of Nathanael. They were probably fishing partners at some level. He says, "I have found the Messiah. I have found the redeemer. I have found the one who's gonna pay for our sins." Do you know what he says? Nathanael says this, "How could any good thing come out of Galilee? How could anybody from that part of the world be the answer to my problems?" Jesus comes around the corner, entertains somewhat of a conversation and I love this dialog, Jesus tells Nathanael, he says, "I saw you under the tree over there and I said to myself, 'There is a man without any guile.'"

You know what Nathanael does? He falls on his knees. I mean, he just falls prostrate and he begins to declare, "You are the Messiah. You are the one. You are the answer to everything." You know what Jesus says? "If you think that's good, you're about to see heaven open up, you're gonna see the angels ascending and descending. That's just for starters." Why would he respond like that? Why would he fall to his face? Why would he weep uncontrollably? Because most likely Nathanael was a whole lot like Job, he'd been accused of things he didn't do, presumed of things that he wasn't guilty of, and maybe had a reputation that was less than stellar, but he knew the truth and there was God in the flesh.

He said, "You are without guile." Do we not just want the record to come forth? Do we not just want the truth to come out? Here we live in a world where every time we hear a news story, the first thought we get is, "Is it even true?" We just want the record to be true and that's what Job is saying, "I just want the facts to come out." But here's the great thing for you and I, we have access to the revelation of God and what I mean by that word is this, that God has revealed himself not only through creation as Romans 1 says, but through his word, and you and I have a perspective that's incredible. We're 2,000 years this side of the empty tomb, we're multiple thousand years on the other side of the ash heap with Job, and we can see how God spoke, we can see how he moved, we can see what he has said to humanity since Job experienced this and I want you to think about what God has revealed to us. You know, in the gospel of Matthew 12, Jesus is looking over a group of people who are questioning the validity of his ministry and he makes this statement, "No marvel, for every idle word that a man speaks he will be held accountable for." Every idle word. Do you know what that means? You see, Job was saying, "I just want it to come out," you know what the Lord says? "That's okay, every deed humanity has ever done, every word humanity has ever spoken, every thought humanity has ever had has been recorded." Later on in Hebrews 4 it says because of that, that the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, that we stand, the Bible says we stand without clothing before him. We are completely revealed before him. There is nothing we can hide. There is nothing that we can push to the side. There is nothing that we can spin or turn or cause to create chaos. He's aware of everything.

I find it interesting that when you get to the end of the Bible in the book of Revelation, this great final judgment, there are those there that are rebellious, there are those there that are against anything of God, particularly Jesus Christ, and when they stand before judgment, how many times have you heard somebody say this, "Well, when I see God face-to-face I've got something I wanna say to him"? No, you won't. Nobody replies. Nobody responds. You know what the Bible says happens there for those who have rebelled and rejected? It says, "And the books of works were opened." You get the picture that as those individuals are condemned to eternal damnation, that every deed, every word, every thought and there is no rebuttal to that.

You see, the petition that Job gives is, "I just want the truth to come out." But Job is considered one of the books of what we call wisdom in the Bible, and even though the Lord called him perfect which means complete, Job never claimed to be sinless. He claimed that he was innocent of the charges that were before him but he never claimed to

be sinless in them and I can prove it and here's why, he says, "I know my redeemer lives." If you're sinless, you don't need a redeemer. If you're without sin, you don't need a redeemer. It reminds me of the early part of the gospel of Luke where who we know as Mary, here she is, she is with child of the Holy Ghost, she goes and talks to her cousin Elizabeth and we call it the magnificat, it's this great declaration that Mary makes about the coming Messiah and you know what she says there? She says, "Within my belly is my Lord and my Savior." You know, if you're sinless, you don't need a Savior. If you're sinless, you don't need a redeemer. So what Job is sharing with us importantly here is the position that he held with the Lord and the position that we as believers can hold. He says, "I know my redeemer lives." What a declaration. What a personal declaration.

Now let's think about the record for just a moment and this is one of those great theological conversations. How could Job have any idea of redemption? I mean, how could he? He lived so long ago, in fact, when you begin to date Job's life, there's really two options that we have and we're gonna work this out. The first option is that he's the fourth or fifth generation after whom we know as Noah, the famous flood. The other option is that he was actually a contemporary of Jacob and Esau, the grandchildren of Abraham. Those are your two options. But let's just take a step back there for a moment. Let's look at the record here. What would Job have access to? What would he have heard of? What would he have known? Whether he was a couple of generations after the flood or a couple of generations after Abraham, what would he have had access to?

1. He would have had access to the story had been told for years, though it hadn't been written down yet, that humanity used to live in the garden of Eden and everything used to be wonderful, and everything used to be walking with the Lord in the cool of the day, but humanity decided they knew better than God did, they fell into temptation, they fell into sin, but much to their surprise what did the Lord say in Genesis 3:15? "There's coming a day where the seed of the woman will take care of and stomp upon the head of the serpent." We call it the very first gospel. You see, immediately as Adam and Eve are removed from the garden of Eden, one of the very first things God says is this, "A redeemer is coming, one who will forgive, one who will save, one who will reconcile. There is one coming."

By the way, redeemer, you realize that word means one who is able to buy you back into a position that has been voided out. Probably the greatest picture we have in the Bible is Hosea, the prophet of God in your Old Testament, whose wife Gomer decided to chase after the frills and thrills of life. She found herself on the auction block in a slave trade and Hosea goes and buys her. That's the picture, that's the record that God began to lay out for them.

So that story would have been well-known and then no matter how you date him, he's on this side of Noah's flood and if that's not a picture of redemption, I don't know what is. All of humanity has fallen into wickedness but verse 8 of chapter 6 of Genesis, God says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of God." That word "grace" is important. It doesn't mean that Noah was sinless. It doesn't mean that he deserved it. Grace is getting that which you do not deserve. Noah didn't deserve to be on that boat. His family didn't

deserve to be on that boat. But when the rains came for 40 days and 40 nights, for 15 months they found themselves in that boat, it kinda makes six months in a pandemic locked up in our houses not seem so bad, does it not? Can you imagine being in a boat with all those animals and nothing but water all around you? But what happens? It's a picture of redemption.

If what we know as Job was the great, great grandchild of Noah, then he would've heard the story not only of the garden but he would've heard the story that his great, great grandfather would have told about being redeemed from the judgment of God. But what if, what if he actually is a contemporary of Jacob and Esau? Do you remember what happened to their dad Isaac? Their dad Abraham takes him up on a hill one day and says, "We're gonna worship the Lord. We're gonna sacrifice." You remember what Isaac says? "Uh, dad, I see the wood, I see the fire, but where's the lamb? Where is the item we're gonna sacrifice?" Do you remember what Abraham said? "The Lord will provide." And as Abraham took his hand up in the motion to cease his physical life, he saw a ram in the thicket. You know the beautiful part about that story is actually not found until Hebrews 11, it says, "Abraham believed," listen to this, "that God was able to raise him from the dead." So if Job was a contemporary and there's pretty good evidence that he was, that means that he would have been a friend of a man whose dad was the one that was tied to that altar. He would've known of a man who the Lord provided and redeemed, and yet what did his granddad say? That he's able to raise him from the dead.

So when Job holds this position that, "I know my redeemer lives," the record states that God prophesied it would come, the record states he illustrated it with Noah, and if so be the record states that even Abraham believed God was able to raise that up from the dead. That's the record, what's the revelation? Notice the second part of verse 25, "and he shall stand on the earth at the latter day." Now here's one of the great qualifiers I have to give you this morning. When you go back into the Old Testament, particularly the prophets whether it be the ones that are most familiar, the Isaiah's and the Jeremiah's, or whether it's the Job's of the world, one of the benefits that you and I have are those thousands of years of history. In fact, Romans 2 says the only benefit to being a Jew over a Gentile is that you've had the Scriptures for thousands of years and we also have had them for thousands of years now. Oftentimes those old prophets, they could not see the difference between what you and I call the First Coming and the Second Coming. They just couldn't see it. In other words, from their perspective they knew a redeemer, they knew a messiah was coming. We have the advantage of looking back and realizing that the first time was to bear a cross, the second time he's coming with a crown. We understand that the first time was to come as a lamb to give his blood, the second time he's coming as a lion in victory.

We can see that now. They couldn't see it as clearly back then, so what does he say? "I know not only that he lives but that he shall stand at the latter day on the earth and in my flesh I will see him." So what's the revelation here? What has God given us throughout the Scriptures in the position that we hold that is so formidable for us today? The first is this, think about this, that Pentecost takes place, Jesus has died, Jesus has raised, Jesus has taught, Jesus has ascended. They have gathered there in Acts 2, the Holy Ghost

comes upon them, 3,000 people are added to the church. It's the first visible manifestation of the church of Jesus Christ as we know it today. What does Peter get up and do? He gets up and he preaches and here's what he states, in fact, he says it twice in Acts 2, he says, "That after he ascended," being Jesus, "he sat down at the right hand of the Father." Then you get to Hebrews 10 and there's this comparison, the priests of the Old Testament versus Jesus Christ, the great high priest, and there's this comparison that Jesus is better than. Then in chapter 10 of Hebrews it makes this statement that, "He offered himself one sacrifice for all, and then he," you guessed it, "sat down at the right hand of the Father."

Why is that important? Why is that significant? Because right now you and I where we find ourselves, the position we find ourselves in life today is this, no matter what our situation in life, is that Jesus Christ has come, he has lived, he has died, he has raised from the dead, he has ascended on high. There's only one thing left in his great economy and that's the fact he's coming back. It says, "and he shall stand on the earth at the latter day." You can go into Zechariah 14, the book of Revelation, and a dozen other places, you know what you discover? There's a day coming, there is a day coming where the clouds are gonna part and that Jesus Christ is gonna come back and unbeknownst to the United Nations, UNICEF and all these other people, he's gonna take charge. He's going to be in control. He's going to call the shots and it doesn't matter how you want to spin it. What happens? He lands what we know as Mount Zion. He establishes his throne in Jerusalem, politically incorrect but biblically accurate. What happens? He stands at the latter day. You see, the position we find ourselves in today, you and I, is that we have the record of all these stories but we have the revelation that you and I are between his ascension and his return and, folks, he's coming back and the bumper sticker's right, Jesus is coming back and, boy, is he mad. It's going to take place.

So let's talk about the promise. What's the promise that the Lord gives us here? Notice what it says in verse 26, "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Here's the record that Job has given us. He experienced it in his own life and we're experiencing it in ours as well, is that it doesn't, it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when. You know, I've said this numerous times as we walk through a global pandemic, forgive me for repeating it. I think sometimes we need to hear it. The mortality rate for humanity is 100%. It's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when and how and we're not given the privilege to know the when and the how but we are given the privilege to know the if because it's a guarantee because it says in Hebrews 9 that all men must die and face the judgment.

I want you to think about Job for just a moment. Here was a man who's called the greatest in the East. He had a network of family and friends. He had a cash pile that's probably incomparable to anybody in his day. If there was anybody who could have fended off disease, it would've been him. If there's anybody who had the resources to put himself in safety when negative situations came, it would've been him. He had all the resources in the world but in a moment they were gone. They were history. But what does he say? "There's gonna come a day where even I am going to die."

You know, that's a lesson I think many of us, particularly in the Western world, need to learn today. It doesn't matter how much access we have to medical care. It doesn't matter how much access we have to education, food, water, whatever it may be. There's still coming a day, look at the record, worms are going to eat your body. Now I know that doesn't sound very pleasant but it's very accurate. You can have the most ornate service in the world, you can have the most beautiful arrangements in the world, but you put that in the ground for long enough and guess who's gonna get through? The worms will. Ladies and gentlemen, that is the record, that worms are going to eat our body, our flesh is going to be destroyed, we are going to breathe our last breath at one point in life.

That's the record and I want you to hear what Job is saying here. Here he is on this ash heap. He's been condemned by his friends. He's been falsely accused. He's lost his family. He's lost his fortune. And he says, "The worms are gonna eat my body," but notice the revelation here, he says, "yet in my flesh I shall see God"? You know what he's stating for us? He is stating what Abraham pictured with Isaac, that God is able to raise us to new life. You know, you think about the ministry of Jesus Christ and we're not gonna spend an enormous amount of time with the whole chronology thereof, but he walks on water, he heals the sick, he multiplies the food, but there's only one person that Jesus touched that after he touched them they tried to kill him too. His name was Lazarus. Don't believe me? Read John 12. It said because of Lazarus' testimony, they tried to take his life too. Why is that? Because even the magicians with Pharaoh could mess around with the elements but when you raise from the dead, that's a whole different sphere.

But I want you to think about that setting. Jesus is with his apostles. Lazarus is sick unto death. He dies. Jesus shows up and when he does so, his sisters, that's Lazarus' sisters, say, "If you would have been here, then our brother would not have died." By the way, just as a corollary there, you know in the gospels there's never account of anybody dying in the presence of Jesus. But nonetheless, he says, "I know that." They say, "But he has been dead four days." One of my favorite statements in all the Bible, his sister says, "Lord, behold he stinketh." You know what they're saying? The worms have started. Decomposition has settled in. Guess what? There is no hope. That's what his sisters are saying. There's no hope. If there was any hope, it's foregone. Those in the medical field would say there comes a point in the physical decomposition that there is no turning back, there's nothing that can be done. That's what they're declaring.

Listen to what Jesus asked, he asked the sisters, he says, "Do you believe that your brother will live again one day?" You know what she says? "At the last day, I believe." In other words, a whole lot like Job, right? She says, "I know there's a day coming that because of his relationship with the Lord he shall live." And I want you to hear what Jesus said. This is in John 11:25-26. He says, "I am." By the way, when Jesus says "I am," he doesn't say it like you and I do. He's referring back to Exodus 3 when Moses says, "Who shall I say is sending me?" He says, "I Am that I Am." Jesus says, "I am." Listen to what he says, "I am the resurrection and the life." Do you believe this? I want you to hear what Jesus is saying, that he is able to raise the dead, he is able to give life to that which is dead.

"I am the resurrection and the life," and here's what Jesus says there in John 11, "though a man die, yet he shall live, and though a man live, he shall never die." Now y'all may be thinking, "Well, is Jesus talking out of both sides of his mouth there?" Oh, no, he's not for the Bible declares to us, it has revealed to us that there is a day coming that the Lord will descend with the shout of an archangel those who are dead in Christ, those who are alive in Christ will meet each other together in the air to be with him forever. What Jesus was picturing is what we commonly refer to as that rapture event where those who are dead, those who are alive will be forever with him. But here's even the better news: what about those that are already deceased? What about those, your loved ones, my loved ones, my friends, your friends, that they've already gone to be, what about them? Here's the revelation in 2 Corinthians 5, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

You see, Job finds himself in the most hopeless situation known to man. I would daresay that whatever you're walking through right now cannot rival what he was sitting through on that ash heap but his position was that there is a redeemer, we know him as Jesus Christ, who not only came and he lived and he died and he rose, but he's coming back again. And here's the promise, that no matter what life befalls you, no matter what you walk through, that you one day will see God face-to-face in the flesh for all of eternity. You see, one of the greatest statements that we have of the hope we have in Jesus Christ was actually made by a man who from the outside had no hope. Today more than ever as we look at the hopelessness of our society, as we look at the hopelessness of our personal situations, maybe we need to have the perspective of Job, "I know my redeemer lives and he shall stand on the earth in the latter days, and though the worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God."