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Sermon Notes

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If a Man Dies, Will He Live Again?

Job 14:14

The fundamental question of our mortal lives... Is this world all there is? Does death end everything? Are we truly, in the end, just an assemblage of atoms that, when dissociated from one another cease to exist as life? Are our hopes and dreams biochemical deceptions... chemical reactions in the neuro-receptors of our brains that are nothing more than illusions?

Is it really like that, as the brilliant cosmologist atheist Stephen Hawking said?

"I regard the brain as a computer which will stop working when its components fail. There is no heaven or afterlife for broken-down computers; that is a fairytale for people afraid of the dark."

Is there hope beyond the grave? Or as Job puts it plainly, **"If a man dies, will he live again?"**

For us as Christians, however, the single most significant moment in the history of the world is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... the empty tomb, the vacant grave clothes... the resurrection appearances... the triumph of our Savior over the grave... that single event changes everything!!

The challenge for us in the Book of Job is to understand Job's perceptions of the afterlife in light of what Christ accomplished in his resurrection victory.

Today I am going to argue one central proposition:

“Job was a better man than any of us will ever be; but we have a better hope than he ever had.”

Along with this, we are going to study from Job 14 techniques of spiritual warfare... of battling against doubts and fears and temptations. Learning from Job, but also transcending him with the transforming news that Job never had in his arsenal:

1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

I. Job’s Struggle with Doubt

A. What Did Job Really Believe About the Grave?

1. Job himself posed the question

Job 14:14 If a man dies, will he live again?

2. It is not entirely clear that he believed the answer was “Yes!”

Job 14:7-12 "At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. ⁸ Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, ⁹ yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant. ¹⁰ But man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more. ¹¹ As water disappears from the sea or a riverbed becomes parched and dry, ¹² so man lies down and does not rise; till the heavens are no more, men will not awake or be roused from their sleep.

It seems like Job is saying that a tree that is felled does better than a man who dies... trees have been known to recover... buds come up from the hidden root system and the tree has a second life

But the man who dies is never seen again

So, as Job was asking this question, he either DIDN'T know whether a dead man could rise, or he thought they wouldn't... this is just evidence of the darkness in his mind because of his pain. But also of the limited perspective of even the greatest people of the Old Testament era before Christ!

B. The Darkness of Sheol... the Grave

Job 7:9-10 As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to the grave does not return. ¹⁰ He will never come to his house again; his place will know him no more.

Job 10:20-22 Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy ²¹ before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and deep shadow, ²² to the land of deepest night, of deep shadow and disorder, where even the light is like darkness.'

Job 17:13-16 If the only home I hope for is the grave, if I spread out my bed in darkness, ¹⁴ if I say to corruption, 'You are my father,' and to the worm, 'My mother' or 'My sister,' ¹⁵ where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me? ¹⁶ Will it go down to the gates of death? Will we descend together into the dust?'

In none of Job's assertions about death and the grave is it certain that Job has a clear view of resurrection.

C. "I Know that My Redeemer Lives"

1. Perhaps the most famous verse in the book of Job... and it seems a clear ringing hope in resurrection

Job 19:25-27 I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; ²⁷ I myself will see him with my own eyes-- I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Handel's Messiah... the astonishing "Hallelujah Chorus" is followed by an even more amazing piece... the soprano aria "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth", perhaps one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written

Using the KJV text, it says

“And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”

2. I will deal with that amazing statement in a later sermon
3. It is enough to say that the idea of life beyond the grave was in Job’s mind at some level

Yet as triumphant as this declaration is, it is still unclear exactly what Job believed about the resurrection and life after the grave. Even if Job were not thinking only of his present healing, he may have only had a view of resuscitation... of a continued, extended, long life in this present form

II. Old Testament Heroes Hoped for the Next World

A. Abraham and Isaac

Genesis 22:5 Abraham said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Hebrews 11:17-19 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ of whom God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." ¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

BUT... Abraham was, it seems, only trusting God to revive Isaac in the very same state he was in before he died... a boy in a growing body

B. The Theology of Sheol (the Grave)

Psalms 6:5 For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise?

Ecclesiastes 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

Isaiah 38:18-19 For Sheol does not thank you; death does not praise you; those who go down to the pit do not hope for your faithfulness. ¹⁹ The living, the living, he thanks you, as I do this day

C. YET The Author to Hebrews

Hebrews 11:13-16 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

The author is saying very plainly that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the Old Testament saints believed in life after death... looking ahead to a world yet to come

That is true... there was a theology of life after death

But there was a quantum leap waiting for the people of God entrusted to the Son of God...

D. Athanasius

On the Incarnation: "Before the divine advent of the Savior, even the holiest of men were afraid of death, and mourned the dead as those who perish. But now that the Savior has raised his body, death is no longer terrible, but all those who believe in Christ tread it underfoot as nothing, and prefer to die rather than deny their faith in Christ, knowing full well that when they die they do not perish but live indeed and become incorruptible through the resurrection."

Athanasius: "Death has now become like a tyrant who has been completely conquered by the legitimate monarch; bound hand and foot as he now is, the passers-by jeer at him, hitting him and abusing him, no longer afraid of his cruelty and rage because of the king who has conquered him. So has death been conquered and branded for what it is by the Savior on the cross. It is bound hand and foot, all who are in Christ trample it as they pass by and as witnesses to Him deride it, scoffing and saying **"Where O death, is your victory? Where, O grave, is your sting?"**

So, we do not want to give top honor to the hero Job... he was an Old Testament saint who did not have the clear hope in resurrection we have, because the Son of God had not yet triumphed. His hope was small and pale and indistinct compared with ours... even the most insignificant Christian today has a vastly superior hope in resurrection to that of Job

So... as we have said... **Job was a better man than any of us will ever be; but we have a better hope than he ever had.**

III. A Better Hope is Introduced

Hebrews 7:18-19 ***The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.***

Hebrews 8:6 ***the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises.***

A. The Author to Hebrews

1. The infinite superiority of Jesus Christ to all Old Testament leaders, heroes, themes
2. Christ is superior to angels... Christ is superior to Abraham... Christ is superior to Moses... Christ is superior to Aaron... Christ's priesthood is superior to the Levites... Christ's final, once for all sacrifice is superior to all the animal sacrifices ever offered

B. Christ By His Death Freed Us from All Fear of Death

Hebrews 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

We see some of that slavery to fear even in a man as great as Job... there was a vagueness to his belief, a weakness to his hope

But when Christ rose from the dead, he gave to his weakest followers the spoils from his mighty victory... as J.C. Ryle said, "Christ has thrown open the gates to heaven" for all believers

To prove it, he shows us his hands and his feet and tells us:

John 14:19 *Because I live, you also will live.*

His resurrection is called the "first fruits"

1 Corinthians 15:20 *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

C. We Do Not Believe in Merely Resuscitation!

1 Corinthians 15:42-44 *So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*

We believe in a resurrection body that is IMPERISHABLE... it can never die again, and will not age in heaven

We believe in a resurrection body that is GLORIOUS... the "righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of our Father"

We believe in a resurrection body that is POWERFUL... we will have limitless health and power and vitality in the New Heavens and New Earth... we will forever run and never grow weary.... We will for all eternity walk and never be faint

We believe in the resurrection body that is SPIRITUAL... a perfect combination of physical and spiritual... like Jesus' own resurrection body

D. Evidence of this Better Hope

1. Stephen

Acts 7:56-60 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷ At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.... ⁵⁹ While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep

2. Paul

Philippians 1:20-24 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

3. Heroes of Church History

The spiritual conquest of the Roman Empire was done in large part by martyrs, bold men, women, and children who, wrapped in Christ, had lost all fear of death

Athanasius: "Everyone is by nature afraid of death and of bodily dissolution; the marvel of marvels is that he who is enfolded in the faith of the cross despises this natural fear and for the sake of the cross is no longer cowardly in the face of it. The natural property of fire is to burn. Suppose then that there was a substance such as the Indian asbestos is said to be, which had no fear of being burnt, but rather displayed the impotence of the fire by proving itself unburnable. If anyone doubted the

truth of this, all he would need do would be to wrap himself up in the substance in question and then touch the fire....” So it is with the followers of Christ. They would naturally be terrorized by death, but they wrap themselves up in their faith in the risen Savior and lose all fear of death.

Polycarp, bold martyr for Jesus in Smyrna, in the year 156, died filled with courage, refusing to betray his faith in Christ. When the Roman proconsul threatened that he would burn him at the stake said this:

“You threaten a fire that burns for a little while and then is quenched. For you know nothing of the fire of future judgment and the eternal punishment that is reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay? Do what you want!”

UTTERLY FEARLESS!!

Thomas Goodwin: “Ah! Is this dying? How have I dreaded as an enemy this smiling friend!”

Adoniram Judson: “I am not tired of my work, neither am I tired of the world; yet when Christ calls me home, I shall go with the gladness of a boy bounding away from school.”

Charles Spurgeon: “Every day Christ is overcoming death, for He gives His Spirit to His saints, and having that Spirit within them they confront death with songs... they face death with a calm countenance, and they fall asleep in peace. ‘I will not fear thee death—why should I? You look like a dragon, but your sting is gone.’ “For these saints, to die has been so different a thing from what they expected it to be, so lightsome, so joyous; they have been so unloaded of all care, have felt so relieved instead of burdened, that they have wondered whether this could be the monster they had been afraid of all their days. They find it a pin’s prick, when they feared it would be a sword thrust; it is the shutting of the eye on earth, and the opening of it in heaven...”

IV. Fighting Fear and Doubt Like Job Did... and Better Than Job

A. The Terrors of Having God As Your Adversary

Job 14:13 "If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed!"

1. It is utterly terrifying to have the omnipotent God as your enemy!
2. How terrifying would it be to have the omnipotent, omniscient God hunting us down... pursuing us... and there is nowhere to hide on earth
3. Job thought of the grave as a place where at least he would have some respite from the wrath of God
4. Yet it was left to Jesus to clearly delineate how much more terror the sinner should have after death

Luke 12:4-5 I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. ⁵ But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

5. No sorrow we could ever face in this world is as terrifying as having God oppose you as your righteous Judge
6. The greatest danger we face is the just wrath of God against us for our sins... Job had a deed sense of that

Job 14:16-17 Surely then you will count my steps but not keep track of my sin. ¹⁷ My offenses will be sealed up in a bag; you will cover over my sin.

7. Job looks for a time when God would forget the record of his sins... seal them up as in a bag... cover them over
8. But we know more fully now how that can be... by the atonement worked by Jesus Christ, by his blood shed on the cross

Romans 3:23-25 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that

came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a propitiation, through faith in his blood.

Propitiation = the removal of sin by the payment of a sacrifice...

God's wrath is completely removed by faith in the blood of Christ

Romans 4:7-8 "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

9. We know better than Job how the death of the Son of God for sinners like you and me completely removes the wrath of God forever

Job said...

Job 14:13 "If only you would hide me in the grave and conceal me till your anger has passed!"

The gospel says...

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

B. Waiting for God to Remember Him

Job 14:13 If only you would set me a time and then remember me!

1. Job yearned to hide in the grave until God remembered him
2. But we know that this only results in God remembering all the sins we have ever committed against God and calling us to account for them on Judgment Day

Matthew 12:36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

3. But as we've said... God chooses to forget our sins in the atoning work of Christ!!

Hebrews 8:12 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

4. Instead, the “remembering” that Job really wants here is God remembering to be gracious and kind to him... remembering his love for Job
5. God’s thoughts concerning us are comprehensive and measureless

Psalm 139:17-18 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.

God has covered us in his thoughts... and his thoughts toward us are precious – he has considered every moment of our lives what is necessary for us in order to be saved

We in the New Testament have this timeless promise:

Romans 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

C. Job Yearns for a Change

Job 14:14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come.

1. The word “renewal” is fascinating... same Hebrew word as the tree sprouting again in verse 7...
2. Perhaps Job is looking toward the change that could happen after death... that God might actually restore him to the vigor and health he knew before
3. But now, we know that Job and all the true believers will be CHANGED, renewed in the pattern of Christ, into those awesome resurrection bodies described in 1 Corinthians 15
4. In the meantime, how can we drink from this BETTER HOPE that Christ has won for us??

D. Job’s Struggle for Hope

Job 14:18-19 "But as a mountain erodes and crumbles and as a rock is moved from its place, ¹⁹ as water wears away stones and torrents wash away the soil, so you destroy man's hope.

1. Job has to battle within himself for hope
2. Satan assaults us and asks us “How do you know that God cares for you? How do you know you are in his favor??”
3. Satan is skillful at putting dark thoughts in our minds and eroding our hopes
4. You can begin to look up to God with doubts and hurt and pain and questions... like Job, saying “God, it seems like your whole purpose here is to crush me!”
5. The answer is to fight Satan’s insinuated thoughts with Scripture
 - a. Jesus answered all of Satan’s temptations in the desert with Scripture... “It is written...” “It is written...” “It is written...”
 - b. So must we wield the sword of faith, which is the Word of God!!
6. There is a difference between a brief thought that flits across your mind and a settled worried doubt that grips your mind for a long time... resulting in deep spiritual depression
7. Sometimes Satan puts a dark thought in our minds and we open ourselves up to it and accept it... like a besieged walled fortress, surrendering to the evil forces that surround it... opening the gates of its defenses and thus inviting the enemy in—and all he wants to do is destroy the city... to “steal, kill, and destroy”! DON’T LET HIM IN! Fight for control of your thoughts!!
8. You have to do spiritual warfare! The battle for the MIND

Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

E. The Greatest Evidence for the Future Renewal is a Presently Renewed Life

1. God has promised that we will share in his heavenly glory
2. He has given the indwelling Holy Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing our future inheritance

John Calvin: “When God will have so changed us that we feel that He dwells in us, and that by this means we fight against our wicked lusts; whereas other men do ordinarily delight in their vices and bathe themselves in them; when we seek just the opposite, so that whatever evil in us displeases us and we mourn on account of it; also when we follow the good and desire to give ourselves wholly to serving God, isn’t that a wonderful change? For such emotions will never come [naturally] from ourselves. When we have tasted God’s goodness, so that we are assured of his Fatherly love toward us, and we even have a certainty of our salvation so as to call God ‘Father’ do you not see how powerful God’s hand is [to change you like that]? For naturally men never do such things! ... Are we desirous to serve Him and honor Him? It is as if He had changed us and cast us in am new mold, as if He had made us an entirely new creature.”

So, we must take hold of all such changes and see that they are clear evidence of the Spirit’s work in our lives

In this way, we can battle our doubts and fears with BETTER PROMISES than Job ever had, with the BETTER HOPE of resurrection that Christ won for us centuries after Job lived...

So... we will never be as righteous in this world as Job. But by the grace of Christ, we have a far better hope in resurrection than he ever had.

Let’s strengthen that hope!!