



Job 19:23-27

Easter, April 5, 2026

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"Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! ²⁴ Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! ²⁵ 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. My heart faints within me!"

Where Jess and I lived in Florida was not at all like it is here. Our neighborhood was not like the neighborhood where I grew up in Franklin, nor where Jess grew up in Watertown, nor where we met in Eau Claire. It was different in a lot of ways. And our neighborhood in Florida regularly opened my eyes to a certain truth that I had been rather successfully able to ignore for my first 25 years of life.

One moment in particular comes to my mind, just as it has very many times since it happened. It was Jess's birthday, we were getting ready to go to lunch, we had a couple babies strapped in their car seats, and suddenly we also had a large truck parked on our front flower bed, a pair of angry eyes staring in at us through the window and another set of fists and a boot trying to break down our door.

It didn't seem like there would be enough time for the police to arrive, so I went out to the carport, locked the door behind me, and confronted them. It was a threatening and angry exchange on their part, and I was afraid. Not for *my* life, so much, but I was afraid for my wife and children. After what *felt* like an hour, I yelled at them to look at me, dressed as I was in my midweek pastoral best, and asked if it looked like I'd be involved in *anything* that they were involved in. That seemed to get through to them, and they jumped back in the truck and tore off across the lawn. But they never left. They never left my mind, anyway. And I'm pretty sure they never left my wife's mind either.

We were pretty shaken up. I got this queasy feeling in my stomach that stayed with me for quite a long time afterward. In fact, I am still a little bit surprised at how hard it was to shake off the feelings that encounter left me with. I just did not like it one bit that *death* was a fact I could no longer ignore.

There's this great hymn written by Martin Franzmann entitled, "O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth," where he describes life in this world as a "*hall of death.*" He writes, "*Thou camest to our hall of death, O Christ, to breath our poisoned air, To drink for us the dark despair That strangled our reluctant breath.*" (LSB #834) The reality of our life is that it is like a hallway where there is only one way to go, and it is death that awaits us at the end.

And I guess I might have forgotten about that, or else I'd never really truly considered it, until that experience I had in Florida. And perhaps God wanted to remind me that I live in a hall of death. On that sunny, June, Florida afternoon, I was forced to think about what this grim truth means for me, personally. And I think I needed to be reminded of that, because, most of the time, I don't think about my life in this dark way at all. And that's probably because it usually doesn't *feel* to me as if I am living in a hall of death. Quite the opposite, really.

My life has been fairly cushioned. I have lived with all these kinds of cushions that have cushioned me from that "life is a hall of death" experience. My neighborhoods, my zip codes, my parents, my schools—all sorts of blessings from the Lord that have made my life generally very comfortable.

And that day in Florida served as a reminder of how easily God could take it all away. And unlike what I easily do with the events on the news, I could not keep those men's faces nor those disturbing thoughts about God at a comfortable distance. Frankly, the idea that God *might* take away all the things that I hold most dear scares me. It scares me. My children? *Lose* them? Please, God, no. My wife? No! Please no. It scares me that God *could* call someone I love out of this life, and I pray all the time that He actually would *not* do so.

And then I read about Job. And I probably don't need to remind you of everything that happened to Job, everything that he lost. In Job, we see a *real* picture of what God allows to one degree or another all the time to people all over the world. God removes cushions and gives death its way. This is what happens when you live in the hall of death. Sooner or later, God starts taking away the things that *seem* give your life hope, the things that *seem* to make your life worth living.

Here's what Job says, earlier in this chapter: ***"My hope [God] has pulled up like a tree. He has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary."*** (Job 19:10-11) In another place, he says, ***"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle and come to their end without hope."*** (Job 7:6) And later, he says, ***"The waters wear away the stones; the torrents wash away the soil of the earth; so you destroy the hope of man."*** (Job 14:19) And finally, ***"Where then is my hope? Who will see my hope?"*** Job asks. (Job 17:15) Quickly and unapologetically, God takes away all of Job's hopes and dreams that he had built up in his life, *for* his life. Suddenly, all these hopes are removed from Job's life.

And so, I find it remarkable, incredible really, that stripped of every sliver of hope, the *strangest* of all hopes remains on Job's lips. Job is not sitting on a cushioned pew in a comfortable church when he gives voice to this one remaining hope. He is suffering immense physical, emotional, and spiritual pain. Death has hemmed him in on every side and God is crushing him! And in those circumstances—how in the world he could do so—in those circumstances, he says:

"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! 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!"

The dark hallway of Job's life was lacking any evidence for these ideas. All the evidence pointed to the contrary. The evidence indicated that Job's wife was right. Might as well just ***"curse God and die."*** (Job 2:9) Hope was useless!

Yet hope remained. This was Job's one, remaining hope. One *beautiful* hope springing up from the wreckage of Job's heart. One solitary strain in the midst of the groaning and the crying and the pain that comes to our ears through this poisoned air that we breath: ***"I know that my Redeemer lives,"*** and ***"I shall see [Him.]"*** ***"I shall see [Him] for myself, and my eyes shall behold [Him.]"***

Job's hope blossoms beautifully, for just a *moment*. And then it passes from our view as quickly as it came, and Job never gives voice to it again. Now, I know when I've read Job, I've been disappointed that Job never uttered this hope again. You arrive at these words, Job discloses his hope in chapter

19, and then you make it all the way to the end of his book in chapter 42, and he does not discuss it once more. *We* would hope that Job would proclaim these words triumphantly again and again and again! But Job does *not*. The words burst forth from His lips in a moment and are just as quickly gone.

But maybe the point is in Job's silence. Maybe we can think about it like this. At the beginning of the book, Job had a life *filled* with hopes, a life that was complete and full. But God took *everything else* away from him, except this one rare and improbable hope. And God doesn't do anything to remove *this* hope. And I like to think that Job was safeguarding that hope away in his shattered heart, holding this treasure so dearly close to him, that he sort of ends up leaving *us* hanging.

But that is the nature of hope! Hope sort of leaves us hanging! When we hope, we have to wait. And it's an agonizing wait at times, because God wants us to wait until the end of the book, until the end of our lives, until the end of time. And so, *Job* had to wait. And by the end of his book, the Lord *does* restore to him, does give him more sons and daughters and sheep and camels and oxen. He restores to him hopes and dreams in *this* life. But as for that one hope stored away in the vault of his heart, Job had to wait. He had to wait another 140 years until he died before he could see that hope.

But *we've* seen the rest of the story. And *we* know that the wait is over. We live on this side of Jesus' resurrection. And *I know* that my Redeemer lives. And I know that in Jesus, God gave Job the Redeemer for which Job hoped. Jesus rose from the grave and so will Job. And so will I. Jesus lives no more to die, and so will Job. And so will I. That's the promise that God has made to each and every one of us—a wonderful, amazing promise. That death is at the end of this hallway, but there is something else on the other side of that door. And *we* will live. We will live.

And yet I still see those men's faces, and I still hear the pounding at the door, and I still feel those hands pushing against my chest. And I still get scared. Like Job, I still find myself being scared while still also holding onto this hope. Out of pure grace, God has planted the same improbable hope into my own weak heart. My heart is filled with fear and worry and doubt, along with a myriad of sinful thoughts and feelings. But I have a Redeemer. And He lives. And He forgives. And He is my hope.

And whenever God in His wisdom allows something to happen in my life that reminds me that life is a hallway of death; whenever God takes away the cushions that have made my life so comfortable—I try to remember that God has really promised me only one thing. He has given me only one sure word, one certainty. But it is a wonderful word. And it's that Jesus lives. And I will live also. Jesus has won the victory, and I am victorious with Him. And that's the hope that He wants us to cling to.

And so, sometimes, God might *take away* our other hopes. But it is for the sake of *this* hope. And He will not take away *this* hope. Instead, He promises to nurture this hope. In fact, our Redeemer *lives* to nurture this hope. "*He lives to comfort all my fears. He lives to wipe away my tears. He lives to calm my troubled heart.*" (TLH #200:5) He lives to do all this for me. And to do all this for you.

Yes, that's our Savior. That's our Redeemer. And even though our skin will be destroyed in this hallway of death, we will pass through unscathed. And we will see Him. We *will* see Him. We will see **"the living one. [He] died, and behold [He lives] forevermore."** (Revelation 1:18) And because He lives, you also will live. (cf. John 14:19) Amen.