

Hope Defined
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Job 14:1-14

Complete this well-known quote: “Life is hard and then

_____.”
Pretty fatalistic isn't it? We don't know who originally said that.
Some point to a poem published in the 1920s that read:

*“This life's a hollow bubble,
Just a painted piece of trouble...
We come to earth to cry,
We grow older and we sigh,
Older still, and then we die!”*
- Edmund Vance Cooke

“Life is hard, and then you die.” We may not know who said THAT but we do know that Job said something like it in the first verse of Job Chapter 14: *“Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble.”*ⁱ The NLT renders it: *“How frail is humanity! How short is life, how full of trouble!”*ⁱⁱ

Knowing what we know about Job's situation fourteen chapters into this book we can empathize with his depressed and disillusioned view of his earthly travail. Humanly speaking, Job had good reason for such a negative view of life; but we didn't open our Bibles to look at life from a human perspective. We came to Bible study so we can have a higher view of God's perfect character and what it means to us when we go through the hard seasons of life. Before this book is over, even while still in the midst of his suffering, Job would conclude that God's people may be down but we're never out.

Truth that should change us: People without faith say, *“Life is hard and then you die.”* People who have trusted Christ KNOW, yes, life IS hard but God is faithful!

Before the text, some context: Last week we began in chapter one and today we're in chapter fourteen. We are jumping over a lot of

territory so here's a quick summary of what happened in chapters 2 through 13.

- God allowed Satan to heap more suffering on Job. Job 2:7 says *“Satan left the Lord’s presence, and struck Job with terrible boils from head to foot.”*ⁱⁱⁱ
- Job’s wife said, *“You should just curse God and die!”* Job said, *“Don’t be foolish!” “Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?” So in all this, Job said nothing wrong.”*^{iv}
- Meanwhile, Job’s three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar show up but only make things worse. With friends like these who needs enemies?
- For seven days and seven nights they just sat there and looked at him.
- Job scraped his sores with broken pottery and wished he’d never been born.
- When they finally started talking, the three friends began to accuse Job: *“If God is making you suffer this much you must’ve done something really bad!”*
- Job said, *“I haven’t done anything terrible to deserve all this!”*
- But Job acknowledges that God is God, and He is still in charge.
- Back-and-forth the friends accuse Job, and Job defends himself.
- Finally in chapter 13 Job says to his friends: *“I know as much as you do, you are no better than I am. I’m going to argue my case directly to God himself.”*
- Then he begins to ask God questions like: *“What have I done wrong? Why do you turn away from me? Why do you treat me as your enemy?”* (13:23-25)
- By the time we get to chapter 14 verse one, Job is quite depressed.

Job 14:1–18 (NLT) — 1 “How frail is humanity! How short is life, how full of trouble! **2** We blossom like a flower and then wither. Like a passing shadow, we quickly disappear. **3** Must you keep an eye on such a frail creature and demand an accounting from me? **4** Who can bring purity out of an impure person? No one! **5** You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer. **6** So leave us alone and let us rest! We are like hired hands, so let us finish our work in peace. **7** “Even a

tree has more hope! If it is cut down, it will sprout again and grow new branches. **8** Though its roots have grown old in the earth and its stump decays, **9** at the scent of water it will bud and sprout again like a new seedling. **10** “But when people die, their strength is gone. They breathe their last, and then where are they? **11** As water evaporates from a lake and a river disappears in drought, **12** people are laid to rest and do not rise again. Until the heavens are no more, they will not wake up nor be roused from their sleep. **13** “I wish you would hide me in the grave and forget me there until your anger has passed. But mark your calendar to think of me again! **14** Can the dead live again? If so, this would give me hope through all my years of struggle, and I would eagerly await the release of death.

- The first human reaction to terrible suffering is often amnesia about God.
- Before God allowed Satan to strike Job, he was righteous, rich and famous. Now, in a relatively short time, he went from “*The Lord gives and takes, blessed be the name of the Lord*” to “*Life is hard and then you die.*”
- Question: Is it a sin for God’s people to have feelings like Job expressed? If not, why not? What would cause our complaining to become sin?
- Of the 150 Psalms, 42 of them (almost 1/3) are psalms of lament.
- Let’s look at Psalm 13 written by David, to see how this is an example.
 - **Psalm 13:1–2 (NLT) — 1** O Lord, how long will you forget me? Forever? How long will you look the other way? **2** How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul, with sorrow in my heart every day? How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
- David was about as depressed as Job! He was lamenting!
- I heard a great quote on Friday. “*Disregard anything anyone says before the word, ‘but.’*” Another quote: I don’t think I’ve ever quoted Dr. Phil but this applies: “*BUT is a powerful word. It means forget everything I just said, I’m now going to tell you what I really mean.*”
- Look at what David said in Psalm 13:5-6 AFTER the word “but.”

- **Psalm 13:5–6 (NLT) — 5** But I trust in your unfailing love. I will rejoice because you have rescued me. **6** I will sing to the Lord because he is good to me.
- The point: It's not a sin to pour out your frustrations and discouragement to God, just don't forget about His character and love.
- Job would return to remembering God's love and care, but he's still down!
- Paraphrasing verses 3 and 4: *“God, life is so hard and we humans are so sinful, why hold us to such a high standard that we can't hope to meet?”*
- Look at verse six: *“...leave us alone and let us rest! We are like hired hands, so let us finish our work in peace.”*
- Verse five: “You have decided the length of our lives. You know how many months we will live, and we are not given a minute longer.”

Psalm 139:16 (NLT) tells us — 16 You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

- So does this mean our fate is sealed? Does this mean we have absolutely no control over when we will die? If God has determined the time, place, and circumstances of my death already, why be wise and prudent? Why not drive like Evel Knevel and put anything we want into our bodies?
- At our house, we believe God has decided our “expiration date” but we're concerned about the quality of our life and health before that date.
- How should a Christ-follower live in light of all this?

James 4:13–15 (NLT) — 13 Look here, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” **14** How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog—it's here a little while, then it's gone. **15** What you ought to say is, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.”

- Quoting one commentator: *“We are to make wise decisions about how we live our lives and how we take care of ourselves. And ultimately, we trust God that He is sovereign and in control of all things.”*^{vi}
- Verses 7-12: Job continues to bemoan his “hopeless” view of life.
- In verse 13 he says to God: *“Hide me in the grave” and come back and get me when “Your anger has passed.”* Job was ready to give up on life.
- Then Job asked a great question in verse 14: “Can the dead live again?”
- *[If the dead can live again], “...this would give me hope through all my years of struggle, and I would eagerly await the release of death.”*
- God had not yet revealed everything we know about the resurrection, yet Job seemed to sense God must have a bigger plan for life after death.
- This gets to the heart of how God’s people can deal with terrible suffering.
- We ask, *“Worst case scenario, even if I die physically, will God the Father and the Lord Jesus be waiting for me with open arms and eternal life?”*
- Job had concluded that life is HARD. The only way to overcome that four-letter word H-A-R-D is another four-letter “h” word: H-O-P-E.
- Job had almost given up on hope.

Job 7:9 (NLT) — 9 Just as a cloud dissipates and vanishes, those who die will not come back.

Job 14:19 (NLT) — 19 as water wears away the stones and floods wash away the soil, so you destroy people’s hope.

- What does it mean to have hope as a follower of Christ?

Hebrews 11:1 (ESV) — 1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

R.C. Sproul wrote regarding the true hope of a Christ-follower: *“Let us be clear on what Scripture means by the term hope. In everyday English, we use the term hope for things that we want to see happen but are uncertain as to whether they will actually occur. Three-year-*

old Jonathan might say that he hopes to get a toy fire truck for Christmas because he wants it, but he may not receive it. Biblical hope, however, includes no uncertainty. It pertains to the future, but the future to which it looks is certain. Scripturally speaking, we hope for such things as the resurrection of the dead because it is a certain event that is yet to come. We are sure that this and every other divine promise of the future will be fulfilled because we know the Lord's trustworthy character ([Ps. 22:5](#)). Faith is the assurance of this hope because it gives what lies ahead a present reality. Faith means that we are confident today that what God has pledged to do for His people will come to pass. Hope, because it is certain, is a sure anchor for the soul that grants us subjective assurance—the personal, confident knowledge that the Lord will keep His Word ([Heb. 6:13–20](#)).”

- Job wondered if there was any reason to hope for relief from his suffering and he even wondered if God would be there after this life is over.
- He answered his own question later in Job 19:25-26.

Job 19:25–26 (ESV) — 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,

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Shakespeare wrote in MacBeth: *“Life ... is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”*ⁱⁱⁱ In other words, “Live is hard and then you die.” That's the fatalistic view of someone without hope in Christ.
- Instead of Shakespeare, I'll go with the unknown writer of Hebrews:

Hebrews 6:19–20 (NLT) — 19 This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. **20** Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest...

- People without faith say, “Life is hard and then you die.” People who have trusted Christ KNOW, yes, life IS hard but God is faithful!
- It's true that life is H-A-R-D, hard!

- Followers of Christ can overcome H-A-R-D because we have H-O-P-E.
- When those hard times come (and they will) we can say with the Psalmist: *“But I trust in your unfailing love. I will rejoice because you have rescued me. I will sing to the Lord because he is good to me.”*
- And we can say with Job: *“I know my redeemer lives, and one day I’ll see Him.”*

ⁱ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Job 14:1). Wheaton, IL:

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Job 14:1). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Job 2:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Job 2:10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^v <https://www.drphil.com/slideshows/jealousy-and-envy-final-thoughts/>

^{vi} <https://www.gotquestions.org/appointed-death.html>

^{vii} <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/20563-life-is-a-tale-told-by-an-idiot-full>