

## JOB 19: 23-27

“Oh, that my words were recorded,  
that they were written on a scroll,  
that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead,  
or engraved in rock forever!

I know that my redeemer[b] lives, and that in the end he  
will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been  
destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see  
him with my own eyes—I, and not another.

## 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and  
sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as  
first fruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the  
Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this  
through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of  
our Lord Jesus Christ.

So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to  
the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of  
mouth or by letter.

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our  
Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal  
encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts  
and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

IN 1987 TWO MEN WERE FLYING AN EMPTY 15 SEAT SMALL  
PLANE FROM MAINE TO MASSACHUSETTS.

SHORTLY AFTER TAKE OFF THEY HEARD A BANGING NOISE  
FROM THE BACK OF THE AIRCRAFT.

THE PILOT, HENRY DEMPSEY, GAVE THE CONTROLS TO THE  
COPILOT AND LEFT HIS SEAT TO INVESTIGATE.

HE NOTICED THE PULL-DOWN DOOR DIDN'T SEEM TO BE  
COMPLETELY CLOSED SO HE GRABBED IT TO CLOSE IT.

AT THAT MOMENT THEY HIT SOME TURBULENCE AND THE  
DOOR FLEW OPEN AND DEMPSEY WAS SUCKED OUT.

THE TERRIFIED COPILOT LOOKED BACK AND SAW THE DOOR  
WAS OPEN AND THE PILOT HAD FALLEN OUT.

HE GOT ON THE RADIO AND DECLARED AN EMERGENCY, AND  
EVEN REQUESTED A HELICOPTER TO SEARCH FOR DEMPSEY'S  
BODY.

THEN HE GOT PERMISSION FOR AN EMERGENCY LANDING  
BACK AT AIRPORT.

AFTER THE PLANE LANDED THE EMERGENCY CREW WAS  
ASTONISHED TO SEE DEMPSEY HANGING ON UPSIDE DOWN ON  
THE OPEN DOOR.

YOU SEE, WHEN THE DOOR FLEW OPEN, DEMPSEY GRABBED  
THE SIDES AND HE WAS HANGING ON FOR DEAR LIFE.

EVEN AS HE WAS BEING BUFFETED BY THE AIRFLOW, AS THE  
PLANE WAS FLYING AT 200 MPH, HE HUNG ON AND REFUSED  
TO LET GO.

IN FACT, HIS GRIP WAS SO TIGHT THAT IT TOOK THEM  
SEVERAL MINUTES TO PRY DEMPSEY'S FINGERS FROM THE  
DOOR.

HANGING ON TO GOD NO MATTER WHAT, NO MATTER HOW  
STRONG THE TURBULENCE OR WIND IN OUR LIVES IS, IS JUST  
AS IMPORTANT.

THERE ARE SEVERAL EXAMPLES IN THE BIBLE OF PEOPLE HOLDING ON TO GOD NO MATTER THE TURMOIL AROUND OR WITHIN THEM.

PERHAPS THE BEST KNOWN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THE MAN NAMED JOB, WHO IS DESCRIBED AS “BLAMELESS AND UPRIGHT, ONE WHO FEARED GOD AND TURNED FROM EVIL.”

THE BOOK OF JOB REVEALS BOTH THE CHALLENGES AND BLESSINGS OF FAITH IN THE LORD OUR GOD FOR A MAN WHO DID NOT LET GO.

FOR THE MOST PART HIS IS NOT A HAPPY STORY, BUT ONE OF UNEXPLAINED SUFFERING, WHICH WAS THE RESULT OF THE LOSS OF PROPERTY, CHILDREN, AND HIS OWN HEALTH.

AND YET, IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING THE SPARK OF FAITH WITHIN JOB NEVER GOES OUT.

INSTEAD, THROUGHOUT THE BOOK IT EBBS AND FLOWS UNTIL IT AGAIN BURNS BRIGHT.

JOB WAS A MAN WHO HAD EVERYTHING HE WANTED IN LIFE, AND HE ALSO WAS APPRECIATED BY GOD, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT KNOW IT.

IN FACT, IT WAS BY GOD EXPRESSING DELIGHT IN JOB AND HIS FAITHFULNESS THAT EVERYTHING THAT FOLLOWED HAPPENED.

SATAN, YOU SEE, HEARD WHAT GOD SAID AND INSISTED JOB ONLY LOVED GOD BECAUSE HIS LIFE WAS GREAT.

THE LORD THEN INSISTED JOB WOULD LOVE HIM NO MATTER WHAT, WHICH LED TO TRAGEDY AFTER TRAGEDY AND GREAT SUFFERING TO BE INFLICTED UPON JOB.

THIS CONTINUED TO THE POINT JOB ONLY HAD TWO THINGS LEFT: HIS WIFE AND HIS LIFE.

NOW, THE BIBLE IS CLEAR GOD NEVER DID ANY HARM TO JOB, BUT INSTEAD ALLOWED HARM TO HAPPEN TO HIM. AND JOB NEVER LEARNS THE REASON WHY.

BUT THE ONE THING HE DOES KNOW AND CLINGS TO IS THAT HE HAS NOT SINNED AGAINST GOD IN ANY WAY THAT WOULD JUSTIFY HIS SUFFERING.

YET, JOB HAD SOME WELL-MEANING FRIENDS WHO CAME TO HIM AGAIN AND AGAIN TRYING TO PERSUADE HIM THAT HE OBVIOUSLY HAD TRANSGRESSED AGAINST THE LORD.

IN THEIR MINDS THE ONLY POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR HIS SUFFERING WAS THAT GOD WAS PUNISHING JOB.

THE MEN FURTHER SAID THAT IF JOB WOULD ONLY STOP BEING STUBBORN AND REBELLIOUS, GOD WOULD SURELY FORGIVE HIM.

THROUGHOUT THE STORY JOB DOES TWO THINGS: HE INSISTS HE IS INNOCENT OF WHAT HIS FRIENDS ACCUSED HIM OF, AND HE DOES NOT LET GO OF GOD.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN JOB MAINTAINS A FIRM GRIP, INDEED NOT.

HE GOES THROUGH WAVES OF TRUST FOLLOWED BY HOPELESSNESS, ANGER, AND DEEP DESPAIR-SO MUCH SO HE WISHED TO DIE.

HE DEMANDS GOD SPEAK TO HIM, AND EXPLAIN THE CAUSE OF HIS SUFFERING.

HIS THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS REVEAL THERE ARE MANY TIMES JOB’S GRIP ON GOD IS ONLY WHAT ONE CAN PINCH BETWEEN TWO FINGERS. BUT STILL JOB HOLDS ON TO GOD.

TODAY’S PASSAGE FROM CHAPTER NINETEEN OF JOB CONTAINS THE BEST-KNOWN VERSES IN THE BOOK OF JOB.

IN RESPONSE TO ACCUSATIONS FROM A FRIEND, JOB INSISTED HE HAD COMMITTED NO SINS, CONFESSED OR UNCONFESSED, THAT COULD EXPLAIN HIS SUFFERING.

JOB ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT EVENTUALLY, GOD WOULD VINDICATE HIM.

HE SAID: "I KNOW MY REDEEMER LIVES, AND THAT AT THE LAST HE WILL STAND UPON THE EARTH...THEN IN MY FLESH I SHALL SEE GOD...."

IN THE BIBLICAL TEXT, JOB DOES NOT ACTUALLY SEE GOD, BUT HE DOES HEAR DIRECTLY FROM THE LORD.

AND WHILE GOD DOES NOT GIVE JOB THE ANSWERS HE DEMANDS, GOD DOES VINDICATE HIM.

THE LORD EVEN PROMISED TO PUNISH HIS FRIENDS, UNLESS JOB PRAYED FOR GOD TO FORGIVE THEM.

TRULY, IT WAS BECAUSE JOB DID NOT LET GO, THAT IN THE END EVERYTHING JOB LOST WAS REPLACED BY GOD. THIS ALSO MADE IT CLEAR JOB WAS FAVORED BY THE LORD.

THE PASSAGE FROM SECOND THESSALONIANS PRESENTS US WITH ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE NEED TO NOT LET GO OF GOD, OR THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

THERE PAUL WRITES TO CALM THE FEARS OF THE CHURCH HE HELPED TO ESTABLISH.

THEY WERE BESET BY THE TURBULENCE OF PERSECUTION, AND EVEN WORSE BY FALSE TEACHERS WHO TOLD THEM THE DAY OF GOD'S JUDGEMENT HAD ALREADY COME.

THIS MEANT IN THEIR MINDS JESUS HAD NOT RESCUED THEM, BUT RATHER LEFT THEM TO ENDURE THE TRIBULATIONS WITH EVERYONE ELSE.

IN THAT MIXED CONGREGATION OF JEWISH AND GENTILE CHRISTIANS, SOME WERE TEMPTED TO ABANDON CHRIST AND GO BACK TO THEIR FORMER FAITH AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICE.

THE APOSTLE WRITES TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO STAND FIRM AND NOT LET GO OF JESUS OR THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

CHAPTER TWO OF THE LETTER OPENS WITH THE MESSAGE TO NOT BE SHAKEN BY FALSE TEACHINGS, AND TO BE AWARE THAT THE DEVIL WILL TRY TO DECEIVE THEM.

THEN PAUL DIRECTS THEIR ATTENTION TO WHAT HE WANTS THESE CHRISTIANS TO FOCUS ON SO AS TO RELIEVE THEIR FEAR AND DISTRESS.

HE WRITES: "BUT WE ARE BOUND TO GIVE THANKS ALWAYS TO GOD FOR YOU, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, BELOVED OF THE LORD...."

HIS WORD OF THANKS TO GOD FOR THEM AS FELLOW CHRISTIANS, LOVED BY AND PRECIOUS TO GOD, SEEKS TO ASSURE THEM OF THEIR SALVATION.

PAUL AFFIRMS THEY ARE SAVED AND ARE INDEED AMONG THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO ARE THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE GOSPEL.

HE ASSURES THEM THAT THEY ARE BORN OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH THEY HEARD THROUGH THE APOSTLES.

THIS IS THE SOURCE OF BOTH THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST AND THE REASON THEY CAN BE CONFIDENT IN THEIR SALVATION.

THEY ARE FURTHER ENCOURAGED TO HOLD ONTO THEIR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST WHO HAS INDEED SAVED THEM, NO MATTER WHAT MAY HAPPEN OR FAIL TO HAPPEN.

THEY CAN ALSO BE ASSURED THAT NOTHING CAN CHANGE THEIR STATUS AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST.

NOT EVEN THE WORST THINGS THEY MAY EXPERIENCE, OR THE MISGUIDED OPINIONS OF OTHERS THEY MAY HEAR, CAN ROB THEM OF WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE FOR THEM.

THEREFORE, THEY MUST NOT LET GO OF JESUS EVEN WHEN FEAR OR TERRIBLE CIRCUMSTANCES TEMPT THEM TO DO SO.

THE APOSTLE ALSO PRAYS THEY WILL EXPERIENCE ANEW THE LOVE AND GRACE, AND ETERNAL HOPE FOUND IN JESUS CHRIST AND GOD THE FATHER.

HE PRAYS FOR GOD TO COMFORT AND EMPOWER THEM TO DO GOOD WORKS, AND SPEAK THE GOSPEL MESSAGE TO OTHERS.

THE APOSTLE'S PRAYER SERVES TO REINFORCE IN THE MINDS OF THESE CHRISTIANS, HIS CONFIDENCE IN THEM AS FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

THAT IS WHY HE TOLD THEM TO HOLD ON NOT ONLY TO JESUS BUT THE TRADITIONS-OR BETTER YET THE TEACHINGS ABOUT JESUS, HE AND OTHER APOSTLES GAVE TO THEM.

WE SHOULD NOTICE THAT PAUL DOES NOT TRY TO EXPLAIN THE CAUSE OF THEIR SUFFERING, BEYOND THE PRESENCE OF EVIL FORCES WORKING AGAINST GOD AND HIS WILL.

FOR US IT CAN BE HELPFUL TO REMEMBER THAT JOB, THE THESSALONIANS, AND OTHERS IN THE EARLY CHURCH STRUGGLED TO FIND ANSWERS.

AND YET THEY HELD FIRM TO THEIR FAITH, AND THE GOSPEL. AND THROUGH THEIR LIVING WITNESS, ALONG WITH THE BIBLE, CHRISTIANS TODAY ARE A PART OF THE LIVING FAITH.

EVEN SO, TODAY, PEOPLE CAN STILL FIND MANY REASONS TO QUESTION GOD.

WE LIVE IN YET ANOTHER ERA OF GREAT TROUBLE IN THE WORLD AT LARGE, AS WELL AS IN OUR NATION.

THERE IS TROUBLE IN MANY COMMUNITIES, AND FOR SOME OF US, TURMOIL IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES.

ALL OF THESE KINDS OF THINGS AND MORE MAY TEMPT US TO LET GO OF JESUS.

THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE SINCE WE, LIKE ALL WHO HAVE COME AND GONE BEFORE US, MAY NOT HAVE MANY OF OUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY GOD TO OUR SATISFACTION.

CONSEQUENTLY, THE EXAMPLES OF JOB, THE APOSTLES, AND REGULAR CHRISTIANS THROUGHOUT THE AGES ARE IMPORTANT FOR US TO REFLECT ON.

THEIR PERSEVERANCE IN THE FAITH, ALONG WITH OUR OWN FAITH IN THE LORD AND THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, PROVIDE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR US TO HOLD ON TO GOD.

THIS IS TRUE EVEN THOUGH HOLDING ONTO CHRIST OUR SAVIOR WILL NOT NECESSARILY MAKE LIFE BETTER OR EASIER.

NOR WILL FAITH PROVIDE US WITH ALL THE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS WE THINK GOD SHOULD PROVIDE TO US.

HOWEVER NOT LETTING GO OF JESUS WILL BEAR FRUIT FOR US, AND HOPEFULLY OTHERS AS WELL.

PART OF THE LYRICS FROM RODGERS AND HAMMERSTEIN'S HIT "CAROUSEL" OFFER A SECULAR WORD OF HOPE IN THE MIDST OF TRAGEDY THAT CAN BE VIEWED IN A NEW WAY.

IN A COUNTRY YEARNING FOR HOPE, IN THE DARK DAYS OF WORLD WAR II, ROGER AND HAMMERSTEIN'S MUSICAL "CAROUSEL" PREMIERED ON BROADWAY IN 1945.

THE SONG: "YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE," WITH ITS MESSAGE OF SURVIVAL AND HOPE BECAME A HIT.

I READ THAT IN SOME PLACES IT BECAME AN ANTHEM OF SUPPORT FOR MEDICAL STAFF, AND FIRST RESPONDERS, AND OTHERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

AND IF WE THINK ABOUT CHRIST'S PROMISE TO ABIDE WITH US ALWAYS, THE WORDS TAKE ON A DEEPER MEANING, THAT COVEYS IN ITS OWN WAY, THE MESSAGE "DO NOT LET GO"

I INVITE YOU TO THINK OF JESUS BESIDE YOU AS THESE WORDS ARE READ: "WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH A STORM KEEP YOUR CHIN UP HIGH AND DON'T BE AFRAID OF THE DARK. AT THE END OF A STORM IS A GOLDEN SKY AND THE SWEET SILVER SONG OF A LARK.

WALK ON THROUGH THE WIND, WALK ON THROUGH THE RAIN, THO' YOUR DREAMS BE TOSSED AND BLOWN. WALK ON, WALK ON, WITH HOPE IN YOUR HEART, AND YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE....'

MAY WE REMEMBER THE PROMISES OF SCRIPTURE AND THE FAITHFULNESS OF JESUS, AND HOLD ON TO HIM ALWAYS. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: JOB 19:23-27 & 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17

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