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Journeying with Job. Part 15

Broken Spirits and Dim Eyes

Text: Job 17:1-16

This first person, vulnerable, revealing chapter of Job is sad. He is, according to 15:1 and 16:1, still answering Eliphaz.

Margaret Brackenbury Crook says, *The whole dreadful miscarriage of justice continues unabated. (*The Cruel God. p. 78)Listen to Job.

* My spirit is broken(1a)
* My days are extinguished(1b)
* The grave is ready for me(1c)
* People spit in my face(6b)
* My purposes are broken off(11b)

Such are some of us. There is not a person in this worship space that has not experienced some of these feelings or thoughts. I remind you that *feelings* are dangerous as a driver of life.

Last Sunday I read a poem by the Reformer, Martin Luther:

*Feelings come and feelings go,*

*And feelings are deceiving;*

*My warrant is the Word of God--*

*Naught else is worth believing.*

*Though all my heart should feel condemned*

*For want of some sweet token,*

*There is One greater than my heart*

*Whose Word cannot be broken.*

*I'll trust in God's unchanging Word*

*Till soul and body sever,*

*For, though all things shall pass away,*

*HIS WORD SHALL STAND FOREVER!”*

Feelings and facts are two separate realities. Feelings are real but they should not be permitted to rule us.

The one certainty in Job’s life is death*.* This chapter holds up these two entities: hope and death. Death is inevitable. Hope is that which fills us as we move toward death.

Picture it: social stigma (6) mixed with internal, spiritual despair (11,15). I have a sermon I preach from Job 29:1-17. I call the sermon, “Bring Back the Butter”. In that twenty-ninth chapter of Job, Job says, “I miss my former life. I was SOMEBODY!!”

 In 17:15, Job brings up the subject of hope as one of his options. The dark night of the soul seems to be turning to day (17:11-12). You who are suffering, be not dismayed. He who brought order out of chaos and light out of darkness is here!!! There is no easy resolution here. Job suggests that suffering and corruption and the destructive worm have become family and settled in his house (17:14). Maybe hope and a perceived bright future will go with him all the way to the end of his life (17:16). I don't know. Norman Habel, speaking of this seventeenth chapter says, “The text remains tantalizingly ambiguous” (The Book Job. p. 279)

**Closing**

This portrait of a suffering broken man contains a haunting question in verse 15, that I’d like us all to answer.

*Where then is my hope?*

It is certainly not found in Job’s three friends...or ours. Our hope is not in our feelings for “feelings come and feelings go.” Our hope is not found in our assets, for they can be taken away. Think not? Ask Job.

No, a person looking for hope amidst their suffering is wise to look beyond their circumstances and their friends and their material assets.

I have a suggestion. Side with the hymn writer, Edward Mote. Mote was a [pastor](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_%28Christianity%29) at Rehoboth Baptist Church in [Horsham](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horsham), [West Sussex](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Sussex), England. He wrote around 100 hymns. This one, which he wrote in 1834, is his best known.

*My hope is built on nothing less*

*than Jesus' blood and righteousness;*

*I dare not trust the sweetest frame,*

*but wholly lean on Jesus' name.*

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;*

*all other ground is sinking sand.*

*2 When darkness veils His lovely face,*

*I rest on His unchanging grace;*

*in ev'ry high and stormy gale*

*my anchor holds within the veil.*

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;*

*all other ground is sinking sand.*

*3 His oath, His covenant, His blood*

*support me in the 'whelming flood;*

*when all around my soul gives way*

*He then is all my hope and stay.*

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;*

*all other ground is sinking sand.*

*4 When He shall come with trumpet sound,*

*O may I then in Him be found,*

*dressed in His righteousness alone,*

*faultless to stand before the throne.*

*On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;*

*all other ground is sinking sand.*

Here is the tension in the text: hope and death.

We can face the dimming eye (17:7) and the broken spirit(17:1); the loss of social standing and the metaphorical or actual spitting in the face(17:6) and even death itself, because we have hope. Hope does not disappoint. On this Pentecost Sunday, we are full of hope. The same God who gave Job some sense of hope is the same God who poured out His Spirit in the upper room. Because of this God, we who follow Christ have hope.

Broken sprits? Yes.

Dim eyes? Yes.

Hopeless???

NO!!!

Amen