

JOB

Chapter 14

Job Continues: Death Comes Soon to All

“Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble. 2 He comes out like a flower and withers; he flees like a shadow and continues not. 3 And do you open your eyes on such a one and bring me into judgment with you? 4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one. 5 Since his days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass, 6 look away from him and leave him alone, that he may enjoy, like a hired hand, his day. 7 “For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease. 8 Though its root grow old in the earth, and its stump die in the soil, 9 yet at the scent of water it will bud and put out branches like a young plant. 10 But a man dies and is laid low; man breathes his last, and where is he? 11 As waters fail from a lake and a river wastes away and dries up, 12 so a man lies down and rises not again; till the heavens are no more he will not awake or be roused out of his sleep. 13 Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! 14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my service I would wait, till my renewal should come. 15 You would call, and I would answer you; you would long for the work of your hands. 16 For then you would number my steps; you would not keep watch over my sin; 17 my transgression would be sealed up in a bag, and you would cover over my iniquity. 18 “But the mountain falls and crumbles away, and the rock is removed from its place; 19 the waters wear away the stones; the torrents wash away the soil of the earth; so you destroy the hope of man. 20 You prevail forever against him, and he passes; you change his countenance, and send him away. 21 His sons come to honor, and he does not know it; they are brought low, and he perceives it not. 22 He feels only the pain of his own body, and he mourns only for himself.”

14:1–2 *few of days and full of trouble.* One might properly understand this passage in two ways: (1) life is short and full of trouble, or (2) already when we are only a few days old, we face many troubles. This and the following verse are often quoted at funerals. *like a flower.* The older we get, the more we realize how quickly life flies by. Flowers bloom and flourish in their beauty, only to wither and die in a short time (cf Is 40:6–8). (TLSB)

14:1 See 5:7. (CSB)

In these verses Job makes several remarkable statements. To the reader of today they may sound too pessimistic, but are they? Let's put ourselves in Job's place. He had lost his property and children, and now he is suffering indescribable pain, intense anxiety, and deep loneliness. He received no help from his unfeeling friends. Their visit rather increased his distress. In addition, he was tempted to feel that even God has forsaken him. (PBC)

14:2–6 A symmetrical poem centered around v. 4; v. 2 corresponds to v. 5, and v. 3 to v. 6. Job expostulates with God: Given man's insignificance and inherited impurity, why do you take him so seriously (see 13:25)? (CSB)

14:2 *He ... withers away.* Life at best is brief and fragile (see 8:19; Ps 37:2; Isa 40:7, 24). (CSB)

14:3 *bring me into judgment.* Given the brevity of life, Job wonders aloud why God should even notice and judge a person. (TLSB)

14:4 *clean thing out of an unclean?* We are all born in sin (cf Ps 51:5). It seems unfair to Job that God should judge us since life is short and filled with trouble and we are born into an unclean (sinful) condition. How can God expect much of any of us? (TLSB)

not one. Job answers his own question. (TLSB)

14:5 *his days.* Job asserts that God controls the length of our brief life. LXX includes the words “on earth.” David expresses it this way: “But I trust in You, O LORD.... My times are in Your hand” (Ps 31:14–15). (TLSB)

14:6 *like a hired hand.* A manager doesn’t expect a great deal out of a mere hired hand. Job wonders why God should be so interested in what we do. (TLSB)

14:7–12 Man is like a flower that lives its short life and is gone (v. 2), not like a tree that revives even after it has been cut down. (CSB)

14:7–9 *hope for a tree.* After some species of trees are cut down, they will sprout new shoots (suckers) from their roots. *its root grow old ... like a young plant.* Isaiah also uses this picture to describe the Savior coming from the “stump of Jesse” (father of King David and ancestor of Christ; Is 11:1–2). Centuries later, long after the royal line of David seemed dead, Jesus would fulfill these words. Contrary to what religions of reincarnation (e.g., Hinduism and Buddhism) teach, an individual does not come back. The Bible teaches that we die once and then face the judgment (Heb 9:27). (TLSB)

14:7 *sprout.* The Hebrew root underlying this word is translated “renewal” in v. 14. (CSB)

14:10 *where is he?* More than a rhetorical question. Later in this ch and more explicitly in 19:25–27, Job expresses hope in the life to come. (TLSB)

14:11–12 *rises not again.* Job seems to say there is no resurrection; though it is possible he has not yet come to the conviction of life after death, more likely he is referring to the passing away of this world (cf vv 13–17). (TLSB)

14:13–17 Job’s spirit now appears to rise above the despair engendered by his rotting body. Although resurrection in the fullest sense is not taught here, Job is saying that if God so desires he is able to hide Job in the grave, then raise him back to life at a time when the divine anger is past. (TLSB)

hide me in Sheol. Job wants to escape this life of suffering and asks God to take him into the realm of the dead. (TLSB)

appoint me a set time. The moment God’s anger passes, Job wants the Lord to remember him. (TLSB)

remember. Hbr *zakar.* Job asks God to remember him beyond death. When the Lord “remembers” us, He acts on our behalf. (TLSB)

The word “remember” has a strong, loving connotation. In the account of the great flood we read that “God remembered Noah” (Genesis 8:1). That does not imply that God had forgotten him, but tells us that God was deeply concerned about Noah and all who were with him in the ark. (PBC)

14:14 *days of my service*. As Job’s life prior to all his suffering showed, he believed that we are on earth to serve and worship God. *my renewal*. Though this may refer to renewal in this life, the context shows that Job sees renewal even after death. (TLSB)

renewal – The Hebrew word is the same root as the word translated “sprout again” in verse 7. There is refers to the new growth of a tree that has been cut down. What a striking picture that is of the resurrection. (PBC)

14:15 *I would answer you*. Job longs to speak with God and serve Him. He envisions God also longing to be in a relationship with His servant. (TLSB)

14:16–17 *not keep watch over my sin*. Aug: “See how Job, too, confesses his sins, and says how sure he is that there is none righteous before the Lord. So he is sure of this also, that if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us. While, therefore, God bestows on him His high testimony of righteousness, according to the standard of human conduct, Job himself, taking his measure from the rule of righteousness [says] ... ‘How shall a mortal man be just before the Lord?’ ” (NPNF 1 5:50). Job sees forgiveness as coming from the hand of the Almighty. *my transgression*. Contrary to what Zophar argued, forgiveness is not accomplished by our efforts. *sealed up*. Merchants sealed bags of goods with a signet stamped onto the binding. Job pictures forgiveness as a sealing up of sin (so it does not contaminate) and a covering (so it is no longer visible). (TLSB)

14:18–22 Job’s pessimism arises not from skepticism about the possibility of resurrection from the dead but rather from God’s apparent unwillingness to do something immediately for a person like him, whose life has become a nightmare of pain and mourning. (CSB)

14:18 *mountain falls*. Job notes the awesome power of the Almighty, similar to what the psalmist writes: “God is our refuge and strength ... though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea” (Ps 46:1–2). God holds power over all of nature, even the seemingly indestructible mountains. The psalm speaks of God’s protective power; here Job refers only to the power, but not the protection. (TLSB)

14:19 *destroy the hope of man*. Job sees God’s awesome power in nature as a sign of His condemning power over sinful people. Nature’s force points toward God’s Law and judgment. (TLSB)

14:20 *You change his countenance*. Job is saying that God can crush the human spirit and sadden our expression. He can do this through suffering or simply through the ravages of old age. (TLSB)

14:21–22 *14:21–22 perceives it not*. In the pain of suffering or old age, we are not even aware of what is happening with our own children—whether they are being honored or brought down. When we die, of course, we are even less aware. *only for himself*. Pain can be so overpowering that we are unable to see what is going on beyond our own body. On this outcry, Job ends his refutation of Zophar and the first round of discussions. (TLSB)

Using the illustration of a person who died and was survived by his children, Job theorized: A dead person is ignorant of that which takes place on earth, and is not aware of the good or bad fortune of his children or others who are still alive. (PBC)

Ch 14 Job expresses the hope of forgiveness and life, but struggles with an overwhelming awareness of God's heavy hand upon weak and sinful human beings like himself. In other words, Job has focused on the condemning power of God's Law, rather than on the forgiving and renewing power of the Gospel. We are like that when we suffer. We tend to see only the anger and condemnation, but we fail to see that even in the darkest hour, God is a God of forgiveness and love. On the cross, Christ suffered not only inscrutable pain physically, emotionally, and mentally for us, but He also suffered hellish spiritual anguish. Through Him we enjoy God's love, now and eternally. Our sufferings can remind us of His greater sufferings on our behalf. They also remind us that this earth is not our permanent home—heaven is our home. • Almighty God, forgive our many doubts, strengthen our faith, and lead us through this life to the joys of heaven. Amen. (TLSB)