

CHAPTER 14

Job had turned from speaking to his friends, finding it to no purpose to reason with them, and here he goes on to speak to God and himself. He had reminded his friends of their frailty and mortality (~~13:12~~ Job 13:12); here he reminds himself of his own, and pleads it with God for some mitigation of his miseries. We have here an account,

I. Of man's life, that it is,

1. Short (v. 1).
2. Sorrowful (v. 1).
3. Sinful (v. 4).
4. Stinted (v. 5, 14).

II. Of man's death, that it puts a final period to our present life, to which we shall not again return (v. 7-12), that it hides us from the calamities of life (v. 13), destroys the hopes of life (v. 18, 19), sends us away from the business of life (v. 20), and keeps us in the dark concerning our relations in this life, how much soever we have formerly been in care about them (v. 21, 22),

III. The use Job makes of all this.

1. He pleads it with God, who, he thought, was too strict and severe with him (v. 16, 17), begging that, in consideration of his frailty, he would not contend with him (v. 3), but grant him some respite (v. 6).
2. He engages himself to prepare for death (v. 14), and encourages himself to hope that it would be comfortable to him (v. 15). This chapter is proper for funeral solemnities; and serious meditations on it will help us both to get good by the death of others and to get ready for our own.

~~14:1~~ JOB 14:1-6

BREVITY AND FRAILTY OF HUMAN LIFE

We are here led to think,

I. Of the original of human life. God is indeed its great original, for he *breathed into man the breath of life* and in him we live; but we date it from our birth, and thence we must date both its frailty and its pollution.

1. Its frailty: *Man, that is born of a woman, is therefore of few days*, v. 1. This may refer to the first woman, who was called *Eve*, because she was the mother of all living. Of her, who being deceived by the tempter was first in the transgression, we are all born, and consequently derive from her that sin and corruption which both shorten our days and sadden them. Or it may refer to every man's immediate mother. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we know that *partus sequitur ventrem* — *the child takes after the mother*. Let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, or in the strength of his father, but remember that he is born of a woman, and that, when God pleases, the *mighty men become as women*, ^{<251>}Jeremiah 51:30.

2. Its pollution (v. 4): *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* If man be born of a woman that is a sinner, how can it be otherwise than that he should be a sinner? See ^{<251>}Job 25:4. *How can he be clean that is born of a woman?* Clean children cannot come from unclean parents any more than pure streams from an impure spring or grapes from thorns. Our habitual corruption is derived with our nature from our parents, and is therefore bred in the bone. Our blood is not only attained by a legal conviction, but tainted with an hereditary disease. Our Lord Jesus, being made sin for us, is said to be *made of a woman*, ^{<251>}Galatians 4:4.

II. Of the nature of human life: it is a *flower*, it is a *shadow*, v. 2. The flower is fading, and all its beauty soon withers and is gone. The shadow is fleeting, and its very being will soon be lost and drowned in the shadows of the night. Of neither do we make any account; in neither do we put any confidence.

III. Of the shortness and uncertainty of human life: *Man is of few days*. Life is here computed, not by months or years, but by days, for we cannot be sure of any day but that it may be our last. These days are few, fewer than we think of, few at the most, in comparison with the days of the first patriarchs, much more in comparison with the days of eternity, but much fewer to most, who come short of what we call *the age of man*. Man sometimes no sooner comes forth than he *is cut down* — comes forth out of the womb than he dies in the cradle — comes forth into the world and

enters into the business of it than he is hurried away as soon as he has laid his hand to the plough. If not cut down immediately, yet *he flees as a shadow*, and never continues in one stay, in one shape, but the fashion of it passes away; so does this world, and our life in it, ~~417~~ 1 Corinthians 7:31.

IV. Of the calamitous state of human life. Man, as he is short-lived, so he is sad-lived. Though he had but a few days to spend here, yet, if he might rejoice in those few, it were well (a short life and a merry one is the boast of some); but it is not so. During these few days he is *full of trouble*, not only troubled, but full of trouble, either toiling or fretting, grieving or fearing. No day passes without some vexation, some hurry, some disorder or other. Those that are fond of the world shall have enough of it. He is *satur tremore* — *full of commotion*. The fewness of his days creates him a continual trouble and uneasiness in expectation of the period of them, and he always hangs in doubt of his life. Yet, since man's days are so full of trouble, it is well that they are few, that the soul's imprisonment in the body, and banishment from the Lord, are not perpetual, are not long. When we come to heaven our days will be many, and perfectly free from trouble, and in the mean time faith, hope, and love, balance the present grievances.

V. Of the sinfulness of human life, arising from the sinfulness of the human nature. So some understand that question (v. 4), *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* — a clean performance from an unclean principle? Note, Actual transgressions are the natural product of habitual corruption, which is *therefore* called *original sin*, because it is the original of all our sins. This holy Job here laments, as all that are sanctified do, running up the streams to the fountain (~~418~~ Psalm 51:5); and some think he intends it as a plea with God for compassion: “Lord, be not extreme to mark my sins of human frailty and infirmity, for thou knowest my weakness. *O remember that I am flesh!*” The Chaldee paraphrase has an observable reading of this verse: *Who can make a man clean that is polluted with sin? Cannot one? that is, God. Or who but God, who is one, and will spare him?* God, by his almighty grace, can change the skin of the Ethiopian, the skin of Job, though clothed with worms.

VI. Of the settled period of human life, v. 5.

1. Three things we are here assured of: —

(1.) That our life will come to an end; our days upon earth are not numberless, are not endless, no, they are numbered, and will soon be finished, ²¹⁶⁶Daniel 5:26.

(2.) That it is determined, in the counsel and decree of God, how long we shall live and when we shall die. The number of our months is with God, at the disposal of his power, which cannot be controlled, and under the view of his omniscience, which cannot be deceived. It is certain that God's providence has the ordering of the period of our lives; our times are in his hand. The powers of nature depend upon him, and act under him. In him we live and move. Diseases are his servants; he kills and makes alive. Nothing comes to pass by chance, no, not the execution done by a bow drawn at a venture. It is therefore certain that God's prescience has determined it before; for *known unto God are all his works*. Whatever he does he determined, yet with a regard partly to the settled course of nature (the end and the means are determined together) and to the settled rules of moral government, punishing evil and rewarding good in this life. We are no more governed by the Stoic's blind fate than by the Epicurean's blind fortune.

(3.) That the bounds God has fixed we cannot pass; for his counsels are unalterable, his foresight being infallible.

2. These considerations Job here urges as reasons,

(1.) Why God should not be so strict in taking cognizance of him and of his slips and failings (v. 3): “Since I have such a corrupt nature within, and am liable to so much trouble, which is a constant temptation from without, *dost thou open thy eyes and fasten them upon such a one*, extremely to mark what I do amiss? ²¹⁶⁷Job 13:27. And dost thou *bring me*, such a worthless worm as I am, *into judgment with thee* who art so quick sighted to discover the least failing, so holy to hate it, so just to condemn it, and so mighty to punish it?” The consideration of our own inability to contend with God, of our own sinfulness and weakness, should engage us to pray, *Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant*.

(2.) Why he should not be so severe in his dealings with him: “Lord, I have but a little time to live. I must certainly and shortly go hence, and the few days I have to spend here are, at the best, full of trouble. O let me have a little respite! v. 6. Turn from afflicting a poor creature thus, and let him rest awhile; allow him some breathing time, *until he shall accomplish as a*

hireling his day. It is appointed to me once to die; let that one day suffice me, and let me not thus be continually dying, dying a thousand deaths. Let it suffice that my life, at best, is *as the day of a hireling*, a day of toil and labour. I am content to accomplish that, and will make the best of the common hardships of human life, the burden and heat of the day; but let me not feel those uncommon tortures, let not my life be as the day of a malefactor, all execution-day.” Thus may we find some relief under great troubles by recommending ourselves to the compassion of that God who knows our frame and will consider it, and our being out of frame too.

~~141~~ JOB 14:7-15

DEATH ANTICIPATED

We have seen what Job has to say concerning life; let us now see what he has to say concerning death, which his thoughts were very much conversant with, now that he was sick and sore. It is not unseasonable, when we are in health, to think of dying; but it is an inexcusable incogitancy if, when we are already taken into the custody of death's messengers, we look upon it as a thing at a distance. Job had already shown that death will come, and that its hour is already fixed. Now here he shows,

I. That death is a removal for ever out of this world. This he had spoken of before (~~141~~ Job 7:9, 10), and now he mentions it again; for, though it be a truth that needs not be proved, yet it needs to be much considered, that it may be duly improved.

1. A man cut down by death will not revive again, as a tree cut down will. What hope there is of a tree he shows very elegantly, v. 7-9. If the body of the tree be cut down, and only the stem or stump left in the ground, though it seem dead and dry, yet it will shoot out young boughs again, as if it were but newly planted. The moisture of the earth and the rain of heaven are, as it were, scented and perceived by the stump of a tree, and they have an influence upon it to revive it; but the dead body of a man would not perceive them, nor be in the least affected by them. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, when his being deprived of the use of his reason was signified by the cutting down of a tree, his return to it again was signified by the leaving of the stump in the earth with a band of iron and brass to be *wet*

with the dew of heaven, ²⁰¹⁸Daniel 4:15. But man has no such prospect of a return to life. The vegetable life is a cheap and easy thing: the scent of water will recover it. The animal life, in some insects and fowls, is so: the heat of the sun retrieves it. But the rational soul, when once retired, is too great, too noble, a thing to be recalled by any of the powers of nature; it is out of the reach of sun or rain, and cannot be restored but by the immediate operations of Omnipotence itself; for (v. 10) *man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?* Two words are here used for man: — *Geber, a mighty man*, though mighty, dies; *Adam, a man of the earth*, because earthy, gives up the ghost. Note, Man is a dying creature. He is here described by what occurs,

(1.) Before death: he *wastes away*; he is continually wasting, dying daily, spending upon the quick stock of life. Sickness and old age are wasting things to the flesh, the strength, the beauty.

(2.) In death: *he gives up the ghost*; the soul leaves the body, and returns to God who gave it, the Father of spirits.

(3.) After death: *Where is he?* He is not where he was; his place knows him no more; but *is he nowhere?* So some read it. Yes, he is somewhere; and it is a very awful consideration to think where those are that have given up the ghost, and where we shall be when we give it up. It has gone to the world of spirits, gone into eternity, gone to return no more to this world.

2. A man laid down in the grave will not rise up again, v. 11, 12. Every night we lie down to sleep, and in the morning we awake and rise again; but at death we must lie down in the grave, not to awake or rise again to such a world, such a state, as we are now in, never to awake or arise *until the heavens*, the faithful measures of time, shall *be no more*, and consequently time itself shall come to an end and be swallowed up in eternity; so that the life of man may fitly be compared to the waters of a land-flood, which spread far and make a great show, but they are shallow, and when they are cut off from the sea or river, the swelling and overflowing of which was the cause of them, they soon decay and dry up, and their place knows them no more. The waters of life are soon exhaled and disappear. The body, like some of those waters, sinks and soaks into the earth, and is buried there; the soul, like others of them, is drawn upwards, to mingle with the waters above the firmament. The learned Sir Richard Blackmore makes this also to be a dissimilitude. If the waters

decay and be dried up in the summer, yet they will return again in the winter; but it is not so with the life of man. Take part of his paraphrase in his own words: —

*A flowing river, or a standing lake,
May their dry banks and naked shores forsake;
Their waters may exhale and upward move,
Their channel leave to roll in clouds above;
But the returning water will restore
What in the summer they had lost before:*

*But if, O man! thy vital streams desert
Their purple channels and defraud the heart,
With fresh recruits they ne'er will be supplied,
Nor feel their leaping life's returning tide.*

II. That yet there will be a return of man to life again in another world, at the end of time, when *the heavens are no more*. Then *they shall awake and be raised out of their sleep*. The resurrection of the dead was doubtless an article of Job's creed, as appears, ^{<1826>}Job 19:26, and to that, it should seem, he has an eye here, where, in the belief of that, we have three things: —

1. A humble petition for a hiding-place in the grave, v. 13. It was not only a passionate weariness of this life that he wished to die, but in a pious assurance of a better life, to which at length he should arise. *O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!* The grave is not only a resting-place, but a hiding-place, to the people of God. God has the key of the grave, to let in now and to let out at the resurrection. He *hides men in the grave*, as we hide our treasure in a place of secrecy and safety; and he who hides will find, and nothing shall be lost. “O that thou wouldst hide me, not only from the storms and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life! Let me lie in the grave, reserved for immortality, in secret from all the world, but not from thee, not from those eyes which saw my substance when first curiously wrought in *the lowest parts of the earth,*” ^{<1825>}Psalms 139:15, 16. There let me lie,

(1.) *Until thy wrath be past*. As long as the bodies of the saints lie in the grave, so long there are some remains of that wrath which they were by nature children of, so long they are under some of the effects of sin; but, when the body is raised, it is wholly past — death, the last enemy, will then be totally destroyed.

(2.) Until the *set time* comes for my being remembered, as Noah was remembered in the ark (~~GEN~~ Genesis 8:1), where God not only hid him from the destruction of the old world, but reserved him for the reparation of a new world. The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave. There is a time appointed, a time set, for their being enquired after. We cannot be sure that we shall look through the darkness of our present troubles and see good days after them in this world; but, if we can but get well to the grave, we may with an eye of faith look through the darkness of that, as Job here, and see better days on the other side of it, in a better world.

2. A holy resolution patiently to attend the will of God both in his death and his resurrection (v. 14): *If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come.* Job's friends proving miserable comforters, he set himself to be the more his own comforter. His case was now bad, but he pleases himself with the expectation of a change. I think it cannot be meant of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. His friends indeed flattered him with the hopes of that, but he himself all along despaired of it. Comforts founded upon uncertainties at best must needs be uncertain comforts; and therefore, no doubt, it is something more sure than that which he here bears up himself with the expectation of. The change he waits for must therefore be understood either,

(1.) Of the change of the resurrection, when the vile body shall be changed (~~PHI~~ Philippians 3:21), and a great and glorious change it will be; and then that question, *If a man die, shall he live again?* must be taken by way of admiration. "Strange! Shall these dry bones live! If so, all the time appointed for the continuance of the separation between soul and body my separate soul shall wait until that change comes, when it shall be united again to the body, *and my flesh also shall rest in hope.*" ~~PSA~~ Psalm 16:9.
Or,

(2.) Of the change at death. "*If a man die, shall he live again?* No, not such a life as he now lives; and therefore I will patiently wait until that change comes which will put a period to my calamities, and not impatiently wish for the anticipation of it, as I have done." Observe here,

[1.] That it is a serious thing to die; it is a work by itself. It is a change; there is a visible change in the body, its appearance altered, its actions brought to an end, but a greater change with the soul, which quits the

body, and removes to the world of spirits, finishes its state of probation and enters upon that of retribution. This change will come, and it will be a final change, not like the transmutations of the elements, which return to their former state. No, we must die, not thus to live again. It is but once to die, and that had need be well done that is to be done but once. An error here is fatal, conclusive, and not again to be rectified.

[2.] That therefore it is the duty of every one of us to wait for that change, and to continue waiting all the days of our appointed time. The time of life is an appointed time; that time is to be reckoned by days; and those days are to be spent in waiting for our change. That is, *First*, We must expect that it will come, and think much of it. *Secondly*, We must desire that it would come, as those that long to be with Christ. *Thirdly*, We must be willing to tarry until it does come, as those that believe God's time to be the best. *Fourthly*, We must give diligence to get ready against it comes, that it may be a blessed change to us.

3. A joyful expectation of bliss and satisfaction in this (v. 15): Then *thou shalt call, and I will answer thee*. Now, he was under such a cloud that he could not, he durst not, answer (^{<K05>} Job 9:15, 35; 13:22); but he comforted himself with this, that there would come a time when God would call and he should answer. Then, that is,

(1.) At the resurrection, “Thou shalt call me out of the grave, by the voice of the archangel, and I will answer and come at the call.” The body is the *work of God's hands*, and he will have a desire to that, having prepared a glory for it. Or,

(2.) At death: “Thou shalt call my body to the grave, and my soul to thyself, and I will answer, Ready, Lord, ready — Coming, coming; here I am.” Gracious souls can cheerfully answer death's summons, and appear to his writ. Their spirits are not forcibly required from them (as ^{<Q21>} Luke 12:20), but willingly resigned by them, and the earthly tabernacle not violently pulled down, but voluntarily laid down, with this assurance, “Thou *wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands*. Thou hast mercy in store for me, not only as made by thy providence, but new-made by thy grace;” otherwise *he that made them will not save them*. Note, Grace in the soul is the work of God's own hands, and therefore he will not forsake it in this world (^{<H38>} Psalm 138:8), but will have a desire to it, to perfect it in the other, and to crown it with endless glory.

~~846~~ JOB 14:16-22

COMPLAININGS OF JOB

Job here returns to his complaints; and, though he is not without hope of future bliss, he finds it very hard to get over his present grievances.

I. He complains of the particular hardships he apprehended himself under from the strictness of God's justice, v. 16, 17. *Therefore* he longed to go hence to that world where God's wrath will be past, because now he was under the continual tokens of it, as a child, under the severe discipline of the rod, longs to be of age. "When shall my change come? *For now thou seemest to me to number my steps, and watch over my sin, and seal it up in a bag,* as bills of indictment are kept safely, to be produced against the prisoner." See ~~8324~~ Deuteronomy 32:34. "Thou takest all advantages against me; old scores are called over, every infirmity is animadverted upon, and no sooner is a false step taken than I am beaten for it." Now,

1. Job does right to the divine justice in owning that he smarted for his sins and transgressions, that he had done enough to deserve all that was laid upon him; for there was sin in all his steps, and he was guilty of transgression enough to bring all this ruin upon him, if it were strictly enquired into: he is far from saying that he perishes being innocent. But,

2. He does wrong to the divine goodness in suggesting that God was extreme to mark what he did amiss, and made the worst of every thing. He spoke to this purport, ~~8327~~ Job 13:27. It was unadvisedly said, and therefore we will not dwell too much upon it. God does indeed see all our sins; he sees sin in his own people; but he is not severe in reckoning with us, nor is the law ever stretched against us, but we are punished less than our iniquities deserve. God does indeed seal and sew up, against the day of wrath, the transgression of the impenitent, but the sins of his people he blots out as a cloud.

II. He complains of the wasting condition of mankind in general. We live in a dying world. *Who knows the power of God's anger, by which we are consumed and troubled, and in which all our days are passed away?* See ~~8301~~ Psalm 90:7-9, 11. And who can bear up against his rebukes? ~~8301~~ Psalm 39:11.

1. We see the decays of the earth itself.

(1.) Of the strongest parts of it, v. 18. Nothing will last always, for we see even mountains moulder and come to nought; they wither and fall as a leaf; rocks wax old and pass away by the continual beating of the sea against them. *The waters wear the stones* with constant dropping, *non vi, sed saepe cadendo* — *not by the violence, but by the constancy with which they fall*. On this earth every thing is the worse for the wearing. *Tempus edax rerum* — *Time devours all things*. It is not so with the heavenly bodies.

(2.) Of the natural products of it. The things which grow out of the earth, and seem to be firmly rooted in it, are sometimes by an excess of rain washed away, v. 19. Some think he pleads this for relief: “Lord, my patience will not hold out always; even rocks and mountains will fail at last; therefore cease the controversy.”

2. No marvel then if we see the decays of man upon the earth, for he is of the earth, earthy. Job begins to think his case is not singular, and therefore he ought to reconcile himself to the common lot. We perceive by many instances,

(1.) How vain it is to expect much from the enjoyments of life: “*Thou destroyest the hope of man,*” that is, “puttest an end to all the projects he had framed and all the prospects of satisfaction he had flattered himself with.” Death will be the destruction of all those hopes which are built upon worldly confidences and confined to worldly comforts. Hope in Christ, and hope in heaven, death will consummate and not destroy.

(2.) How vain it is to struggle against the assaults of death (v. 20): *Thou prevailest for ever against him*. Note, Man is an unequal match for God. Whom God contends with he will certainly prevail against, prevail for ever against so that they shall never be able to make head again. Note further, The stroke of death is irresistible; it is to no purpose to dispute its summons. God prevails against man and he passes away, and lo he is not. Look upon a dying man, and see,

[1.] How his looks are altered: *Thou changest his countenance*, and this in two ways: — *First*, By the disease of his body. When a man has been a few days sick what a change is there in his countenance! How much more when he has been a few minutes dead! The countenance which was

majestic and awful becomes mean and despicable — that was lovely and amiable becomes ghastly and frightful. *Bury my dead out of my sight.* Where then is the admired beauty? Death changes the countenance, and then sends us away out of this world, gives us one dismissal hence, never to return. *Secondly*, By the discomposure of his mind. Note, The approach of death will make the strongest and stoutest to change countenance; it will make the most merry smiling countenance to look grave and serious, and the most bold daring countenance to look pale and timorous.

[2.] How little he is concerned in the affairs of his family, which once lay so near his heart. When he is in the hands of the harbingers of death, suppose struck with a palsy or apoplexy, or delirious in a fever, or in conflict with death, tell him then the most agreeable news, or the most painful, concerning his children, it is all alike, he knows it not, he perceives it not, v. 21. He is going to that world where he will be a perfect stranger to all those things which here filled and affected him. The consideration of this should moderate our cares concerning our children and families. God will know what comes of them when we are gone. To him therefore let us commit them, with him let us leave them, and not burden ourselves with needless fruitless cares concerning them.

[3.] How dreadful the agonies of death are (v. 22): *While his flesh is upon him* (so it may be read), that is, the body he is so loth to lay down,; *it shall have pain; and while his soul is within him*, that is, the spirit he is so loth to resign, it shall mourn. Note, Dying work is hard work; dying pangs are, commonly, sore pangs. It is folly therefore for men to defer their repentance to a death-bed, and to have that to do which is the one thing needful when they are really unfit to do any thing: but it is true wisdom by making our peace with God in Christ and keeping a good conscience, to treasure up comforts which will support and relieve us against the pains and sorrows of a dying hour.