

**Job 3:20-26 (NIV)**

- 20 “Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul,  
 21 to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it  
 more than for hidden treasure,  
 22 who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave?  
 23 Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has  
 hedged in?  
 24 For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like  
 water.  
 25 What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to  
 me.  
 26 I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”

18-03-01-“I Wonder If It’s a Life!”

Despair, why-questions, trials, suffering, self-renunciation

Job 3:20-26

Human hope must be fed with divine truth.

**INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture reading)**

–*Job* starts as *prose* [story language] but continues as *poetry* [soul language].

Job meets his tragedies with *poetic resignation* in **Job 1:21**, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.” But his long poem of

*despair* in Ch.3 boils down to one phrase: “*I wish I’d never been born!*”

–[“*I wish I’d never been born!*” is a phrase from Frank Capra’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*. We don’t ask, “Have you seen it?” but “How many times have you seen it?”

*Why do we repeatedly watch it?* The answer is in why the *Book of Job* remains a *wonderful resource* for people working their way through the trials of this life, people who aren’t saying, “*It’s a wonderful life!*” but “*I wonder if it’s a life!*” (title).]

–[**George Eliot** (really Mary Ann Evans) wrote, “*Despair is often only the painful eagerness of unfed hope.*”] Job’s *despair* at life’s *injustices and tragedies* is in the Bible for a reason. His poetic *realism* shows us that **HOM.idea**.

–*Hope in God’s truth must be set in contrast to despair in life’s trials...*

**I. When Death Seems Desirable, Feed Hope on God’s Truth– v.20-**

**22**, “Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure, who are filled with gladness and rejoice when they reach the grave?”

A. *Human despair* happens when our God-given “*Something’s not right!*” meets with our human “*I can’t do anything about it!*”

1. **People in despair**, may think *life’s end* is better than *life’s pain*: “*I’ll be ‘filled with gladness and rejoice when [I] reach the grave.’ (Not so unless you already have God’s joy now– Phil 1:23-24, I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*

2. **God prolongs life** so we can *experience His loving grace*.

B. If death seems desirable, human hope must feed on divine truth.

1. **Talk to your soul!**– **Psa 43:5** (NASB), Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance, and my God.
2. **Tell yourself the truth!**– **Psa 117**, Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.

**TRANS:** *Despair* occurs when our God-given “something’s not right!” meets our human “I can’t do anything about it!” But *hope* comes when our helplessness meets our trust in God’s unfailing love. *Despair* says, “That’s it! I’m done!” *Faith* says, “I will put my Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance, and my God.”

## II. When Things Look Dark, Feed Hope on God’s Goodness— v.23,

“Why is life given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?”

- A. Much of life’s “way is hidden.” (We don’t know why trouble comes.)
- B. SO, we think “God has hedged in” our soul (We feel out of control in a “painful eagerness of unfed hope.” [Pain in illness intensifies from lack of knowledge and loss of control: “What are my options? Where’s the call light?”])
  1. Darkness can alter our perspective. (We see only our troubles.)
  2. Darkness clouds memories of past help & hopes for the future.
- C. If darkness oppresses us, human hope must feed on divine truth.
  1. Talk to your soul!— Psa 27:13-14, I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.
  2. Tell yourself the truth!— Psa 23:6, Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

**TRANS:** Christians *do* have times of despair. [Spurgeon, a great preacher, suffered from depression and wrote: “There are experiences of the children of God which are full of spiritual darkness; and I am almost persuaded that those of God’s servants who have been most highly favoured have, nevertheless, suffered more times of darkness than others.”] But Spurgeon fed his drooping hope on the truth of God’s love, and with his hope strengthened, he fed others!

## III. When Trouble Comes, Feed Hope on God’s Deliverance— v.24,

“For sighing comes to me instead of food; my groans pour out like water.

- A. Trouble can bring a despairing isolation. (If “sighing comes... instead of food” from God’s Word to feed our hope, we may withdraw from others, as we get alone to let our despairing “groans pour out.”)
- B. Despair deepens, if we prepare for troubles but they come anyway — v. 25, What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me.
- C. When troubles multiply in succession, we can really get depressed — v.26, “I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil.”
- D. If troubles overwhelm us, human hope must feed on divine truth.
  1. Talk to your soul!— Psa 27:5, For in the day of trouble he will keep me

safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.

2. Tell yourself the truth!— Psa 37:39-40, The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble. The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.

## CONCLUSION:

—Talking to your soul is a new idea to many but an old one in the Bible. Yet it’s an essential practice for the despairing soul (when death seems desirable, when things look dark, when troubles come). Remember, “Despair is often only the painful eagerness of unfed hope.” If trials bring you into depression or despair, talk to your soul! Tell yourself to hope in what God’s Word says! Human hope must be fed with divine truth.