

## Job 7:1-7

For those of you who don't know it already, the Rosenow family owned a 200 acre **farm** in East Farmington, out on the **river** road. My **great-grandparents** and **grandparents** farmed there until my grandfather died from leukemia. Then the farm was **sold**. As the oldest grandchild, I inherited a number of family **heirlooms**. One of them is a copy of Die Heilige Schrift - The Holy Bible in German, which belonged to my great-grandfather. Copies of this book are **not** especially **rare** - but this particular copy **is** rather **unusual**. You see, in spite of its age, this Bible is in pretty good shape, except for the Book of **Job**. In fact, this Bible was opened so **often** to that book, that the **pages** are in tatters, and **binding** is actually **broken** there. Just out of curiosity, I opened it to chapter 7, and there was an **x** marking the words of our text for today. There is the **possibility** that none of this **means** anything at all. However, I think it is more **likely**, that my great-grandfather lived through some rather **difficult** times, and that he frequently turned to the Book of **Job** for **comfort**. One of the things we learn from the Book of Job is that **Life Is Just A Breath**. Sometimes it is a breath of **fresh** air, sometimes it is a breath **polluted** by **sin**, but it is **always** the breath of **God**.

Regardless of the **good** things or **bad** things which we experience in our earthly life, we're only here for a **short** time - and when those times have been **bad**, it's **comforting** to know that those days aren't going to **last** for very long, and that God is ultimately in **control** of them. **Job's** life was perhaps as **difficult** as anyone's has **ever** been. Let me give you a little **background** information.

When the Book of Job begins, we learn that Job lived in the land of **Uz**. Although we aren't completely **sure**, it seems most likely that this is the same land which we know as **Edom**. We are told that Job was a **wealthy** man - "*the greatest of all the men of the East.*" The description of his wealth shows us that God had **richly** blessed Job - even by **modern** standards. We're told that Job had **7 sons, 3 daughters, 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and a very large retinue of servants**. We're also told that the relationship between Job's sons and daughters was a **good** one - there was no **backbiting** or **bickering** between them.

Job is also described as being "*blameless and upright; a man who feared God, and turned away from evil.*" Job knew exactly where his blessings had come from, and he regularly gave **thanks** and offered **sacrifices** to the one true **God**, out of **gratitude**. At this time Job must have been a **very** happy man - a man who had reached a point in his life where he didn't **need** to work just to make **ends** meet,

but rather he could take some time to **enjoy** the fruits of his labor. For the time being, his life was a breath of **fresh air**. That is, until the **tests** started to come.

We're told that **Satan** had a conversation with **God** - a conversation in which God used **Job** as an example of great **faith**. But Satan **scoffed** at the suggestion. He told God, *"Is it **without cause** that Job fears God? You have put a protective **hedge** around him and his household and everything that belongs to him, haven't you? You have **blessed** the work of his hands. His livestock has spread throughout the land. But just stretch out your hand and **strike** everything that is his, and he will certainly **curse** you to your face."* It was a **challenge** which God was not going to **ignore**. To prove that Satan was **wrong**, God gave him the permission to **take away** all of Job's possessions. But at the same time, God did **not** allow Satan to touch Job **himself**.

Nevertheless, in a single day, through a series of disasters, Job lost **all** of his ten **children**, **all** of his **flocks** and **herds**, and all but a **handful** of his **servants** who survived only to report the tragic incidents to Job. I can't imagine a more **devastating** day in the life of **any** human being. All of a sudden, the breath of Job's life had turned **stale** and **sour** and **polluted**. But through it all, Job **still** does **not** curse God. Instead we hear him say, *"**Naked** I came from my mother's womb, and **naked** I will return. The **LORD** gave and the **LORD** has **taken away**; may the name of the **LORD** be **blessed**."*

That certainly proves Job's faith to **me**, but it wasn't **good** enough for the **devil**. He went back to God a **second** time, and said, *"Skin for skin! A man will give all he **has** for his **life**. But stretch out your hand and strike his **bones and flesh**, and he will **certainly** curse you to your face!"* A **second** challenge - a challenge which God was **equally** confident that Job would be able to **meet**. So, God **again** allowed Satan to attack His servant - this time striking Job **himself** - with the one **restriction**, that Satan could **not** take Job's **life**. The breath of Job's life was about to become even **more** putrid than before.

That's where our **text** for today picks up. Job is **weeping** and **wailing** over his physical infirmities - he is **lamenting** the day that he was **born** - his is **wishing** that he were **dead**. But Job is **not** cursing God. As our text begins, we see Job's faith **bending**, but not **breaking**. We hear him say, *"Isn't man's time on earth like being **compelled** to serve in the **army**? Aren't his days like those of a **hired man**? Like a **slave**, he longs for shade, or like a **day laborer**, he waits for his **pay**. In the same way, **I** have been allotted months of **futility**, and nights of **agony** have been assigned to me."*

Job refers to the days of his life as being **compelled** to serve in the **army**. Military life hasn't really changed much over the years. It is a life based on **discipline** and **obedience**. The military slogan, "Ours is not to reason **why**, ours is but to **do** or **die**," would have applied in **Job's** day just as it does in our **own**. Such **blind** obedience is **difficult**, especially when you have been **compelled** to carry it out. Job feels like he doesn't have any **control** over his life. He simply **must do** whatever it is that **God** wants him to do.

You've felt that way **too**, haven't you? When we feel as if our lives are out of **control**, we need to remember who is **in** control of our lives. **God** is. Sometimes it really **is difficult** to do what God wants us to do with our lives. But God **loves** us, and **provides** for us, and **cares** for our every need. How could we possibly go **against** His wishes, when we know that He is only doing what is **best** for us? Job didn't **understand** that there was a **test** behind his afflictions. But he **did** understand that **God** was in control, and that God **loved** him. So, he continued to **hang on** to God, even when he was in the **depths** of despair.

Job also refers to the days of his life as the work of a **hired man** - even a **slave**. The hired man and the slave both have things in common. They **work** for **someone else**. Their **efforts** bring **benefits** to someone else. In return, the slave receives a **place** to live, and **rest** at the end of the day - while the hired man receives his **wages**. That's **something**, but it's really not **enough**. Job is **frustrated** that he has lived his life for **God**, and **God** has seemingly received **all** the **benefits**.

Job is **struggling** with the thought that perhaps **he** should be receiving something **better** from God. And who can **blame** him? Listen to the way his disease is described. "*When I lie down, I think, 'How long before I get up?' But the night drags on, and I am filled with restlessness until dawn. My flesh is clothed with maggots and caked with dirt. My skin scabs over and then oozes again.*" Job's nights are **sleepless**, and his days are **painful**. The symptoms of his disease have been compared to elephantiasis - a disease which is marked by an enormous **enlargement** of parts of the body, caused by **parasites** blocking the **lymph** system. Without knowing any more details than **that**, it already makes my skin **crawl**. Yet, even through such suffering, Job does **not** curse God.

Have you ever felt as if God wasn't giving you what **you** deserve? Well, your suspicions are **correct**. God **hasn't** given you what you deserve. And you can be **grateful** that He has treated you with such **mercy**. If God really gave us what we **deserved**, then by comparison, the sufferings of **Job** would look like a stroll in

the park. The breath of our life has been **polluted** by **sin**, and our **sins** have earned us an **eternity** of **separation from God** in the torments of **hell**. **That's** what we really **deserve**.

Even **Job** knew that his life wasn't **that** bad, because he knew that our earthly life is **temporary** and that it comes to an end **quickly**. Our text concludes, "*My days pass by more **swiftly** than the **shuttle** of a weaver's loom. They come to an end without **hope**. Remember that my **Life Is Just A Breath**.*" Everybody knows how **time flies**, and the older we get, the more **swiftly** it seems to move. Because of his intense **agony**, Job **hoped** that his life would come to an end **soon**. Little did he realize at the time, that God would **not** take his life away, but rather, He would **restore** Job's **earthly** life - granting him even **more** blessings than Job had experienced in the **past**, and allowing him to **live** yet another 140 years!

Even so, our **Life Is Just A Breath** - a single breath of **God**. At the creation of Adam we learn that man had his **beginning** when, "*the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and **breathed into** his nostrils the **breath of life**, and the man became a living being.*" Then in the Book of Ecclesiastes we learn that man reaches his **end** when, "*the dust goes back into the ground - just as it was before, and the **spirit** goes back to **God** who gave it.*" That's all there is to life. God breathes life **into** us ... (exhale) ... and then whenever He chooses, He takes that life **back** again ... (inhale). **One breath of God**, and our life is over.

My dear friends in Christ, may we always realize that our **Life Is Just A Breath** - a breath which will be **over** all too soon. And whether that life is a breath of **fresh air** filled with many **blessings**, or whether it is a breath of **stale air** filled with many **problems**, may we recognize it as a **gift from God**, and wisely **use** the days of our life to **serve God** and give Him **glory**. Amen.