Job 7:1-7 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? 2Like a slave, he longs for shade, or like a day laborer, he waits for his pay. 3In the same way, I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of agony have been assigned to me.

4When I lie down, I think, “How long before I get up?” But the night drags on, and I am filled with restlessness until dawn. 5My flesh is clothed with maggots and caked with dirt. My skin scabs over and then oozes again.

6My days pass by more swiftly than the shuttle of a weaver’s loom. They come to an end without hope. 7Remember that my life is just a breath. My eyes will never again see good fortune.

I will tell you, you get a text like this and your mind just shutters. This is a tough text! I mean, just look at the opening verses: **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.”**

We are going to have to admit that clearly these are not happy words. Clearly they speak of struggle and hardship that I don’t think most people expect to find in the Bible. And yet, the truth be told, God’s Word often lays out truths and facts in just the way they happened. That’s why you find heroes of faith caught in adultery or other wickedness. That’s why you can find historical incidents that are not godly and good but rather raw and on the border of evil. Our verse are very much like that.

So, yes, these verses speak of hardship, struggle, and difficulty, really these words are an expression of the despair that a fellow by the name of Job is undergoing. What do we make of such words? What should we walk away with as we study the book of Job? All those are pertinent and important questions to consider. Our theme will be: **JOB TEACHES ABOUT LIFE.**

Please note that our words for today do indeed come from the book of Job. By our guestimates Job lived during the days of the Patriarchs, somewhere in the 1800’s B.C. It appears that Job is a man of wealth and influence and it is clear that Job is a man who has been very much blessed by the Lord God. That is something important to remember. Job has been blessed by God most of his life. Job is a firm believer in God, a stalwart man of faith who clearly knows and has confidence in the promises of God. Please note that the very first verse of this book says, **“There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright, a man who feared God and turned away from evil.”**

I want you to remember that these words are the pronouncement of God over Job. From there the section goes on to speak of Job’s family, seven sons and three daughters, such were the blessings that the Lord had given. And there was more. It is reported that Job had **“seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys.”** At the end of this section a simple fact is recorded: **“This man was the greatest of all the men of the East.”**

That fact and the blamelessness of Job are things to be remembered. It is clear from his status that Job would have been admired, respected and set forth as an example of what a man is to be. But note that Job is going to teach even more. Job is going to be set forth as a living Bible lesson for all the generations to come, because if there is one thing that stands out it is the fact that even today, we still speak of Job. But it is not his wealth or anything material that we remember. It is Job’s faith and the lessons about God that his book brings forth.

What we find in this book is that after this stellar introduction comes Job’s first test. Be careful as you read what it was that happened. Remember not to ascribe to God any level of evil or wickedness. Those things are foreign to God. So the best we can say is that we learn that Satan is given allowance to test the faith of Job. And what a test! In one day Job will lose everything he has. Through a series of calamities his animals, his servants and his children are all taken from him. I can imagine that you and I might have been filled with despair and horror and perhaps even anger with God should such misfortune come upon us. But Job shows the measure of what true faith is even as disaster strikes. Job declares, even in the distress he must have been feeling: **“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.”**

I can tell you that such a faith is to be admired. It is a faith that is based on God’s goodness and majesty and not upon the worldly and earthly gifts that God in his grace might or might not give us. God’s love is not measured by earthly standards of wealth or ease of life. God’s love is ours because God is love and compassion, filled with grace and mercy in every way for us. But brace yourself, for your faith in God is going to be pressed and challenged in the chapters to come, pressed and challenged just like Job’s faith was.

In chapter 2 Satan asks to test Job even more. Now it will be physical distress. We are told Job is covered from head to toe with painful sores. His only relief is to scrape himself with a broken piece of pottery. But the test isn’t just found in the physical stress and pain. The test is also found in the words of the friends of Job who supposedly come to comfort him. Their words are not comfort, but their words falsely accuse God and Job of wrongs. It is this onslaught of “worldly” wisdom that pushes Job to the limits. Our words of chapter 7 show the influence of what is upon Job. It is clear from the words that Job is feeling despair and struggling to keep a faithful perspective. I can tell you that many times Job will wish that he dies or that he had never been born, the struggle is so great and difficult. It is this struggle that is laid out until the 38th chapter. Finally in chapter 38 the Lord himself addresses Job and his so-called friends.

At this point, let me then share with you what I think the true lessons of Job are. Lessons we should not forget.

Lesson 1. You are not God and you do not grasp and fathom God’s greatness, goodness, marvel and majesty as you should. Many words are found in Job but many of those words speak falsely of God and his ways. It is a reminder that we are not to listen to the world’s ideas and pronouncements of God, rather listen to the Lord and what He reveals. In chapter 42 Job says, **“I know that you can do all things. No purpose of yours can be thwarted. You asked, “Who is this who spreads darkness over my plans with his ignorant words?” I have made statements about things I do not understand, things to wonderful for me to know. You said, “Listen now and I will speak. I will ask you questions and you will inform me.” My ear heard about you. Now my eyes see you. So I despise myself. I repent in dust and ashes.”**

Job got lesson one. As children of faith we are to have confidence in the grace and goodness of God no matter what is going on or happening. When first tested, Job did just that…**”The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away,”** but later on Job will waver in his confidence in God’s love and goodness, waver because his so-called friends representing the world, lead away from God and his truth. So trust God. Follow God’s ways and you will be fine.

Lesson 2. Although it may sound as if Job has given up on faith, he does not. Job wavers. Job struggles. Job gets confused and down. Such can be the impact of sin and distress in our lives. But if you know the book of Job you also know that pretty much in the middle of all of this is a confession of faith and confidence in the promises of God that says it all. Job 19:25-27 **“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the end of time he will stand over the dust. Then, even after my skin has been destroyed, nevertheless, in my own flesh I will see God. I myself will see him. My own eyes will see him, and not as a stranger.”**

The importance of this confession of Job for the understanding of this book is often overlooked. Even when Job is saying he wants to die or that he wishes had not been born, his confession is still that of God’s grace and mercy and God’s gift of eternal life and salvation through the promised Savior. It is this hope, the wonder of eternal life with God that survives and helps Job to get through his struggles. I believe that Paul in 2 Corinthians makes a very similar confession. Paul says in 4:16-18, **“Therefore we are not discouraged. But even if our outer self is wasting away, yet our inner self is being renewed day by day. Yes, our momentary, light trouble produces for us an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond any comparison. We are not focusing on what is seen, but on what is not seen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”**

Lesson 2 reminds you that when you are struggling, and you will in this world of sin and despair, where is it you should turn? To the world and its ideas? To the shallow and vain idea, yes, false idea, that says if I am good God will bless me and if I am bad God will punish me? That is not the teaching of your Savior and God. Your Savior God took your punishment and even in the midst of sin and trouble blesses you with the gift of eternal life and salvation. I believe absolutely that when we focus on the eternal blessing of God found in Jesus then in this life there is nothing we can’t bear and take on. God is with us. God blesses us with eternal life in Jesus. Not a single trouble of this world cancels or casts aside this marvel and wonder of God. The biggest problem we have is that we don’t grasp that this is our hope and focus. We forget the salvation of God in Jesus and that this salvation is even for now. Just like Job with sores and in pain, we should confess, **“I know my Redeemer lives!”** Or like Paul to say, **“Our momentary, light trouble produces for us an eternal weight of glory.”**

When we keep the promises and love of God found in Jesus before us, what is there to despair of? God is with us. God is working for our good and eternal salvation. God is fulfilling his purpose and plan in our lives. God’s way, dear children. Trust in God no matter what.

Of course, it is here that we most struggle. If we don’t have this or gain that, then we think God has somehow abandoned and forsaken us. Yet nothing is further from the truth. God is there to help. God is there to uplift and comfort, to strengthen and guide in his ways. But we despair, we act as if Jesus somehow died and stays dead. We act as if all this marvel of Jesus is as nothing.

But that is exactly the point of the book of Job. Don’t give up on the wonder and marvel of God. Let God’s promises be your hope and stay, your comfort and confidence. God does not work to punish but to bless and save in every way. I will guarantee this to you, when you get to heaven and you say to God, “Lord, why did you let this happen to me, it was so hard?” God will show you exactly who, what, how and when and by the time He is done you will realize He was working to save your soul and bring you all the closer to Him. Again, our problem is we resist. In Job’s case, his friends who were supposed to comfort caused greater despair because they lead away from God’s grace. I see this happening in the Christian church of today. The Church doubting, twisting, changing the clear teaching of God for what appears scholarly or what is worldly and literally is gutting the marvel of Jesus of its hope and comfort. Stick to God’s Word as God’s Word. Believe it or not, even in Job’s life, God was working for the good and eternal salvation of his servant and family. Such is the wonder and marvel of God.

Lesson 3. Because of God’s love, Job’s faith remains intact. For that matter, Job’s friends have to go to Job and let Job plead for their forgiveness before God. We are told God even blesses Job with twice as much goodness as before. All of this that the people and world around Job might learn and also believe in the Lord God. Think of this, Job’s struggle was a lesson before all. God used Job to teach and preach a lesson that all needed to hear. I can’t emphasize this enough, Job’s life and struggles were lessons for the people of Job’s day, that they might hear and learn the truth and wonder of God.

I pray it is the same for your life. Got a struggle? You can whine and complain and wallow in self-pity or you can realize that God is with you, that you can and will endure, and that to God is all the glory. I am going to guess you have known people like that. I can tell you as a Pastor I have seen so many wonderful examples of faith in the midst of difficulty among our members. God’s children who in the face of sin’s destructive powers stood firm in their confidence and trust in God. And in so many of those cases their faith was an absolute blessing to behold. I mean, when someone confesses, “If God heals me and I get through, thank the Lord and if God uses this to take me home to him, thank the Lord,” you can’t help but rejoice and give praise to God for his care and compassion, his gift of faith that sustains and upholds. In many cases, that is what the book of Job is about. About the struggles we will surely face but about the victory that God always gives, no matter what, because God’s love is always for us.

Thank you Job for your display of faith. Thank you Lord, for the lessons of Job. Lord, grant us such a gracious faith, that we know we are always in your hands. Whether there is good or bad, let faith cause us to praise your name and cling to your gracious promises to endure even to eternal life. Amen.