

JOB

Chapter 7

Job Continues: My Life Has No Hope

“Has not man a hard service on earth, and are not his days like the days of a hired hand? 2 Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like a hired hand who looks for his wages, 3 so I am allotted months of emptiness, and nights of misery are apportioned to me. 4 When I lie down I say, ‘When shall I arise?’ But the night is long, and I am full of tossing till the dawn. 5 My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt; my skin hardens, then breaks out afresh. 6 My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle and come to their end without hope. 7 “Remember that my life is a breath; my eye will never again see good. 8 The eye of him who sees me will behold me no more; while your eyes are on me, I shall be gone. 9 As the cloud fades and vanishes, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up; 10 he returns no more to his house, nor does his place know him anymore. 11 “Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. 12 Am I the sea, or a sea monster, that you set a guard over me? 13 When I say, ‘My bed will comfort me, my couch will ease my complaint,’ 14 then you scare me with dreams and terrify me with visions, 15 so that I would choose strangling and death rather than my bones. 16 I loathe my life; I would not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are a breath. 17 What is man, that you make so much of him, and that you set your heart on him, 18 visit him every morning and test him every moment? 19 How long will you not look away from me, nor leave me alone till I swallow my spit? 20 If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of mankind? Why have you made me your mark? Why have I become a burden to you? 21 Why do you not pardon my transgression and take away my iniquity? For now I shall lie in the earth; you will seek me, but I shall not be.”

Ch 7 Job turns his complaint away from his friends and toward God. (TLSB)

7:1–21 Having replied to Eliphaz, Job now addresses his complaint toward God. (CSB)

7:1 *a hard service* – A slave didn’t even earn wages. He was the property of his master and was completely bound to his master’s will. Since the slave received no wages, all he had to look forward to after a hard day’s work was rest under the shade of a tree or in a shelter. (PBC)

A slave longed for the evening shadows, a signal that the day’s labor was finished. The hired man normally received his pay at the end of each day, a necessity for buying food for the next day. (TLSB)

hard service. See 14:14. The Hebrew for this expression sometimes implies military service. It is also used in reference to the Babylonian exile in Isa 40:2. (CSB)

In a broader sense the word can indicate “warfare” or “enforced service,” under which the worker has very little freedom as stated in Is. 40:2, where in the KJV it is translated “and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished. (PBC)

hired hand – He worked for another. He had to do his bidding, and had no investment or equity of his own. He was only paid wages. He hoped to receive his wages at the end of a work day, but sometimes he was disappointed. (PBC)

7:2 *the shadow*. End of the workday. (CSB)

7:3–4 Job complains that he gets no “pay” at all for months, not just days, of hard labor. The shade of night brings no rest; depression frequently causes sleeplessness. (TLSB)

7:5 We don’t know the exact problems Job faced, but he had many festering sores all over his body. (CSB)

Job emphasizes the physical symptoms of his disease. His skin disease constantly breaks out in some places as it heals in others. (TLSB)

It is questionable whether any other human being except our Savior has suffered more severely than Job. (PBC)

7:6 *weaver’s shuttle*. Shuttle for a handloom glides back and forth rapidly to create the final product. Job lost all hope for physical and emotional recovery prior to his impending death. (TLSB)

This describes a means of which the weft is shot between the threads of the warp as they are drawn up and down. His days pass as swiftly by as the little shuttle passes backwards and forwards in the warp. (KD)

As the web of the weaver’s loom would be cut off, so also would Job’s life. (PBC)

While he clung to the slender thread of life as his hope, he was convinced that it would soon be cut off. Little did he know that God would grant him an additional 140 years after his restoration (42:16). (PBC)

7:7–21 Job addresses God directly. (TLSB)

7:7 *my life is but a breath*. As a chronic sufferer he has lost all sense of purpose in life (see v. 3; see also Ps 144:3–4). He does not anticipate healing and sees death as his only escape. (CSB)

my eye will never again see good – In saying those words Job was in grave danger of falling away from God. His great suffering drove him to say things he would never have said under other circumstances. (PBC)

7:9 *he who goes down to Sheol does not come up*. Such statements are based on common observation and are not meant to dogmatize about what happens after death. Mesopotamian descriptions of the netherworld refer to it similarly as the “land of no return.” (CSB)

Sheol. Hbr for “grave” (as here) or, in some contexts, for “hell.” Job emphasizes the disappearance of a person upon death, similar to the vanished cloud in the sky. From a purely natural perspective, a person dies, is buried, and is seen no more. (TLSB)

7:11 *not restrain my mouth*. Job is determined to cry out against the apparent injustice of God who, it seems, will not leave him alone (vv. 17–20). (CSB)

7:12 *the sea, or the monster of the deep.* The sea and the largest creatures in it are sometimes used to symbolize God’s most powerful enemies (e.g., Ps 74:13–14; cf Jb 41). Job complains that he is neither God’s enemy nor is he powerful, yet God has treated him as though he were both. (TLSB)

7:13–14 He thinks that even the nightmares that disturb his much-needed sleep are from God. (CSB)

7:14 *You.* Job blames God for the dreams and visions that interrupt his sleep and exhaust him at night. (TLSB)

7:16 *I loathe my life.* The depth of Job’s hopelessness is revealed in the plaintive cry to God: “Leave me alone.” (TLSB)

In speaking these words, Job was asking God to abandon him, but to stop afflicting him so severely or else to let his die in peace. In spite of his strong feelings and sharp word Job still retained his faith in God even though severely tested. (PBC)

7:17 *What is man that you make so much of him ... ?* See Ps 144:3; cf. Ps 8:4–8, where the answer is given that man is created in God’s image to have dominion over the world (see Ge 1:27–28). Job’s words (vv. 18–21) are a parody on this theme—as if God’s only interest in man is to scrutinize him unmercifully and take quick offense at his slightest fault. (CSB)

For a similar question in a much more positive context, cf Ps 8:4–8. Job can see only his own pain, and it colors his view of everything else. (TLSB)

7:19 *how long.* Lit. “long enough for me to swallow my saliva.” (CSB)

swallow my spit? Ancient proverb, used in Arabic even today, meaning “a very short time.” (TLSB)

7:20 *If I sin, what do to you ... ?* I have not been perfect, but what terrible sin have I committed that deserves this kind of suffering? (CSB)

We can’t defend these words of Job, but if we put ourselves in his place we can understand them. (PBC)

watcher. The Hebrew for this word is used in a favorable sense in Isa 27:3, but here Job complains that God is too critical. (CSB)

Ordinarily, “watcher” refers to God, who “watches over” human beings, protecting and providing for them. Job, however, describes God watching humankind as an enemy army watches a besieged city, waiting to attack a weak spot. (TLSB)

mark? Target (cf 6:4). (TLSB)

burden to you. See NIV text note. Ancient Hebrew scribes report that a change in the text had been made from “you” to “myself” because the reading “you” involved too presumptuous a questioning of God’s justice. (CSB)

7:21 *transgression...iniquity.* Job confesses that he is a sinner, but he cannot understand why God refuses to forgive him. (CSB)

lie down in the earth. Of the netherworld, as in Mesopotamian descriptions of it (see note on v. 9). (CSB)

Job acknowledges his sinfulness and pleads for mercy. Bern: “Throwing down the weight of my own will, I may breathe easily under the light burden of charity; that I may not be overborne any longer by servile fear, nor allured by selfish cupidity, but may be impelled by Your spirit, the spirit of liberty, which is that of Your children” (*SLSB*, p 199). (TLSB)

Ch 7 In his grief and bitter pain, Job turns to God with this desperate cry: “Leave me alone” (v 16). Painful experiences, such as being diagnosed with a terminal illness or the sudden death of a loved one, can leave us angry with God. By the cross, we understand that God loves us and works through everything in our lives for our salvation (Rm 8:28). In Christ alone, we receive full assurance of God’s love for us. Luth: “This consignment into Satan’s hands which is held up to your eyes and heart is a temptation for an hour and a moment of time, not for your perdition but to try you, for your salvation and endless gain” (AE 6:95). • Lord, teach me each day to beg Your pardon and believe Your promise that even amid suffering, You are working for my good. Amen. (TLSB)