

Thorn-Crowned Devotions

Week Seven

Breath of God

... then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (Genesis 2:7)

God is the source of life. He literally is the air we breathe as the song says. He created man out of the earthly materials, but it was the breath of life which made us each living creatures (persons). From that one act of creation all of us have come into existence and continue to live.

Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone” (*Luke 4:4*). He was quoting Moses (*Deuteronomy 8:3*). This is one of the lessons from the manna that God provided for Israel in the wilderness. Their food literally came from heaven in order to help them understand that the real reason why they had bread to eat was because God said so and for no other reason.

The world record for holding one’s breath was established in 2012 by Stig Severinsen, a Danish free diver. By saturating his body with pure oxygen for 20 minutes he was able to hold his breath for 22 minutes. This record stood for four years until broken by Aleix Segura who went on an additional two minutes and 3.45 seconds until he drew his next breath.

The reason these men were able to do this is because of intense training, being aided by oxygen, and the fact that God gave them the breath of life. One day both of them will take their last breath.

One day you will take the last breath that God will allow you to have and then you will pass from the realm of the living into death. When will this happen?

Psalm 31:15 says, “*My future is in your hands.*”

Commit

*⁵Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God. (Psalm 31:5)*

Written by Jesus' ancestor, King David, Psalm 31 communicates the reasons why we can trust God. We are not sure what peril the king was facing when he wrote this, but we do know that when Jesus quoted it, death was imminent, and trust was vital. He was committing his life and the possibility of rising again to his Father.

David was trusting the Lord for safety and difficult, perhaps life-threatening, circumstances. He knew that God was a *refuge* (4). What is pictured by this word is an impregnable mountain stronghold.

He knew that God had redeemed him from every adversity that he had faced so far (5; see *2 Samuel 4:9; 1 Kings 1:29*). In every circumstance where he had been afflicted, he had the confidence that God had seen it (7; *Exodus 3:7; 4:31*).

Speaking as a shepherd, David says that God has brought him to "*a broad place*." This was a place of safety and supply. He contrasts the plans of the enemy with trust in God's good purposes (8).

He knows that "*calling upon*" the Lord is the solution to his difficulties (17). One of the reasons he knows this is because of his experience. David had been in a besieged city, God had heard his prayer and delivered him (21-22; see *1 Samuel 30*).

Have you found yourself besieged facing the worst disaster of your life? There is a God on whom you can call committing yourself in trust that He will deliver.

Entrust

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. (1 Peter 2:23)

Trust is required when people are being unfair to us.

While Jesus was on the cross there was little he could do when he was reviled. He could've responded by hurling words of accusation from his vast knowledge of the sins of all people. He could've threatened them with what was going to happen to them in the judgment. He did none of these things. Instead he kept quiet because he was trusting that God would judge Him justly.

It is because of this example of Jesus the Peter was able to write to fellow believers who were suffering great persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ. He encouraged them not to suffer as wrongdoers, but to recognize that when they suffered while doing good, God would reward them.

Suffering is nothing to be ashamed of, but he does not always turn out in physical deliverance. Sometimes our sufferings are to the death. Peter says,

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

1 Peter 4:19 (ESV)

Do you look upon suffering as an opportunity to trust God with your very life knowing that it might be His will to bring glory to his name and to you by letting you die. It was true for Jesus and it was true for the first Christian martyr Stephen who died while a young man, Saul of Tarsus, stood and watched (*Acts 7:58*).

Back

... and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:7)

Our spirit, the breath of life, will one day return to God and our body will return to the earth from which it springs. If that is all there is life would seem... unfinished!

There is so much to life, the sunshine on your face, the incredible vastness of the stars in heaven, and the feel of rain upon your skin.

When we are young and vigorous there is so much that we can do with our strength. We can slide into home scoring the winning run or make the tackle turns the tide in a game. With our strength and intelligence we can build things including a satisfying career. We can marry the love of our life and have the fulfillment of loving and raising children.

All of this will be meaningless if we forget that we have come from our Creator and are returning to Him. This is why the Preacher wrote Ecclesiastes starts off with an exhortation,

¹ Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

Ecclesiastes 12:1 (ESV)

God has given us the breath of his life, our spirit. It comes from Him and one day will return to Him. Each of us is on our way to a rendezvous with God our Creator. We will stand before him and be judged by him. Jesus came to live and die to make that a good meeting for all who will put their trust in him.

Contrite

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
(Psalm 51:17)*

What have you done to the spirit that God gave you? Each of us has this precious gift of life which we use to sin. King David, the author of this Psalm, had committed adultery with another man's wife. The heading of the Psalm names her as Bathsheba, but in the lineage of Jesus simply calls her "*the wife of Uriah.*"

When confronted about this sin by Nathan the prophet (2 Samuel 12:1 – 18), the king repented and then wrote Psalm 51 to publicly declare what he had hidden in secret, or so he thought. It turns out the only one in the dark was the king who tried to cover up his sexual sin with murder.

Having defiled the spirit that God gave to him, this godly, but sinful man was broken in spirit and contrite heart. It was this inward change that enabled God to answer the prayer,

*Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.*

Psalm 51:10 (ESV)

Is your heart clean and your spirit right before God?

It is not necessary to go through life with sin an ever-present companion and a spirit askew from the holy purposes of God. Because Jesus died the price for sin has been paid, the way to walk with a holy God has been shown, and God will not despise to walk with our spirit now or in eternity.

Is your trust in him? Is there any sin that you have not confessed before God?