

2/19/23 Christ Fellowship

### “Job’s Depression” – Job 3

A while back, I listened to a local pastor friend of mine describe going hiking a few years ago with some of his friends up to the top of a huge mountain. He said they got to the top but he did not describe the beautiful scenery or the fresh air or the sunlight. He said his only thought was wanting to throw himself off the cliff face so he could die.

He was a pastor. He had a wife and kids and a good church but he said there was such a darkness in his life and he didn’t know how to get out of it. And he felt the only way out was suicide. He didn’t describe the darkness or any other reasons for his feeling that way...and he didn’t have to.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that around 300 million people worldwide have depression. One of their reports found that in many countries, people with common mental disorders such as depression, anxiety and schizophrenia routinely suffer gross human rights violations - including shackling, torture and imprisonment. Now, I’m no doctor but I’m pretty sure that doesn’t help. (<https://www.france24.com/en/20181010-has-world-gone-mad-mental-health-disorders-rise-every-country-globally>)

That same report said that cases of depression have been on the rise for years and have spiked in recent years and will cost trillions of dollars. While some of the costs will be the direct costs of healthcare and medicines or other therapies, most are indirect - in the form of loss of productivity, and spending on social welfare, education and law and order.

That’s just the financial aspect of it. What’s the cost to people’s lives and families and the cost of so many people living in that same kind of darkness my friend went through? What’s the cost to a person’s mind who lives without hope or reason for their suffering? What price does a person pay who feels like they are worthless or that nobody cares for them?

Maybe you have been there. If not, I bet you know someone who has. As we continue in our study of the profound book of Job, we see clearly that Job suffered from depression. And some may read this and think, *“Well, of course he does. Who wouldn’t be depressed if they lost nearly everything they had?”*

But if you excuse it in Job, then what is going to happen when tragedy hits you? And it will hit you sooner or later. Will you just excuse it in your own life as a part of the grief process and allow yourself to be pulled deeper and deeper into that darkness? Or will you use scripture, prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit to lift you out of that hole that so many fall into?

Turn to **Job chapter three** this morning, please. We have read the first two chapters and have seen Job lose his health and his wealth. He is left with a foolish talking wife and three well-meaning but foolish talking friends and not much else. He has literally been sitting on a pile of rubbish with painful sores all over his body for a week and now we hear his first real speech and it is not pretty.

*After this, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. 2 He said: 3 “May the day of my birth perish, and the night that said, ‘A boy is conceived!’*

*4 That day—may it turn to darkness; may God above not care about it; may no light shine on it. 5 May gloom and utter darkness claim it once more; may a cloud settle over it; may blackness overwhelm it.*

*6 That night—may thick darkness seize it; may it not be included among the days of the year nor be entered in any of the months. May that night be barren; may no shout of joy be heard in it.*

*11 “Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb? 12 Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? “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 has become my daily 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.”*

One thing I have learned about depression this week as I have been studying is that reading about depression...is depressing. Everybody gets bummed out at times in their life and there are seasons of grief for anybody that lives any length of time because we are all going to lose people that we love, whether it is to death or divorce or something else. But some people struggle with depression more than others and there may never be any clear reason why that is.

The question we need to ask is how to get out of it as quickly as possible. This is not to say that we should try to hurry through the grief process when we lose a loved one. You are going to grieve, whether you want to or not. Everybody grieves differently and for different lengths of time and to different depths and none are necessarily wrong. You can put off grieving by getting busy with work or something else but at some point, you have to work through that grief. That’s just how God made us and it is ultimately good for us.

What’s bad is when we grieve to the point of such depression that we, like Job, wish we were dead. Or maybe years have gone by and the depression hasn’t gotten any better and it just

overtakes a person and they just can't get out of the darkness, the hopelessness or the feelings of unworthiness and so they stop trying.

Unlike Job's friends, we need to know how to help people that we love that we see in this condition but we also need to know how to help ourselves. We have nearly all been attacked by Satan recently and we need to know the right way, the biblical way to respond to those attacks.

Let's talk about our options. Just for instance, let's say that God allows Satan to attack you physically. Maybe he takes away your health or your wealth in some way like he did to Job. What are our options when something like that happens to us? What are some ways that we can handle that?

What did Job do? Well, the very first thing he did, as we saw a couple of weeks ago, was to fall down in true and peaceful worship as it says in chapter one verse twenty. That's a good option. He also tore his robe and shaved his head and went and sat on a dung heap. Those options are probably not as good for us today but maybe that will work for you.

There are good doctor-prescribed drugs you can take and if your doctor recommends them, then there is nothing wrong with taking them. But some people self-medicate with drugs or alcohol and I think we all know the consequences of doing that. Some people ignore it and just busy themselves with work like I said earlier and try not to think about it. The problem with that is that every time you try not to think about your issues, at some point they always come back to our minds. And isn't that where almost all our battles are fought? In our minds?

When you are battling grief, the battlefield is in your mind. When you are trying to resist the temptation to sin, it starts in your mind. For the drug addict, the alcoholic, the murderer, the porn addict and even the one being attacked by Satan with physical issues, the battlefield is always in the mind.

\*In 1835 a man visited a doctor in Florence, Italy. He was filled with anxiety and exhausted from lack of sleep. He couldn't eat, and he avoided his friends. The doctor examined him and found that he was in prime physical condition. Concluding that his patient needed to have a good time, the physician told him about a circus in town and its star performer, a clown named Grimaldi. Night after night he had the people rolling in the aisles. *"You must go and see him,"* the doctor advised. *"Grimaldi is the world's funniest clown. He'll make you laugh and cure your sadness."* "No," replied the despairing man, **"he can't help me. You see, I am Grimaldi!"** (<http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/d/depression.htm>)

So many times, the despair is never known by other people because those in depression have gotten used to faking it. I think of people like comedian Robin Williams who killed himself a

few years ago. His battle wasn't on the outside. His battle, like so many others', was mental. The physical problems may be bad but the mind is often the worst problem we can have. So, what can we do to get out of that mental darkness?

Well, I have the answer. But if this answer was my idea, I would understand your skepticism. Who am I to address anybody else's grief? I'm no doctor or scholar about anything, including grief, but the Apostle Paul most certainly was. The apostle Paul – *“I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak?” (2 Cor. 11)*

Yes, THAT Apostle Paul was also the same guy that said in **Philippians 4**, *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.”* The question is, how did Paul do it? And this is the point in the sermon where you might expect your pastor to say, *“Just accept Jesus into your life to be your Savior and all your depression will go away.”* Or I might say, *“Just have faith in God and all your darkness will turn to light.”* Or maybe, *“God will never give you more than you can handle.”* Or *“Cleanliness is next to godliness”* or *“God helps those who help themselves”* or anything else that sounds good but just isn't true. None of that is how Paul overcame depression to have peace, joy and contentment.

Paul tells us that there is work to be done and decisions to be made. Since those dark thoughts are dark places in the mind and the mind is the battlefield and all those struggles start in our thought life, Paul first tells us to take every thought captive. Write this down in the flyleaf of your Bible. **2 Corinthians 10:5** says to take every thought captive. This is not easy to do and you have to make the conscious decision to do it but, as a true believer, you can do it with the help of the Holy Spirit.

What it means to take those thoughts captive is to take a mental picture of those thoughts. In your mind, make the decision to take a snapshot of that darkness, that dread or feeling of

hopelessness if you are struggling with depression. If you struggle with temptation or sin or addiction, this works just as well for that. Take a mental picture of that struggle and here is what I do: put it in a mental picture frame. That's right. Frame it. See how pretty my mental frame is with its gilded edges and crystal glass?

Now, with that mental picture of your depression safely behind that pretty frame...throw it on the ground and smash it! Stomp on it! Smash it to pieces because if you don't, that picture will continue to take you captive, but God gives us the power to overcome our thoughts and feelings through Jesus Christ. So, take that thought captive and destroy it. That's **step one**.

But what happens if you just stop there? That thought is going to come right back, isn't it? So, you have to replace it with something else. Paul tells us what **step two** is in **Philippians 4:8**. Write that in the flyleaf of your Bible as well. *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things."*

I know most of us have done this before so we are not going to do it again. But what I want you to do is to go home and print out that verse, Philippians 4:8. And where it says, *"whatever is true"*, write something that is true. Let's all do it right now. Somebody tell me something that is true. How about the fact that Jesus is coming back? Maybe you would rather write that Jesus loves you or you love your spouse or dogs are better than cats. Whatever you want. Write that on the piece of paper. Then go to the next one. What is something noble? Right? Pure? Etc.

Here's why I want you to write all that on there and to keep it handy. The next time you feel yourself getting depressed or tempted to sin, you might remember to take that thought captive but when you go to replace it with a thought of something pure or lovely, it is hard to do in the heat of battle. You have to have that stuff loaded up and ready to go and easy to find or your good intentions will be beaten down by Satan's attacks.

As it is, you may have to do this every five minutes for a while. It's a hassle. It's hard to do. It's way easier to just curl up in bed and marinate in the darkness and cry out like Job did that you wish you were dead. But it's worth the hassle and you can do it.

Now let me read the last part of a verse I have already read this morning. In **Philippians 4**, when Paul said he could be content in whatever circumstance he was in, he ended by saying what has become a favorite verse for lots of people but is sometimes taken out of context. **Philippians 4:13** says, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* Do you believe that? Of course you do, but too many people think that goes for anything they want to do. *"I can win this race through Christ who strengthens me."* *"I can get this job through Christ who strengthens me."* *"I can win this lottery through Christ who strengthens me."*

That is not what this is saying. When it is God's will for you to do something, He will empower you to do it. He is not going to ask you, command you or put you in a position to do something that will be impossible if the power of Christ is giving you strength.

\*A few years ago, on New Year's Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas. The amusing thing was the sponsor for this float...was Exxon Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas. (sermonillustrations.com)

That's just what it is like when a Christian, a child of the Most High King, the Creator of the universe, struggles with depression. You have the power that raised Jesus from the grave at your disposal through prayer, scripture and the Holy Spirit living inside of you and it is not God's will that you stay depressed. But you have to make the decision and you have to put in the work of taking those thoughts captive and replacing them with something of God and He will help you to do that. Now, I don't know what people do who don't have that power behind them. I can't imagine how hard it must be for them when they suffer loss. But when you humbly go to God and ask Him to forgive your sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness, **1 John 1:9** says He will do just that. Allow Him to change your life today if you never have. We aren't guaranteed tomorrow. Do it right now as the music plays.