

Banishing Discouragement Series

November 3, 2021

Scripture: Psalms 77:1-20

Summary: This lesson deals with how the believer should deal with discouragement

Banishing Discouragement

Introduction: Discouragement is the common cold of emotions. Eventually it affects us all.

Elijah, God's iron man of the Old Testament became so discouraged that he sat down under a juniper tree and prayed to die.

According to Mark 8:12, even Jesus himself often "sighed" deep within his spirit.

Paul had so many difficult experiences in Asia that according to

2 Corinthians 1:8 he, "despaired even of life."

8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

The word, "despaired" means, "to be at an utter loss." In other words, Paul's situation seemed so hopeless that he saw no way out but death.

Many of the world's and the church's greatest leaders have been given to despair.

Winston Churchill confessed that he was often, "hounded by the black dog of despair."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the greatest preacher since the Apostle Paul fought continually bouts of depression as a result of gout that finally killed him at age 58.

If you are singing the blues in your life it may help to know that the Psalmist understood and wrote about it in Psalm 77.

The man we meet in this Psalm bore all the marks that would today be diagnosed as depression.

He was looking at life through dark colored glasses. He felt forgotten and forsaken by God. He couldn't sleep. He couldn't articulate his thoughts because of emotional exhaustion. He was tired all the time. He lived in the past longing for a day that had passed by. He remembered when he was happy and had a song in his heart, but no more, and he couldn't seem to get back there no matter how hard he tried.

He became so depressed that he even began to question God (7-9). "Has God rejected his people?" "Does God no longer care?" "Has God lost his compassion?"

These are sharp piercing questions, but they were the questions that came from the Psalmist as he wallowed in despair.

He hadn't reached such a place over night. There is always progression in such emotional experiences. Despair begins with a disappointment that is not handled constructively. The pattern is this: disappointment leads to doubt; doubt leads to depression; and depression leads to despair. Simple disappointment is the father of despair.

Some of you may be like the psalmist and questioning whether God has left you without help in your time of trouble.

But he made a startling insight that saved him from his despair.

We see it in verse 10, "This is my infirmity," he says. He recognized that the problem was with himself and not with God.

He saw that his doubts were due to his own weakness, not God's neglect.

It was at this point that he determined to do something about his problem.

Four times in verses 10 and 11 he says, "I will"

That is significant. We are not helpless victims of our emotions. We do not have to be hijacked by our attitudes. We can take action.

Our thoughts govern our moods, therefore if we think right we will feel right.

Most depression arises from faulty thinking and we do have within our power to change or control our thoughts.

To deal with these harmful emotions we must be mentally tough. If you don't handle your emotions they will handle you. You must make up your mind that you are not going to allow your circumstances defeat you.

How are Christians supposed to deal with disappointment?

In the fourth division of this Psalm (11-20) the psalmist tells us what he did. And we can be victorious by doing the same things.

I CONCENTRATE ON THE GREATNESS OF GOD (11-12)

A. Study God's Word and recall His mighty works in other days.

B. I recently read that 93% of depressed Christians admit to spending less than an hour a week in Bible Study.

C. There will always be circumstances that disappoint us, and they can bring us to a point of despair, but they are much less likely to if we stay in the Bible study how Great God is.

D. Concentrating on God's past performance in crisis will convince us that he will do it again.

II CONSISTENTLY GIVE THANKS FOR HIS GREATNESS (13-14)

A. When the psalmist focused on what had done in the past he broke out into song praising Him for His greatness.

B. We must not find our joy in our success, but in God himself.

C. If we find our joy in our accomplishments, then when we fail or do not succeed to the level that we think we should we will find ourselves cast down and moving headlong in the direction of despair.

D. Our joy cannot come from things or accomplishments, but must come only from the person of Jesus Christ.

E. We must learn to be happy with God himself.

III CONSIDER HIS PAST WORKS (19-20)

A. Look at the exodus story.

B. Remember the prophet fed all through the drought with the tiny amount of meal in a widow's barrel.

C. Remember Jesus' life being spared when every other boy baby his age was killed.

D. Remember Paul's life being spared time and time again so that the Gospel could be carried on.

E. God has never faltered, what makes you think he will in your case?

Conclusion: Many times God is at work in our lives when we can't see his footprints, but he is nonetheless at work. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

In times of despair we need to break out in the old Fannie Crosby hymn and sing"

All the way my savior leads me;

What have I to dread beside?

Can I doubt His tender mercy,

Who through life has been my guide?

Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,

Here by faith in Him to dwell!

For I know what 'ere befall me,

Jesus doeth all things well;

For I know what 'ere befall me,

Jesus doeth all things well.