

“The Bitter Cry of a Broken Man”

Job 3:1-26

One of the most serious struggles in life that many, if not all of us have struggled with at some point, is the experience of disappointment, despair, and depression. In the 1500's, Saint John of the Cross referred to depression as the dark night of the soul.

Every year, more than 16 million Americans, roughly 7% of adults 18 and older, report being affected by depression. Globally, the World Health Organization reports that more than 350 million people suffer from depression.

Common symptoms often include:

- feelings of sadness, emptiness, and severe anxiety
- feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- loss of interest or pleasure in life
- loss of energy and constant fatigue

CBS News, “Americans More Depressed Now Than Decades Ago” (October 2, 2014) -

“Americans appear to be more depressed now than they have been in years, according to a new study. Researchers examined data from 6.9 million teens and adults in the U.S., and found that contemporary Americans report more symptoms of depression...than people typically did in the 1980s. Today's teenagers are 38 percent more likely to report problems with depression compared with their 1980s counterparts. They are also 74 percent more likely to have trouble sleeping and twice as likely to have seen a specialist for mental health issues. Contemporary college students in the study were 50 percent more likely to admit that they felt overwhelmed, while adults were more likely to say that they were restless sleepers, had a poor appetite and that, on top of that, everything else was an effort. All of these issues are often manifestations of depression.

Research shows there's an increase in depression among millennials:

The Washington Post, “Why Are So Many Millennials Depressed?” (January 6, 2014) -

“Rates of depression are soaring among millennials in college. A 2012 study by the American College Counseling Association reported a 16 percent increase in mental-health visits since

2000 and a significant increase in crisis response over the past five years. According to recent studies, 44 percent of college students experienced symptoms of depression, and suicide is one of the leading causes of death among college students.”

I came across a poem that was written by a mother who wrote to express the pain of watching her daughter battle depression:

*Until it affects someone we love,
We don't even know it's there.
It's really not our problem,
So why should we care.*

*The statistics are quite shocking,
One in four they say
Will suffer from depression
In their lives one day.*

*There's not much stigma anymore
For this serious mental flaw.
But no one knows where it will strike,
It's just the luck of the draw.*

*No one would choose to live with it,
And some don't even try.
I see my daughter suffering
And all she can do is cry.*

*Most people turn the other cheek,
They've been doing it for years.
But I must face the pain I see,
In my daughter's tears.*

Many of you have been there personally, or someone you love has been there. Depression often comes in waves. It can usually be traced back to:

- disappointment

- discouragement
- disillusionment

The person who has been disappointed in some way can become disillusioned very easily. When you are disillusioned, you lose your sense of perspective. This pattern often triggers depression.

Of course, depression is not just limited to circumstances. There are other factors as well, such as physiological and biological factors. Just as the body can become sick, so also can the mind.

Despair and depression is often an unaddressed subject.

Dr. Gary Lovejoy, “Shadow of Depression” - *“People in general and Christians in particular are often experts at pretense. They don’t want others to know what’s going on...unless they can really trust the person they’re talking to, and even then they’re often reluctant to disclose their despair.”*

Perhaps the reason for this reluctance is the faulty understanding that a person who battles depression lacks faith. Such misunderstanding leads one to believe that a spiritually mature man or woman would never struggle with thoughts of depression and despair. You may be surprised to learn that many godly men and women who have lived throughout history have struggled with seasons of depression in life. Consider these examples from Scripture:

- **David**—reveals thoughts of despair in many of the psalms
- **Solomon**—weary from perceived meaningless in life in the book of Ecclesiastes
- **Elijah**—sat down under a juniper tree and prayed to die
- **John the Baptist**—discouraged and disillusioned while in prison
- **Paul**—confessed his own despair in 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 1:8 - **“For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.”**

Even the great preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, struggled with bouts of severe depression. Frequently during his ministry, he was plunged into severe depression, due in part to gout but also for other reasons. In his biography of Spurgeon, Arnold Dallimore wrote, “What he suffered in those times of darkness we may not know...even his desperate calling on God brought no relief. 'There are dungeons', he said, 'beneath the castles of despair.’”

The first two chapters of the book reveal how Job goes from the top of the mountain to the valley floor. God has allowed Satan to have access to Job’s life, though Job doesn’t know it. The enemy has asserted that if Job hurt bad enough, he would curse God and renounce his faith. In chapter 1, Job loses his fortune and his family, but he still worships. In chapter 2, he loses his physical health, is abandoned by his wife, and is approached by his three well-intentioned, but ultimately unhelpful friends. Yet, he still worships.

Beginning in chapter 3, Job will open his mouth and begin to speak after an unspecified amount of time has passed. Job’s words will reveal to us the depth of pain that he finds himself in. What we read is nothing more than the bitter cry of a broken man. He is in a dungeon of despair if ever a man has been.

Scripture paints its heroes with honest strokes. There is no glossing over the uncomfortable issues. It is not always sunshine and roses in the lives of God’s servants.

Job had hit rock bottom, and his words reveal his attempt to process the reasons behind his suffering. I want us to consider what Job says here in the text and see how he is speaking from intense sorrow.

1. Job regrets his ARRIVAL—“I should have never been born!”

“After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job said, Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, A man is conceived. Let that day be darkness! May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it. Let gloom and deep darkness claim it. Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. That night—let thick darkness seize it! Let it not rejoice among the days of the year; let it not come into the number of the months. Behold, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry enter it. Let those curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan. Let the stars of its dawn be dark; let it hope for light, but have none, nor see the eyelids of the morning, because it did not shut the doors of my mother’s womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes.”

We have watched the lonely suffering of Job in the last chapter, and now we listen to him as he speaks from the midst of his pain.

Job is not having a conversation with his friends. Nor is he speaking to God. He is speaking to himself from his broken condition. Job's situation reminds me of what the psalmist writes:

Psalm 137:1-4 - "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion! How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"

It is all too common in life for people to become discouraged to the point of despair as they grapple with life's disappointments.

Proverbs 13:12 - "Hope deferred makes the heart sick."

Disappointment in life comes in different shapes and sizes:

- a man loses his job in the prime of life, and he is not sure how he will ever provide for his family
- a young woman is heartbroken by a fiancée who ends their relationship
- a man feels like he has been unsuccessful in life
- a wife is devastated by the unfaithfulness of her husband

Sometimes, a teenager becomes disappointed by his perceived lack of athleticism or popularity, or a young lady is discouraged by what she perceives as her own unattractiveness. Regardless of the age or the situation, disappointment can take its toll out on the soul, and you can quickly find yourself in a pit of despair.

Job is there. He is in a dark and lonesome valley in which the light of the sun has been obscured. Painful memories of how things used to be flood his soul, and he sees no future for himself. All that remains from his former life has been reduced to a pile of ashes.

Job essentially says in these verses, "It would have been better if I had never been born!" Have you ever heard anyone say that?

illus. of George Bailey in “It’s A Wonderful Life”

When we are hurting, we may often say and do a lot of things that we later regret. Job’s suffering was so great that he forgot the blessings that he and his family had enjoyed for so many years.

Had he never been born, he never would have lived to be the greatest man in the east. Had he never been born, he never would have been father to his children. It is amazing at how our sense of perspective can be lost during times of grief.

2. Job questions his SURVIVAL—“My life has been a waste!”

“Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse? For then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have slept; then I would have been at rest, with kings and counselors of the earth who rebuilt ruins for themselves, or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light? There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master.”

When Job considers his situation, he looks back on his life and says it has been a waste. He says that he should have died at birth like a stillborn infant. He basically says in these verses, “Stop the world, God—I want to get off!” He wants to check out of this life, to be free from a world that he has come to be associated with heartache and sadness.

Job doesn’t understand why he is still living. He questions his existence and sees his life as having been a waste. His perspective has been skewed by his pain.

Depression affects your whole view of life. It gives a twisted perception of reality. It produces a distorted view of God and often yields an inaccurate and unhealthy negative self-image. That’s why you never need to make a major decision in life when you are discouraged!

Consider how this often play out in real life:

- things get tough in your church, and you decide to quit and go somewhere else
- things get tough in your marriage and you contemplate divorce

- things get tough in your personal life and you consider taking your own life

If you are not extremely careful, when you find yourself in the valley of disappointment and despair, you can lose perspective and be tempted to make decisions that you would not otherwise make.

Job is not about to take his own life, for he is a man who fears God. But he doesn't understand why God is allowing him to continue in such a miserable existence.

3. Job doubts his REVIVAL—“Death is better than life!”

“Why is light given to him who is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hidden treasures, who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in? For my sighing comes instead of my bread, and my groanings are poured out like water. For the thing that I fear comes upon me, and what I dread befalls me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, but trouble comes.”

Job doesn't see how he could ever recover from such crushing losses as he has experienced. It is not that Job is considering taking his own life, for he is a man who fears God. His life is not his to take into his own hands. His life is in God's hands. However, he does wish for God to take his life.

For Job it has all drifted into the negative. All he sees is a 'No Entry' sign to the future. 'If only I had never been.' If you were to ask him, "What are you looking forward to, Job?" At this point in his life, he would respond, "Nothing." If he tries to look forward, all he can see is a blank wall of hopelessness.

He essentially says, "There is no future for me, and I wish that there had been no past." His sorrows have swallowed him like quicksand, and all that's left is the cry of a man desperate for some solid ground.

He questions whether or not he has a future. He doesn't see how any good could ever come from what he has experienced.

Chuck Swindoll - *“We need to understand that God's wonderful plan is wonderful from His perspective, not yours and mine. To us, wonderful means comfortable, healthy, all bills paid, no*

debt, never sick, happily married with two well-behaved children, a fulfilling well paying job, and the anticipation of nothing but blessing and success and prosperity forever. That's wonderful to us. But God's wonderful plan is not like that."

God's plan for Abraham involved being a father of many nations, but it meant that he had to learn patience while waiting on God's timing.

God's plan for Hannah involved a son, but it meant that she had to endure some tough years of barrenness learning to trust God.

God's plan for David involved a throne, but it meant that he had to spend some tough years running from King Saul.

God's plan for the apostle Paul involved a crown of righteousness that was laid up for him, but it meant that he had to lose his head as a faithful witness for Christ.

God's plan for His own Son involved the nations coming and bowing at His feet, but it meant that He had to endure the pain and rejection and isolation of the cross.

Expect disappointment in life. From our perspective, we wonder how any disappointment could bring about greater good. You need to remember that even your disappointments are in the hands of God. Surrender to Jesus, and trust Him to heal your wounded spirit.

Here are some lessons we ought to remember when dealing with life's disappointment and the issue of depression:

- Life's disappointments must be **recognized** for what they are
- Life's disappointments must be **responded** to appropriately
- Life's disappointments can **result** in greater blessing

Spurgeon - *"Before any great achievement, some measure of the same depression is very usual...Such was my experience when I first became pastor in London. My success appalled me; and the thought of the career which it seemed to open up, so far from elating me, cast me into the lowest depths...Who was I that should continue to lead so great a multitude? I would betake me to my village obscurity, or emigrate to America and find a solitary nest in the backwoods, where I might be sufficient for the things which would be demanded of me...This*

depression comes over me whenever the Lord is preparing a larger blessing for my ministry; the cloud is black before it breaks, and overshadows before it yields its deluge of mercy. Depression has now become to me as a prophet in rough clothing.”

Job is hanging suspended between the past and the future, utterly alone and asking, “Why?” Though he doesn’t see it, there is a shadow of a cross stretched out on the ground before him. His suffering and loneliness merely foreshadows the suffering of Christ that secures the salvation of those who trust in Him.

Before there can be a resurrection, there must first be a crucifixion.

The very trial that we resist and avoid may be the instrument used by God to bring us closer to Him and to greater blessing.

In other words, when your life goes up in smoke, what you perceive as the worst thing that could happen to you may in fact be what God is using for your good. Rainy days make you appreciate blue skies. Some lessons in life can only be learned in the valley:

- God is good, even in the valley
- God will guide you through the valley
- God will give you life on the other side

Some of you may be in a season of disappointment and depression at this very moment. Maybe things in life have not turned out the way that you had hoped, and you feel like a failure, like your life has been a waste. Maybe your health is bad, or some nagging problem won’t go away, and you find it’s getting harder to get up in the morning. Like John the Baptist, you’re sitting in a prison and wondering where God is. Jesus, are You the One who is coming, or should we look for another?

Luke 7:22 - “And He answered them, Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.”

In other words, Jesus says to those who are discouraged, “Trust in Me, for I’m making all things new.”