

Rise Above The Tide
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Questions for reflection: How has God been faithful to you in times of DISCOURAGEMENT?

Jeremiah 15:10-21

"Where Does A Mother Go To Resign?"

That's the title of a book written several years ago by Christian author and speaker Barbara Johnson about dealing with the crippling of her husband, the death of two sons, and homosexuality of her third son. AND YOU THINK YOU HAVE PROBLEMS!

- Today's scripture passage might be titled: "Where does a PROPHET go to resign?"
- The title of today's LESSON is RISING ABOVE THE TIDE...and it's about the TIDE of DISCOURAGEMENT

Question: When we take out a pen and pour out our hearts to God what do we call it?
Journalling

The Holman Old Testament Commentary tells us:

Scattered throughout the Book of Jeremiah are several poems dealing with the inner life of the prophet. They provide insight into his character and feelings. Old Testament scholars call them the "Confessions of Jeremiah." These confessions were probably never delivered publicly and were most likely never published in Jeremiah's lifetime. The prophet's confessions were sometimes monologues but more often dialogues with God. They laid bare the innermost thoughts and agony of his life. This included his fears and his conflict with adversity, doubt, and temptations. In short, they contained his reaction to a world that threatened to crush him. He faced a huge task that overwhelmed his sensitive nature.

- Basically, in this section of Jeremiah, we are reading his own, personal journal
- Sometimes we find ourselves in the same kind of DISCOURAGED situation as Jeremiah

The key question is: When you and I are confronted with disappointment in serving the Lord like Jeremiah was, how do we respond?

Let's start with verses 10 and 11:

Jeremiah 15:10-11

10 Alas, my mother, that you gave me birth,
a man with whom the whole land strives and contends!

- This is similar to what we read in the book of Job chapter 3

Jeremiah goes on to say:

I have neither lent nor borrowed,
yet everyone curses me.

- "I'm not a loan shark or a tax collector!" "I'm a good guy and yet everybody hates me!"

11 The LORD said,
"Surely I will deliver you for a good purpose;
surely I will make your enemies plead with you
in times of disaster and times of distress.

- Verse 11: What did God assure Jeremiah of in verse 11?
- Here's the point: God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows everything that's happening to us. More importantly: GOD CARES.

Look at how Jeremiah responds in verse 15-18...let's read them and then unpack them:

Jeremiah 15:15-18

15 LORD, you understand;
remember me and care for me.
Avenge me on my persecutors.

You are long-suffering—do not take me away;
think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.

- He's saying: "Lord, look at how much STUFF I have to put up with for your sake!"

16 When your words came, I ate them;
they were my joy and my heart's delight,
for I bear your name,
LORD God Almighty.

- How is he describing himself in verse 16? I study the Bible and I DO WHAT IT SAYS!
"I bear your name God!" I'm a DILIGENT Christian.

17 I never sat in the company of revelers,
never made merry with them;
I sat alone because your hand was on me
and you had filled me with indignation.

- What does he mean in verse 17? "I didn't party...I stayed home and studied by Bible!"
"I don't smoke, and I don't chew, and I don't go with the girls who do!"
- In verse 18 he complains some more but then he crosses the line:

18 Why is my pain unending
and my wound grievous and incurable?
You are to me like a deceptive brook,
like a spring that fails.

- That last line is a little cryptic: "You are to me like a (what kind of brook?)"
DECEPTIVE
- "Like a spring that fails." Imagine a water fountain that stops running every time you lean down for a drink.
- Here's another example: Lucy, Charlie Brown, and the football! What could Charlie Brown not do when it came to Lucy holding the football? He couldn't TRUST her.
- Back to that word DECEPTIVE.
- Jeremiah is basically saying "God, I'm not sure I can TRUST you!"

Sometimes we get so OVERWHELMED WITH DISCOURAGEMENT that we even begin to question if we can TRUST GOD.

A.W. Tozer said:

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us!" He goes on to say: "We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God."

- Question: How do you know you can TRUST God? I mean in your own personal experience...in times of great DISCOURAGEMENT...how do you know you can TRUST God?
- He's been FAITHFUL in the past!
- I have personally seen evidence that He is LOVING, COMPASSIONATE, and POWERFUL.

Statement: When I see the evidence of his POWER and MAJESTY I have to ask: "Who would I trust with my situation, me or God? Another flawed human being...or the CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE?"

- Another way I know God is TRUSTWORTHY: I BELIEVE my Bible and it documents His trustworthiness over and over again.

Hebrews 11:6

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Romans 8:28

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[a] have been called according to his purpose.

Jeremiah 33:3

3 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

Psalm 34:15

15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are attentive to their cry;

Psalm 3:3

3 But you, LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.

Chuck Swindoll writes:

Human logic breaks down in crisis. The mystery is enormous, and it is the enormity of it all that calls for faith. I'm sorry if that sounds like an overused bromide. But if we could unravel it, why would we need faith? ...God's plan is that we walk by faith, not by sight. It is faith and patience that stretch us to the breaking point. Such things send doubt running.

When you find yourself dealing with doubt, let me give you three things to remember. God cannot lie. He will always keep His Word.

You cannot lose. God is trustworthy.

Our Lord Jesus does not leave. He is with you even now.

As our friends the Robnetts have said: "You either BELIEVE GOD or you don't!"

- Jeremiah's DISCOURAGEMENT and DOUBT had pushed him to the point of questioning God's TRUSTWORTHINESS. How did God respond? You may be surprised.

Jeremiah 15:19-21

19 Therefore this is what the LORD says:

"If you repent, I will restore you
that you may serve me;
if you utter worthy, not worthless, words,
you will be my spokesman.
Let this people turn to you,
but you must not turn to them.

- It's like God is saying:
- "Jeremiah, you need to get down on your knees and repent!" (Echoes of my childhood)
- "Jeremiah, repent and get your act together and you'll be able to serve me!"
- "Jeremiah, stop talking foolishness...say what you know to be true about me!"
- "Jeremiah, the people are supposed to be listening to YOU not YOU listening to THEM!"

- And then God RENEWS His promises:

20 I will make you a wall to this people,
a fortified wall of bronze;
they will fight against you
but will not overcome you,
for I am with you
to rescue and save you,"
declares the LORD.

21 "I will save you from the hands of the wicked
and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel."

Warren Wiersbe

Is it unusual for chosen servants of God to become discouraged and endanger their own ministries? No, because every servant of God is human and subject to the weaknesses of human nature.

Moses became discouraged and wanted to die (Num. 11:10–15);

Joshua was ready to quit and leave the Promised Land (Josh. 7:6–11);

Elijah even abandoned his place of duty and hoped to die (1 Kings 19);

and Jonah became so angry he refused to help the very people he came to save (Jonah 4)!

God doesn't want us to ignore our feelings, because that would make us less than human, but He does want us to trust Him to change our feelings and start walking by faith (see 2 Cor. 1:3–11).

Years ago, Judith Viorst wrote a popular childrens' book entitled:
"Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day"

Six-year-old Alexander's day starts like this:

"I went to sleep with gum in my mouth and now there's gum in my hair and when I got out of bed this morning I tripped on the skateboard and by mistake I dropped my sweater in the sink while the water was running and I could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day."

Alexander's day only gets worse: He trips on a skateboard, his teacher doesn't like his drawing of an invisible castle, his lunchbox doesn't have any dessert, and his best friend Paul declares that Alexander is only his third best friend. Throughout the story, things get so bad, Alexander wishes he could move to Australia! After school, the dentist finds a cavity in Alexander's tooth, the shoe store is out of the shoes he wants, and he makes a big mess at his father's office. It really has been a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day.

How does the story end? His mother tells him:

"...some days are like that. Even in Australia"

The beauty of this book, the moral of the story is not a rosy happy ending...but a parent's realistic assurance, "Some days are like that."

Our Heavenly Father would go a little further

Jesus said in John 16:33

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

So, What's The Takeaway?

- Becoming DISCOURAGED is a natural part of life, even for God's most committed people
- We can bring our DISCOURAGEMENT to God knowing
- He cares for us
- He knows us better than anyone and knows more about our circumstances than anyone
- He will STRENGTHEN us to do what He's called us to do
- As Chuck Swindoll said:
 - God cannot lie. He will always keep His Word.
 - You cannot lose. God is trustworthy.
 - Our Lord Jesus does not leave. He is with you even now.