

“SOULed OUT”
Session 5: The Loss and Restoration of Hope
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October 17, 2010

INTRODUCTION

Naïve hope

That things will soon work out as we desire

Hope in a person

That they will accomplish what we cannot do ourselves

Hope of the godless...

Job 8:11-19 (NIV)

*Can papyrus grow tall where there is no marsh? Can reeds thrive without water? While still growing and uncut, they wither more quickly than grass. Such is the destiny of all who forget God; so perishes the **hope of the godless**. What he trusts in is fragile; what he relies on is a spider's web. He leans on his web, but it gives way; he clings to it, but it does not hold. He is like a well-watered plant in the sunshine, spreading its shoots over the garden; it entwines its roots around a pile of rocks and looks for a place among the stones. But when it is torn from its spot, that place disowns it and says, 'I never saw you.' Surely its life withers away, and from the soil other plants grow.*

Proverbs 11:7 (NIV)

When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; all he expected from his power comes to nothing.

Proverbs 10:28 (NIV)

The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing.

Q: Based on these passages, can there be true hope without God in the picture? What do people tend to hope for instead?

Q: How does this help us to know what to put our hope in?

Hope: Holding unswervingly. Enduring Focus

Psalm 62:5-8 (NIV)

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. Selah

Psalm 71:5-7 (NIV)

For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD, my confidence since my youth. From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother's womb. I will ever praise you. I have become like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NIV)

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Q: What makes this kind of hope go from a “head belief” to a “heart belief” in someone’s life?

I. Three “Fruit of the Spirit” which relate to Hope

Joy: Not the absence of something undesirable, but the certainty of the Holy Spirit’s presence in any circumstance.

Peace: Security, safety, harmony, and accord in all parts of life. “Shalom” is the ultimate blessing and is an expression of what heaven will be. It is wholeness.

Self-control: Being empowered by the Holy Spirit to avoid distraction and sin in order to fulfill a divinely appointed task. Self-control is sound judgment and the inner strength to carry it out.

The opposite of Hope is despair and jealousy, wanting something I don’t have while not realizing that God has promised to provide what I need in his time. We take short cuts and seek escape when we don’t have hope and a focus.

Examples: Jealousy, envy, drunkenness, wild parties

II. How People Lose Hope

Regret: disappointment over a loss or a bad decision

Sadness: an emptiness inside

Depression: a continual state of mind rather than a temporary slow-down.

Despair: the utter absence of hope and a feeling of powerlessness

III. Our Response to Abandonment and Loss

We all face losses in our lives.

The most difficult are loss of relationships. When people fail us.

An example of the loss of hope

- Feeling isolated (Ps 88:5)
- Being overwhelmed with many troubles (Ps 88:7)
- Being despised by others, particularly old friends (Ps 88:8)
- Broken promises (Ps 88: 1-2 and 13-14)
- Feeling abandoned by God (Ps 88:14)
- Cyclical and repetitive disappointment (Ps 88:15)
- Believing that I am being punished- perhaps unfairly (Ps 88:16-18)

Psalm 88:1-18 (NIV)

1 O LORD, the God who saves me, day and night I cry out before you.

2 May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry.

3 For my soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave.

4 I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength.

5 I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.

6 You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.

7 Your wrath lies heavily upon me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. Selah

8 You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape;

9 my eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, O LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you.

10 Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do those who are dead rise up and praise you? Selah

11 Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction?

12 Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?

13 But I cry to you for help, O LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you.

14 Why, O LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?

15 From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death; I have suffered your terrors and am in despair.

16 Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me.

17 All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me.

18 You have taken my companions and loved ones from me; the darkness is my closest friend.

Loss of hope leads to loneliness

Despair looks at the world and says "I am alone, No one can help me. No one cares about me. They stand against me. Things are not going to get better. Hope only brings disappointment.

Ungodly despair shuts us down, it refuses to agonize any longer. It isolates us from everyone and everything.

IV. Redemptive Despair

"Godly despair is the collapse of self will; it is the surrender to a reality that we are powerless to consummate but in which we are granted an opportunity to play a part. Instead of a suicide note that puts a stop to the loss, it is a howling prayer that sees no explanation for our pain but reflexively knows something beyond an answer is what we desire, Godly despair cries out for perspective but allows the hollowness of loss to move the heart to seek God."

p 147-148 *The Cry of the Soul*

Psalm 77:1-13 (NIV)

1 I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me.

2 When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands and my soul refused to be comforted.

3 I remembered you, O God, and I groaned; I mused, and my spirit grew faint.

Selah (Pause)

4 You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak.

5 I thought about the former days, the years of long ago;

6 I remembered my songs in the night. My heart mused and my spirit inquired:

7 "Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again?"

8 Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time?

9 Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"

Selah (Pause)

10 Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years of the right hand of the Most High."

11 I will remember the deeds of the LORD; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.

12 I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds.

13 Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God?"

Q: What are the results of dealing with our negative emotions too quickly?

Things to consider

- Faith is not a quiet submission to fate.
- Faith asks and it shouts. It is a cry that is heard in heaven.
- Honest struggle is not smashed and rebuked by God.
- The irony of questioning God is that it honors Him; It turns our hearts away from ungodly despair toward a passionate desire to comprehend Him.

Psalm 30:10-12 (NIV)

Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me; O LORD, be my help." You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever.

Hebrews 2:9-10 (NIV)

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.

Cultivating Hope:

- Know that God is with you in all circumstances
- Remember that eventual peace and wholeness is a sure promise for those who trust in God.
- Keep the goal in mind so you can avoid foolish thoughts and distractions
- Flee comparison to others and self - numbing of your pain and disappointment

For Personal Reflection

A: Have you ever had a self realization that you were numbing or trying to escape your pain?

B: How has having a focus helped keep you from being discouraged and distracted at some time in your life?

C: How has knowing God's presence carried you through a difficult time and helped you hold on?

Coming up...

October 24 Wrestling with Evil

October 31 The Power of Human Shame

With more to come...

This series is based on a number of books, but a key text is "*The Cry of the Soul: How our emotions reveal our deepest questions about God*" by Dr. Dan B. Alexander and Dr. Tremper Longman III

The audio and notes for this and previous sessions of this series are available at www.sequimcommunitychurch.org in the Sunday Seminar section