

S.N. April 1, 79 A.M. -
(epiphany meeting) -

THE NUMBER ONE ILLNESS OF THE 70's

I Kings 19:1-10

Discouragement is as old as man himself. If we look into the Bible, for example, we discover there are many times in the ancient past when people showed discouragement. The Old Testament records reveal many, many times in the wilderness wanderings, of God's people. And of course, the illustration we have chosen today of Elijah tells us that there was a great depression.

When Jesus arrived at Bethany where Lazarus had lived, the family members were grieving. They had employed professional mourners. And friends and relatives were trying to bring comfort.

And at the same time, religious leaders stood around critical of the comments of Jesus.

This is a moving experience. Jesus deeply moved, wept himself. When we look at our century, and at the time in which we live, we realize that even Christians are at the point of unhappiness and discouragement. In the United States, in 1973, we had an awful record of 200,000 people attempting suicide every year. And 25,000 being successful. This means, that on the average, someone tries to kill himself every 3 minutes. And once every 21 minutes he succeeds. Most of these people are discouraged and depressed, and deeply unhappy with life.

It is hard today to find people who are even defeated with an attitude of victory. Carlyle Marney tells of the experience he had with a five year old boy. Who would come by his home each evening. For rough-house and wrestling. One day the little chap had assaulted Marney with all of his might including his teeth. Until in exasperation the old battler rolled over 200 pounds on the younger chaps 40 pounds and pinned him to the floor. Hoof, horn, and nostril. But then with his eyes wide open and with his fists and teeth clinched, as if in a mighty struggle, the five year old said - "even when I am on the bottom, I am winning."

Now keeping this same determination is something that we seldom see today.
Though a person may be down - he may not be out.

First, this is a problem of the 70's. Do you realize that depression is the No. 1 mental illness. As reported by the National Institute of Mental Health. Depression has overtaken almost all other problems. Eight million people last year had to seek some kind of professional help. Medically, or in some way, for what we call depression. That is why, I have listed it as the No. 1 illness of the 70's.

Why is this upsurge in depression at all ages and age levels. Even in grammar school, children are beset with depression. It becomes the No. 1 cause of suicide.

There are many explanations that we have seen - the shattering of the institutions. In which we have had great confidence and great trust.

First, in our government - there was the Nixon affair. The whole country somewhat lost its confidence in any kind of government.

A second thing is, the world has been hoping for peace. There have been tensions all around the world, little wars going on. Uprisings. And seemingly no answer.

Throughout the nations of the world, one crisis after another. The oil crisis, the energy crisis, etc.

Another explanation has been the destruction of the home. We have become a rootless type of people. Without any institution being able to stand and to offer security. People have no real tie in life. There is nothing to anchor their lives too. They are like a raft drifting on the open sea. And every wind and every circumstance controls their lives, and the result is - depression, depression.

There was even a motion picture (Cheaper By The Dozen.) It was a particular episode in which a father who was in distress had 12 children. He was taking the entire brood for an automobile ride. The ancient automobile in which they were riding was huffing, and puffing, and straining, under the heavy load. The father was trying to keep his patience. The children began to fight, and fuss, and scuffle. And argue one with another. He approached an intersection, and slowed down to stop. Standing on the corner, a man observed the 12 passengers, and all of the commotion. And he asked, with a smile (going on a picnic)

The fuming father, his patience worn thin, answered sir, all 12 of these children

are mine. And believe me, it is no picnic.

Yes, we live in a day, in a midst of such confusion and depression, that people are saying - life is no longer a picnic. Why is this so. Why should it be this way when there is an abundance of happiness to be had.

Depression takes over.

II. This is a personal problem. There are many symptoms. You and I see evidence of this. Perhaps, on Monday morning in our own lives. We may call it the "blues". Many people after this (hard winter) which we have had, have expressed it. That it has gotten them down.

The real symptoms of severe depression may be gloom, despair, or cynicism. There was a story of a wino who hung around a restuarant. He was running customers off. And they could not get rid of him. They would put him out back and he would come back. One day he was in a stupper and they rubbed some lindberger cheese on his mustache, and beard. When he woke up - he sniffed, and he said, I am getting out of here - this place stinks. He went to the barber shop - and he said, this place stinks. He went to the old house where a couple of his wino friends were. And he said, you guys stink. I am getting out of here - and finally he returned to the restuarant. And he said, I have decided the whole world stinks. "

With people, in that sort of depressed attitude, that pessimistic attitude,

Everything is wrong. Everything! Everything in Washington is wrong. Everything
with the President is wrong. Everything in Richmond with the governor is wrong.
Everything in the City Hall at Chesapeake with the Mayor is wrong. Everything is
wrong at work. You can take it right down the line. Everything at home is wrong.
Everything with my family is wrong. Everything is black, it is gloomy, it is
despair. It is pessimism. Everything in my church is wrong. These are symptoms
of depression. And they are rooted in depression.

It is distressing to observe that there are so many people today who have lost
the hope that anything wonderful may happen. To deliver them from the bondage of
such an evil life. They are bitter, they are irritable, they are difficult to live
with. And they think that life has soured on them - and they do not trust anyone.

Let me illustrate this with a dear little old lady who was in need of \$25.00.
She thought about her situation, and wrote a letter to God. Not knowing the exact
address to mail it - she put it in (care) of the Post Master.

As the Post Master read the story of the old lady and her needs for financial
assistance, he went back to the mail distribution room, and told the clerks. So
they pasted the hat. And they collected \$15.00 - which he put in an envelope and
sent back to the old lady's return address.

A week went by, and another letter addressed to the Lord in Heaven arrived.
And was opened by the Post Master. Just as he suspected, it was from the same
source. With a warm feeling, in his heart - and in high hopes that the money
collected had been of great assistance. He read the (text) of the letter. But the

words were amazing and amusing.

" Please, dear God, thank you for your assistance. I asked for \$25.00 and received only \$15.00. I suppose you sent the other \$10. But the next time, will you send it by registered mail. For you just can't trust those people in the Post Office. "

More people than we care to imagine, are just like that old woman. They are bitter and untrusting. And they are quite ready to bite the hand that feeds them. And this ought not to be.

Another symptom here in the matter of your personal depression is apathy. And fatigue. You don't want to give up, and you just cannot move. When you do get up - you can't get out. You really can't come to grips with the problems before you. You can't make decisions. You sit there at your desk and you just shuffle a lot of papers. You just can't seem to get your job done.

Here is a housewife. She just can't get into the job of cleaning the house. She gets up in the morning. Drinks coffee. And sits around in her (bathrobe) all day. And she can't get cleaned up.

Or here is the student who can't go to school. He can't concentrate. He is very depressed and doesn't want to get up. They do not want to face life.

I heard about a mother once trying to get her son out of bed. Son, get up.
This is Sunday. This is the Lord's Day. Sunday School starts at 9:30. I know.
Get up, get out, and get to Sunday School.

He said, I'll give you two reasons why I don't want to get out of bed. And
go to Sunday School. What are they? First of all, I don't feel like getting out
of bed. And second I don't want to go to Sunday School down there - no body at
the church likes me. They are all against me.

The mother said, son, get out of that bed! Now I am going to give you two
reasons why you ought to get out of bed. First of all, you are 35 years old.
And second, you are the pastor of the church. Now his problem - he was depressed.
Everybody is against me. Nobody loves me. And I don't feel like facing my
responsibility. That is the root of depression.

And then, we just at the drop of the hat - cry, go all to pieces, and fold up.
And get angry over the least little thing.

Third, it is a spiritual problem. We have lost our capacity for faith. Faith
in the future. Faith in God. Faith in others. Faith in ourselves. And that makes
us depressed and pessimistic. All of us see ourselves with these symptoms at times.
And we wonder what is wrong with us. What is wrong with a loved one who expressed
themselves in these ways. The answer is depression.

But basically, it is more than an emotional problem. You cannot divide emotion

who said, we are going with you. Let's get this depression off of our minds.

Let's find a way to answer this problem which we have.

Elijah is another case that we might illustrate with.

First, the cause of his depression.

First, he was tired. As we look over the situation - Ahab was king.

Jezebel, a pagan queen. Who had brought 450 prophets of Baal. And Elijah was a mountain of the plains. And he had preached, and he had prophesied that there would be no rain for 3 1/2 years. And there was a great drought on. And finally Elijah had a contest on Mt. Carmel with the prophets of Baal. Elijah laughed and they prayed and prayed. At the end of the day, Elijah brought barrels of water, and they soaked the altar down. And he prayed to the living God who sent fire down and consumed that altar and that sacrifice. As a result, the people turned against the prophets of Baal. Now when Jezebel heard this, she said Elijah - may God strike me dead if I don't have you killed by tomorrow. That scared the life out of Elijah. He started running. You talk about being depressed - all the way from Mt. Carmel in the North, through the Jordan Valley, down the King's Highway. He went down to the edge of Negev. I suppose near the border of Mt. Sinai. And he stopped under a juniper tree. And listen to what he said -- oh God, I want to die.

Take my life from me. I am through. I am finished.

Did you ever feel like that. I wish I were dead. That is depression. But I wonder if we meant it.

I heard about a construction job once in progress. And a man was so depressed on

that job that he said, Lord, I wish I were dead. And about that time, a brick mason above him dropped a brick. And hit him on the head. Oh Lord, he said, don't take me so seriously. Now we feel that way. But we don't always mean it. And that is what Elijah said. And that is what he meant. Lord, I wish I were dead. Jezebel is after me. She is going to kill me.

But the first cause of this was - he was tired. What is it that causes your depression and mine. The same thing. What happens? Elijah had lost his physical stamina - he was played out. He had run several miles without food, and without rest. That is what happens to us. You get under pressure.

Sometimes more work comes along than you anticipated - and you just can't get on top of it. And you feel that you are inadequate. You lack time, and you are inadequate with the resources that you have to work with. Or you feel inadequate with the energy that you have. You cannot see an end to your job. Your job gets bigger and bigger - until at last, you are in the state of physical exhaustion. That will make you depressed.

Second cause, he lost contact with God. On Mt. Carmel, he had his eyes fixed on God. His faith was clear. He saw God on the throne in great power. With about 450 enemies before him. He still saw God. But he took his eyes off God and looked at Jezebel - And he got scared to death. He changed the priorities of his life. He looked in another direction. And when we do this, we are going to find that we are on the way to despondency. God is the only focus for us. The only place for ultimate trust.

If you put your trust in your job, and something goes wrong - -

Or you put your trust in yourself - your own abilities. You are in deep trouble. But if you put your trust in others, they will fail you every time. Put your trust in your resources - and they can diminish or be inadequate, to meet the need. Elijah took his eyes off God. And looked at Jezebel.

✓ Third, he lost his fellowship with other people. With God's people. He withdrew and he made a great mistake. And we make a mistake when we get into depression and draw back.

Somebody normally is very talkative, and outgoing. They clam up and they quit talking even to their loved ones. They just sit and stare.

Everybody needs somebody they can share with. Somebody they can trust. This is the right relationship in marriage. They say, I am down - and you have to help me. I'm a little despondent.

We find all kind of opportunities to do this. But this is a great thing in the ministry that we have. Why, I think all people have needs of this. When physical death comes - or other things come. And they just pile up.

And we need to find somewhere acceptance. We need a prayer partner. We need somebody who says I've been through it. You can start a new life.

Elijah, instead of going toward the people, that could help him in this time,

workers, and their church. Their jobs.

And like Elijah, they come and feel self-pity. There is a tendency here. And then there is apathy. They become inactive. And things get the best of them.

Now what can God do for us, in this illness of the 70's. What do you think is the answer and the cure to it. Where are we going to find some help that will get us out of this.

What can God do for you.

First, give you rest V. (8.) We find part of the cure was to put Elijah to sleep. You can't beat that. God said to Elijah, you are not ready to face all of these tests ahead of you. And the first thing that you need to do is to get some rest. God put him to rest. That is a marvelous picture there. God put Elijah in this situation and fed him during these days.

Second, God showed him the root of his trouble. So there was rest. And then there was the root of his sin. And that was self-pity. You know, sin ultimately is the root of depression in many of our lives. The heart becomes so loaded down with guilt that we do not find happiness and freedom. You have to get that lifted off. You can talk it out.

Dr. John Bonnell who has a clinic in New York says this - there is a certain point to which medicine and counselling can go. But there comes that ultimate last

depressed person. Talk over his problems and express his feelings. And evaluate the situation. You have to uncover these causes of depression.

✓ Another thing, that was bound up in the cure was - that God sent him back to work. He put him back into action. He told Elijah to get out of his cave. What are you doing here. Just lying around in a cave, feeling sorry for yourself. Get up and go back to work. There is work that needs to be done.

God told him in V. (15) - you go now and anoint Hazael to be king of Syria. You go and anoint Jehu to be the king of Israel. You go and anoint Elisha to be the prophet in your stead.

Anoint Jehu. Ahab is dead as a king. Anoint a new king. Lay your mantle on a new man. There is work to do.

✓ Another thing he did - he called him back to renew his fellowship with God's own people. Don't stay here - but get back in the midst of that 7,000. Miss Flint who wanted to be a concert pianist - but before she was 20 arthritis crippled her. Within 5 years, she was helpless. In pain, she wrote with a pencil. Flat of her back. On a board suspended over her bed.

God hath not promised skies always blue
Flower strewn pathways all our lives through
God hath not promised sun without rain
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain

But God hath promised strength for the day
Rest for the labor, right for the way
Grace for the trials, help from above
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

When you get to the end of yourself, you step out not into darkness - but into the strong arms of God. When you cannot see, you must walk by faith. Life goes on day by day.

The big question today, how are you going to respond? What will you do? How will you do. God says I want to help you. Not just handle your depression. I want to help you to achieve victory in your life. I want you to get ahold of your life and be confident. And believe that God is on the throne. God has the power to forgive your sins. And cleanse your life. You can be a new person today. And you can start with a new life.

Every individual here feels that the Negro spiritual - sometimes I'm up, and sometimes I'm down, and sometimes I'm almost to the ground. Is descriptive. There are some days that one cannot tell whether he is up or down. And he is just somewhere in the misty flats - somewhere between the two. Peter, one day called Jesus the son of the living God. And the next moments, Jesus said, get thee behind me Satan.

Frank Craeff was born in 1860. He was a preacher. But he went into deep depression and deep despair. He felt himself beneath the stormy waves of Galilee. He was born up in Pa. in the Dutch country. And he was a wonderful shepherd and

preacher. He had a remarkable way about him. Even humorous at times. He took one of his wife's pies to a neighbor, and afterwards it was discovered that the crust of that particular batch was unusually tough. He next took a hatchet to the neighbor with an explanation, it was to be used in cutting the pie.

But the (burdens) of the people were heavy on his heart. And as a pastor finds, that day after day, he bears these burdens of his people. It may have been a time that he was worn down physically and exhausted in body. But he was not finding his strength feeding his barren soul on the living bread. Or helping his spiritual thirst with the water of life. But there was a verse that comforted him during the days of his depression. And it was this (he careth for you). He asked that question, and then he answered it. And then he wrote down this message. That has every stanza and a line - a four line question. And then he wrote a chorus to answer that question in faith.

Here it is:

Does Jesus care when my heart is pained
Too deeply for myrth or song
As the burdens pressed and the cares distress
And the ways grow weary and long.

He answered that:

Oh yes, he cares, I know he cares
His heart is touched with my grief
When the days are weary, the long nights dreary
I know my Saviour cares.

The second line:

Does Jesus care when my way is dark
With a nameless dread and fear
As the day light fades into deep night shades
Does he care enough to be near.

His third question:

Does Jesus care when I am tired and fail
To resist some temptation strong
When my deep grief, there is no relief
Though my tears flow all the night long.

And of course he answers that with his chorus:

Oh yes, he cares.

Now there have been many of us who have gone through similar nights of depression and despair. But here was a man who was expressing the heart throb of his soul. At age 59 he passed away, July 29, 1919. He is buried at Norris Town, Pa. And the strange and the remarkable thing about the final stanza of the Gospel hymn is this - that all of his loved ones who were left behind, joined in the church service on the following Sunday. And here is what they sang.

Does Jesus care when I've said goodbye
To the dearest on earth to me
And my sad heart aches until it nearly breaks
Is it ought to him, does he care.

And the answer, oh yes, he cares, I know he cares. His heart is touched
with my grief. The days are weary and the long nights dreary, I know my
Saviour cares.

And I know that in the hearts of that family - it was like a bell ringing.
Oh yes, he cares, I know he cares.

What will you do - God is saying, I care.! Will you act today and move toward
God's people who can strengthen you in experience. And will you move toward the
church today and toward God. And will you act this moment in that interest.

God has a purpose and a plan, and a will for every life. God wants us to express our faith in him. When we do not express our faith in him, that he is God - that becomes sin. And that becomes unbelief.

It is also a sin not to have faith in others. That is wallowing in self-pity.

Many times people get depressed and they say - I quit. I won't do anymore. And they are not willing to face up to life and do a good job because of self-pity. That is one of the worst sins in the world.

And God confronted Elijah with this. There are still 7,000 people like you who are still faithful. They are still true. And, Elijah, we are going to win. We are going to win.

We need to recognize and accept these facts when we are discouraged. That here is a God that controls the universe. And God has a plan, for each of us.

And we need to renew our dependance upon God. And we need to get into some meaningful activity for God.

You know what your great problem is sometimes - it is easy to look at a bad situation. But you never see the good. There is a tendency to look at the hopeless. And expect the worst. Here is one place where a Christian can help a

X he withdrew to a cave in Sinai. And you know, that is one of the loneliest places in all of the world down in the Sinai Desert.

I guess there were other causes of his depression. As with you. Frustrated over the inability to accomplish some task. Or feeling that this thing is too hard - like a boy trying to build a model airplane. He dumps those parts out of a box and it looks like a million parts. And now he has got to try and get them all put together correctly. And his project doesn't succeed very well.

We may get depressed over the behavior of other people. It may provoke us. And irritate us. We may think their demands are too high.

There may be a lack of real purpose in life. Because of this depression. Men and women have no direction and no apparent meaning in life. This lack of purpose may cause us to drift and to be discouraged.

To get people depressed - must surely be a tactic of the Devil. Who wants to see people, especially Christian people, ineffective, unproductive, and hindered in their work.

Now there are many marks and causes that you can detect. And characteristics here. One is that a person becomes highly critical. And complaining. This still happens. They often find fault and criticize - their neighbors, their fellow

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and spirit. You do not chop a person apart and say here is the spiritual part of you and here is the physical part of you. But here is a person who is tired of being a whole person. And that is what we need - spiritual healing really. That takes care of physical, mental, and emotional.

God wants to help you be victorious over all of the circumstances of life. He wants you to live in a triumphant way. God says, I do not want you to live with depression. I do not want you to live in a tunnel. I want you to live in a way that your life will count for something.

IV. Bible Illustrations

Now from the Bible, there are so many illustrations that I could use. About this matter of depression.

There was Thomas, in John 20:25, he was so depressed over the death of Jesus, that he made this statement. Except I shall see in his hands, the prints of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails - and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Another man was Peter - John 21:3. He was so upset and oppressed and depressed - that Jesus his leader had died. There was no one to follow now. He simply said, (I go fishing.) He was going to run away from his troubles.

And there were several others - to be exact. There were six other disciples,