

KILLING GIANTS SERIES #5
“KILLING THE GIANT OF DEPRESSION”
I Samuel 21:11-15, 2 Corinthians 1:3-11, John 14:1-6, 25-27
March 14 & 15, 2020

“There was a lady whose husband died. She found herself, of course, extremely lonely. She told herself that she needed to do something to overcome her depression. She took a trip to the pet store to look for something to comfort her in her loneliness.

“The proprietor introduced her to a parakeet that talked. The widow thought the idea of a talking parakeet was wonderful, so she took the parakeet home. She started talking to the bird, but the parakeet wouldn’t talk back. The woman talked and talked. This went on for a week and naturally, she was a little confused as to what was going on.

“The widow made her way back to the pet store. ‘The parakeet is not talking.’ The proprietor said, ‘Oh, you forgot to get the mirror. The parakeet needs to see itself in the mirror, then it will be encouraged to talk.’

“So she bought a mirror, took it back, and placed it in the cage. She made sure that the parakeet could see itself. For another week, she talked to the parakeet. The parakeet still would not talk.

“The lady went back, yet again, to the pet store. ‘That parakeet is still not talking.’

“Oh,’ he said, ‘you didn’t get the swing. The parakeet’s got to be on the swing and swinging and looking at itself in order for it to talk.’

“So she bought the swing, put the parakeet on the swing, and started talking to the parakeet. Another week went by and she made her way back to the pet store. ‘This dumb parakeet is not working. It’s not doing what I hoped it would do.’

“Oh, I am sorry. There’s one more thing you forgot to get – the ladder. The parakeet has got to have the ladder to walk up and down on. That movement will allow it to talk.’

“Begrudgingly, she bought the ladder. Another week went by. That parakeet didn’t say a word. However at the end of the week, it fell over dead.

“The widow was really mad now. She marched back to the store and sought out the store owner.

She said, ‘That parakeet you sold me died. I bought the mirror, I bought the swing, I bought the ladder; and that bird didn’t say a mumbling word. It just fell over and died.’

“The store owner said, ‘I cannot believe that it died. Did it say *anything* before it died?’

“Yeah, while it was falling over dead, it looked up with one eye open and said, ‘Don’t they serve any food at that pet store?’ For four weeks, that bird hadn’t eaten. The woman kept buying all the wrong stuff. That’s what a lot of us look for – all the wrong stuff. The things we hope will solve our problems die on us. They don’t produce what we expect.”¹ **It’s a case of wrong thinking**, and wrong thinking will always lead us into **coming under the control of the giant Depression**.

You see, Depressions gets us twisted around into thinking, “**Is that it?** Is that all there is to life?” Depression rides piggy back with the giants of Fear, Bitterness, Jealousy and Lust to convince us that life is supposed to have much more for us. It can look a blessing right in the eye and ask, “Is that all there is?” It can walk up right beside the best event you’ve ever had and ask, “Is that it?” Depression stalks us in our minds to convince us that life has gotten so bad that we may as well end it all, just give up and die, because “That’s it! There ain’t no more!” And we might be standing in the most plush estate, surrounded by all the pleasures a person could ever want, having the blessings of the Lord given to us, and we hear from within us with Depression whispering in our ear, “Is that all there is?”

Elijah experienced it right after he had been given a stunning victory at Mt. Carmel against the prophets of Baal, when God showed Himself to be THE GOD of the universe (I Kings 18-19). Yet Elijah runs away, frightened because of the threat from Queen Jezebel. She put out a warrant for his arrest because he had killed all the prophets of Baal and brought the people of Israel back into the worship of the Lord God. God had shown Himself through him in a mighty way, yet Elijah asks, “Is that all there is to victory?”

King David experienced it. In our Old Testament lesson of I Samuel 21 we see him asking the same question. “Is that all there is to valor?” “He had killed a giant and married a princess. He was a

¹ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago: Moody Publications, 2009] #207, pg. 76-77)

fierce and resourceful front-line fighter but found himself the target of his own king's spear. Although a proven and dedicated warrior, unmatched in Israel's ranks for bravery, he was forced to flee [Saul's anger]. This sent him reeling, appearing insane before the king of Gath [the very country whose giant he had killed in battle, Goliath]. The once-exalted man of valor now 'scribbled on the doors of the gate and let his saliva run down into his beard' (I Samuel 21:13). David had wrestled with bears, tackled sinewy lions, and leveled a 9-foot-9 Philistine...but he traded an external giant for an internal one and was now rendered helpless..."² by the wrong thinking of Depression. "Is that all there is?"

And **the Apostle Paul experienced it**. Though he had served the Lord Jesus throughout vast regions of Asia, though He had penned God's Word to the people helping them to accurately understand the concept of God that would influence the Church for centuries, he too, faced the giant Depression. We see that in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9a, as he shared with the Corinthian believers, "*We want to remind you, brothers, of the trouble we had in the province of Asia. The burdens laid upon us were so great and so heavy that we gave up all hope of staying alive. We felt that the death sentence had been passed on us...*" Wrong thinking of the external events taking place in his life caused him to consider giving up.

Depression is like that, causing us to move into wrong thinking about what is taking place in our lives. And depending upon how we think about those events will determine how we move through life.

"In his book, *Learned Optimism*, Professor Martin Seligman refers to depression as '**the ultimate expression of pessimism**,' and claims that many depressed people can talk their way out of pessimism by changing the way they think. As Seligman puts it, we can change our 'explanatory style.' After studying optimists and pessimists for twenty-five years, Seligman writes:

The defining characteristic of pessimists is that they tend to believe bad events will last a long time, will undermine everything they do, and are their own fault. The optimists, who are confronted with the same hard knocks of this world, think about misfortune in the opposite way. They tend to believe defeat is just a temporary setback, that its causes are confined to this one case. The optimists

² (Charles Swindoll, *Killing Giants, Pulling Thorns*, [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994] pg. 41)

*believe defeat is not their fault; Circumstances, bad luck, or other people brought it about. Such people are unfazed by defeat. Confronted by a bad situation, they perceive it as a challenge and try harder.**

“Seligman claims that we can change from pessimistic thinking to optimistic thinking. He says this: *One of the most significant findings in psychology in the past twenty years is that individuals can choose the way they think.***

“Depression is nothing more than its symptoms. It is caused by negative thoughts. There is no deep underlying disorder to be rooted out: not unresolved childhood conflicts, not our unconscious anger, and not even our brain chemistry. Emotion comes directly from what we think...

“Depression results from lifelong habits of conscious thought. If we change these habits of thought we will cure depression.”³ That’s an astounding concept, isn’t it – change the way we think!

When I was serving in Marinette, I was a part of the Jail and Prison Outreach Ministry. During those six years I had the chance to teach a course called “Stinking Thinking.” It went right along with this understanding from Dr. Seligman. If we change our belief system, it will change our thinking. When we change our thinking, it changes our behavior. And when we change our behavior, it changes our life. Depression encourages stinking thinking. Jesus encourages godly thinking, and that will transform our lives.

And we see that it happened in Paul’s life right after his bout of depression. Explaining to the Corinthians he says, *“But this happened so that we should rely, not on ourselves, but only on God, who raises the dead. From such terrible dangers of death He saved us, and will save us; and we have placed our hope in Him that He will save us again, as you help us by means of your prayers for us. So it will be that the many prayers for us will be answered, and God will bless us; and many will raise their voices to Him in thanksgiving for us”* (2 Corinthians 1:9b-11).

Paul remembered the many times that God had saved him and brought him through the trial and the storm to continue to do His work. Focusing on the positive experiences rather than the negative

* ** ³ (Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, [New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1990] pg. 4-5, 8, 74-75) found in (Robert J. Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000] pg. 210)

experiences, opened up Paul to defeat Depression. It comes down to the way we think about the stuff of life. It comes down to whom we put our trust and faith in. So let me give you 4 ways to openly defeat this giant, Depression.

First, **Change Your Thinking Pattern.** The saying is very true, if you look for the worst in people or things, you will quickly find it; but if you look for the best in people or things, you will also quickly find it, too. Change the way you look at the stuff of your life.

Take for example this corona virus scare we are experiencing. The media is making it sound like this is an instant death disease when it's not. Do you realize that the common cold is a corona virus? We don't have a cure for that yet. There are some remedies that might help us to get rid of it, but there is no cure as of today. Do you know that the flu is a corona virus? We've gotten some vaccines that will help us build up immunity to the flu, but still there are thousands of people who die from the flu each year. This is just a new corona virus that we haven't seen yet, and sadly there are people who are dying from it. But the way we look at this disease will determine largely how we will respond to it. For me, it's another flu that I am to be careful not to get. So I wash my hands, be careful not to touch my face with my hands (or feet), eat well, try to stay healthy, wear a coat when the temperature is less than 50° regardless how warm it feels, and protect myself from those who are sick. To me it is just common sense. Does that mean I won't get sick? No. But if I protect myself as best as I can, there's no need to become paranoid about the latest strain of the flu.

Thinking positively about the things in life lightens up our spirits, allows us to enjoy the blessings of the Lord and share the goodness of all that we have.

Second, **Practice Thanksgiving For All God Has Done For Us.** When we focus on giving God thanks for what He has done in our life, we begin to get confidence that if God did it then, He can do it again now. Focusing on the positives, giving thanks for the blessings that God has graciously poured out on us gets our minds away from the "what-ifs" and gets them centered on the reality of what has already happened.

Paul says it well, “[Jesus] helps us in all our troubles, so that we are able to help other who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God.” (2 Cor. 1:4). As we focus on the goodness of God that we have received during those difficult times of our lives, we can then turn to those around us and help them through similar problems with the same blessings that God has given to us. Living in the world of the positive defeats Depression. Giving thanks to God for all that He has done in our life kills this nasty giant and allows us to find the freedom of life even in difficult times.

There is so much negativity around us, and so much garbage thrown at us that causes our hearts to sink and become weak. But that’s not where Jesus wants us to be as His followers! Jesus wants us to be strong and of great courage, speaking up and defending our faith, taking stands against the atrocities of our world, fighting for the oppressed and rescuing the perishing. We can’t do that if we are discouraged and depressed. If we allow ourselves to be steeped in negativity, then we can easily ask ourselves, “Is that all there is to life?”

But if we look at the greatness of God, if we thank Him for His presence and His power and His guidance in our lives when we go through the tough times of life, we begin to see that He will always be with us when we claim Jesus as our Savior and Lord. He promised to never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He promised to strengthen you (Isaiah 41:10) and supply you with all your needs (Philippians 4:19). He promised to protect you from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:3). God has promised so many things for your life, but if you don’t focus on them, but look to the junk of the world, you will miss those promises and you will settle for the junk of the world. Giving thanks to God for what He has already done reminds you of the promises, gives you encouragement that God is good on His word, and allows you to see that He is willing to be with you in the midst of every trial and struggle.

Third, **Prayer And Praise Keeps Your Eyes On Jesus**. I don’t know how to convince you that prayer works if you have never prayed, except by telling you the many times that I have received answers to my prayers. Praying to God gets my eyes off of ME and getting them onto HIM. When my

strength fails and I pray to God for His help, I am now relinquishing control of my life to Him so that He can take over and bring glory to Him. Paul says it well, *“Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, **for Christ’s sake**; for when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Cor. 12:10). Great things can happen when we let go of ourselves and let God work through us. Prayers to God remind me that I have very little strength, very little wisdom, very little ambition, and very little authority OUTSIDE OF HIM. But *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13).

Prayer keeps my eyes on the work that Jesus did for me, forgiving me of my sin and giving me the gift of salvation. Prayer opens my eyes to see the work that God has for me to do for Him. Prayer livens my discouraged heart, opening up my mind to the things of God. Prayer grants me a song to sing in my heart to support me so that I don’t fall to Depression’s negativity. Prayer gets me in touch with God so that I can follow Him with my whole heart, soul, mind and strength.

Praise comes right alongside of prayer. Praise reminds me of the greatness of God. Praise opens my eyes to the glorious creation around me which God has done. Praise reminds me that God has blessed me abundantly with all I have so that I don’t ask, “Is that all there is?” Praise picks my heart up when I am low, gives me confidence when I doubt myself, and gives me examples of others who have depended upon God’s guidance and had victory in their life. Praise informs me when I feel overwhelmed by the junk of the world that God is in control, that He has a plan for my life and that He has already given me the necessary resources to accomplish all that He has asked me to do. Praise challenges the questions that I have about God’s character. Praise exposes the work of the Holy Spirit in my life so that I can see the results of His work in the lives of those around me.

When I am active in Prayer and Praise, there is no way, whatsoever, that Depression can affect me or cause me to give up. Talk often with God through Jesus Christ and you will never have reason to give up.

The fourth and last way to defeat Depression today is **Have Faith In Our Lord Jesus’**

Promises. We just touched on this a little bit, but I want to share with you some of the most encouraging words in the Scriptures. Listen to these words of Jesus in the John 14. READ John 14:1-6, 25-27)

Did you hear what Jesus says to us? No matter what is going on in our life, no matter how low, how discouraged, or how hurt we may be, Jesus tells us, *“And after I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to Myself, so that you will be where I am”* (Jn. 14:3). He’s not abandoned us to fight it out with the world all by ourselves. He’s not deserted us to our own resources. He’s not forgotten us since He’s gone back to be with God the Father. Jesus tells us to believe in God, believe also in Him, AND I WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU!

Folks this is not our home. We are only sojourners here on this planet. This is not our final destination. Though our bodies may die and waste away, when we believe in Jesus and claim Him as our Savior and Lord, WE GO ON TO BE WITH HIM IN HEAVEN! Everyone who trusts in Jesus and diligently seeks to follow His will and His way have a place already prepared for us in The Father’s House. And there is no one or no thing that can take it away from us. It is a promise of Jesus, and He stands good to His word. I don’t know about you, but just that promise will get me on my feet and going for Him. There is no way for Depression to have ANY effect on me when I remember that I am His and He is mine. No one can snatch me out of His hands! So how can I ever ask, “Is that all?” What more could I ever hope for? What more is there for anyone else to ever want? When we let Jesus become our all-in-all, Depression doesn’t stand a chance to have any control on our lives.

So we accept Jesus’ promise, and we let the Holy Spirit teach us and remind us all that He has said to us to encourage us (Jn. 14:25). We open our lives to let the Holy Spirit bring His peace to us so that there is no reason for us to be worried or upset (14:27). There is no need for us to be afraid when we have confidence that Jesus knows us, owns us, and has prepared a place for us. And Depression falls dead on the floor because there is nothing more to fear.

Believe in Jesus, trust in Him, and follow His ways, and watch Depression shrivel up to nothing.

Let's pray; Father move in us today to remain faithful to Jesus in all we do so that we can be strong for You in all we do. Show us the positive things of life so we can focus on them. Quicken our hearts to give you thanks for all that You have done. Encourage us to pray to you and give you all things as we praise You for what You have done. And help us keep faith in Jesus' promises so that we need not fear anything. Help us kill the giant of Depression so that our lives may be filled with Your Holy Spirit, for we pray all this in Jesus' name. AMEN.