

YOU

Sermon Series: When Emotions Rise

To be used with: Session 6: Winning Over Depression

Sermon Title Possibilities: Reflections of a Pessimistic Prophet

Scripture: Jeremiah 20:7-13

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study “*When Emotions Rise*,” these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

Introduction: Years ago, the Statler Brothers had a popular song called “The Class of ’57.” It talked about different people who had graduated from this class, and what had become of them. Many were leading rather ordinary lives, and others had faced terrible hardship and tragedy. Many of them had not realized the hopes they had when they were teenagers. The song concludes with the words, “Things get complicated when you get past eighteen, but the Class of ’57 had its dreams.” Whether you graduated in 1957 or 1997, you can probably relate to that song. Many of us had big plans for the future when we were teenagers, but the harsher realities of life got in the way of their fulfillment.

There’s nothing wrong with having hopes and dreams, as long they bring glory to God, but you must keep them in the right perspective. For one thing, you must keep them realistic. After all, it’s rather pointless to dream of being a great singer if you’re unable to carry a tune! Second, your dreams may not always be in line with God’s will. In other words, what we want and what God wants are often two different things! This was the case with the prophet Jeremiah. By the time he spoke these words in chapter 20, he had been preaching for more than 20 years, but things had not worked out the way he wanted. He was so discouraged that he voiced his frustrations to God.

1) His protest.

- a) Jeremiah was first called to be a prophet during the reign of King Josiah.
 - i) Josiah was the last righteous king of Judah.
 - (1) He had rid the land of idols and renovated the temple.
 - (2) After a book of the law (probably Deuteronomy) was found in the temple, Josiah led the nation in a time of repentance.
 - (3) He even went outside of Judah’s borders and destroyed a golden calf at Bethel, which had stood for centuries.
 - ii) After Josiah’s death, people reverted to their idolatry.
 - (1) Jeremiah urged the people to repent, but they would not listen.
 - (2) By the time he spoke these words, they were mocking him
- b) Jeremiah accused God of deceiving him.
 - i) He was likely optimistic during his early years, but that was long gone.
 - (1) People were not only mocking him, but also persecuting him.
 - (2) God had warned Jeremiah the people would not listen to him, so

- (3) he had not been deceived at all (Jeremiah 7:27).
- ii) Jeremiah was only human.
 - (1) Show me a person who has never doubted God, and I will show you someone who is probably being less than honest.
 - (2) We live in a fallen world, and life isn't always fair.
 - (3) As society gets more wicked, God's people are likely to be more discouraged.

2) His predicament.

- a) Jeremiah was ready to quit.
 - i) He vowed he would not speak God's message anymore.
 - (1) People would not listen to his message, so what was the point?
 - (2) There was "fear on every side". His whole country had turned against him, and their mockery was getting to him.
 - ii) Discouragement abounds in churches today.
 - (1) Studies show that approximately 3000 pastors leave the ministry every year. Sometimes it's because of moral failure, but many times they are simply discouraged.
 - (2) Whether you're a pastor or a layperson, it's not easy to stick to the task when you aren't getting any results.
- b) Because God had called him, Jeremiah couldn't quit.
 - i) God's Word was like a "burning fire" in his bones.
 - (1) He couldn't quit preaching even if he wanted.
 - (2) He knew God had called him, and to quit would be disobedient.
 - (a) I remember a conversation I had with an older student when I first started seminary. I asked him if it was hard, and he said, "I'll put it this way: if God has called you, you'll make it. If He hasn't, you might as well drop out now." He was right. I had not even finished my first year of seminary before I was sorely tempted to quit! That was over thirty years ago, and I've been tempted to quit many times since then. The only thing that has kept me going has been the call of God.
 - ii) The church today faces that same dilemma.
 - (1) Churches that preach God's Word are getting less popular each year, and the opposition is getting more vocal.
 - (2) Nevertheless, God has commanded us to proclaim His Word, and we must obey Him.

3) His praise.

- a) Jeremiah knew that God was still with him (verse 11).
 - i) This verse is an abrupt shift from his previous words.
 - (1) When you're depressed, your emotions often fluctuate.
 - (2) He lashed out at God, but deep down, He knew God had not betrayed him at all.
 - (a) Vance Havner used to say, "When you don't know what to do, give God the benefit of the doubt."
 - ii) He called God "a mighty terrible one."

- (1) Other translations say “mighty warrior” or “mighty dread champion”.
- (2) Jeremiah knew God was bigger than any of His enemies.
 - (a) These days, people often say those who oppose abortion and same sex “marriage” are on “the wrong side of history.” We should not be discouraged by such talk. God is the author of history, and He will have the final word.
- b) Jeremiah could praise God in spite of His discouragement.
 - i) God knew Jeremiah’s heart.
 - (a) People were attacking his motives, but Jeremiah knew he did not have to answer to them.
 - (b) Likewise, we do not have to justify ourselves to other people.
 - (i) Many people today attack the church’s motives. They call us “hateful” and “bigoted.” They say we are only interested in money or political power. Let them talk. God knows our hearts, and His opinion is the only one that matters.
 - ii) Praising God is a good cure for discouragement.
 - (a) You can praise Him by singing a favorite hymn or praise song, or by reciting His Word.
 - (b) The devil plays on your fears and your emotions. When you praise God, the devil will flee.
 - (c)

Conclusion: I remember one of the last chapel services I attended in seminary just before I graduated. The seminary president was out of town, so one of the professors presided over the service. He made the announcements, and then he introduced the speaker for that morning, who was one of our other professors. He said, “There are a lot of nice things I could say about him. Unfortunately, I can’t think of any of them right now. I lost the introduction he wrote out for me!” We students laughed, and then he went on to say some things about the speaker. The other professor walked to the pulpit, and he began his sermon. Ironically, he was speaking on friendship. He said, “There are true friends, false friends...” Then he looked at the professor who had introduced him, and he said, “...people you thought were your friends!”

We students knew the two men were just picking at each other, and they gave us a good laugh. However, it’s not a bit funny when a friend truly turns against you. I’m sure many of you have been there, and so have I. Human friends are not always loyal. Ah, but the Bible says there’s a Friend who sticks closer than a brother, and that Friend is Almighty God. You may not always understand what He’s doing, but He’s with you even when you don’t understand. You may fail Him, but He will never fail you. Keep your trust in Him!

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