

4- Healing our Sorrows
Pastor Deborah Oakley – GFC – 5/5/24

We're in a sermon series entitled: Greater Freedom. We've been teaching about how hard it is for many Christians to get free and stay free. We are dealing with the root problems in our life that need to be cut off so that we can live in greater freedom.

The outline for this series is based on the ministries Jesus came to earth to accomplish on our behalf. We find these ministries listed in Luke 4:18-19 when Jesus said-

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

We spent several weeks teaching about how Jesus came to preach the gospel to the poor and that message is found in Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

True repentance lays the ax to the root of sin.

Secondly – Jesus came to heal the brokenhearted. A broken heart comes from someone having their feelings deeply wounded, usually by something someone they trust says or does.

Another cause of a broken heart is sorrow from experiencing a loss. A heart-breaking loss can include the death of a loved one, sickness, a divorce, being rejected by someone who we thought loved us, or the death of a vision we had for our lives.

If we don't handle sorrow correctly, it can lead to resentment and bitterness that can lead to spiritual bondage in our life. This is especially true when we hold on to past hurts and when we don't forgive those who hurt us or break our hearts. So, we need to deal with it in order to experience greater freedom.

I'm preaching today on Healing our Sorrows.

1. Experiencing sorrow is not wrong.

But, if sorrow is not dealt with properly, people can get stuck in life. The two wrong ways of dealing with sorrow are: not dealing with it at all, or having a

worldly sorrow. If you don't lay the ax to those wrong responses, it will have negative results in your life.

Sorrow is another word for grief. Grief is the pain you feel when you suffer a loss. That loss can break your heart, but Jesus came to heal broken hearts. What we must understand is this: the Bible teaches

2. There's a difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow

We find this in 2 Corinthians 7:10

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

You can tell the difference between worldly sorrow and godly sorrow by their results. Godly sorrow lays the ax to the root, but worldly sorrow does not. Godly sorrow leads to repentance and change, but worldly sorrow leads to death – emotional, spiritual death and sometimes even physical death. That's because worldly sorrow is sorrow without hope. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 says:

Dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.

When you lose hope, that's when you know you need to lay the ax to the root of worldly sorrow. Worldly sorrow drives you away from God, but godly sorrow draws you closer to God! Psalm 34:18 says:

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

God dwells on high, yet He is near to those who are broken hearted. Not only is He near to the broken hearted, but Psalm 147:2 says –

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

When Jesus was on earth – He took people's brokenness seriously, and so should we.

Joe and I used to go to a doctor who did not take you seriously when you shared a problem with him. He dismissed your feelings – downplayed symptoms – and ended up misdiagnosing us. If you shared problems with him, he would say things like – “That's no big deal – what if you had cancer?” It was frustrating for this doctor not to take us seriously.

We do that to hurting people sometimes. We don't really listen, we dismiss their feelings, we downplay their pain.

The Bible clearly teaches against this kind of response to hurting people. Jeremiah 8:10-11 says:

From the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace.

In this passage, God rebuked ministers because they dealt only with the symptoms and not with the deep spiritual hurts of the people. The NIV says

They dress the wound of My people as though it were not serious.

Yet - how many times have we said to hurting people, “Big deal, that’s not so bad, get over it.” Or “You think that’s bad – listen to what happened to me.” Or “Shouldn’t you be over that by now?” When we say those kinds of things to people, we are treating their pain slightly - superficially.

One of the reasons there is not more healing in some churches is because they try to talk people out of pain rather than healing their pain. They try to convince hurting people they shouldn’t feel that way. When broken hearted people are not allowed to grieve their loss – all that does is cause more pain! The Living Bible says:

You can't heal a wound by saying it's not there!

You’ll never heal your broken heart by denying your pain! We must take pain seriously. It’s only when we do that that we can apply healing to our sorrows.

3. Healing a broken heart requires grieving our losses

Jesus came to heal broken hearts and we are part of that process. For that to happen, we must take people’s pain seriously. Healing sorrow comes through comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

This shows us that God wants to comfort people through us! What does it mean to comfort someone? It does not mean to shut down their tears or pain. In fact, the New Testament Greek word for mourn means “to grieve and to wail.”

To comfort someone, we must allow them to have their feelings and to act on them appropriately, which may include tears. Did you know that tears are precious to God? Psalm 56:8 says:

You have collected all my tears and preserved them in Your bottle! You have recorded every one in Your book.

Many times we shut down people's healing process when we don't allow them to grieve or cry. Romans 12:15 tells us to ***mourn with those who mourn***. We are not called to fix them; we are called to mourn with them. Some translations say to ***weep with those who weep***.

One of the most amazing things in the universe is a God who weeps. The most profound example of this is at the death of Lazarus. When Jesus arrived at the family home, everyone was crying. John 11:33-36 says:

When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

Now think about this - What was Jesus about to do? Raise Lazarus from the dead. Did He know what He was about to do? Yes. Did He say, "Stop your crying - or - Don't you have any faith? - or - God's going to bring good out of this - real soon." NO - even though He knew Lazarus would soon live again, He still mourned with those who were mourning. He cried with them. His tears showed others how much He loved them.

We must learn to mourn with people who are mourning. Even though we have faith and know that God will ultimately bring good from the situation - the clear example of Jesus is to mourn with those who mourn. People around us are hurting. We can minister healing to them with the love of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The church is in the business of putting broken things back together - broken lives, broken homes, broken families and broken hearts. And we need to remember that restoration is a process, not an event. We need to pray and believe for instant miracles, but we also need to support people when they are in the process of restoration.

Many Christians mistakenly believe that we should go through life never grieving our losses - and as a result they stay stuck. They pretend everything is okay and they never lay the ax to the root. I want you to see today that grieving is not wrong. In fact,

4. Grieving your loss results in blessing

Jesus said in Matthew 5:4

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

The Holy Spirit is called our Comforter and some people never receive the blessing of His comfort because they never mourn.

I want you to know that in this church you have permission to grieve your losses! We don't expect losses in life to not affect you and we know you don't always get over some things right away! But we do believe Jesus can heal your broken heart! Here's the thing - you should not stay in grief forever – there needs to be healing at some point. Jesus wants to heal our sorrows and He not only shed His blood for physical sickness, but also for emotional grief and sorrows. Isaiah 53:3-4 says:

He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief... Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...

Some Christians don't think it's right to grieve, but Jesus grieved.
Some Christians don't think it's right to sorrow, but Jesus sorrowed.
Some Christians don't think it's right to lament, but Jesus lamented.
And in fact, there is a whole book of the Bible named Lamentations!

Christians who don't think you should grieve bury their hurts, but when you bury a hurt - you bury it alive. It lies there infected and festering and if it's not dealt with, it will cause areas of bondage in your life. As a result, many people are in bondage to their past and can't get free. Past sins, past wounds, past hurts, past regrets.

There are 2 other things we must do in order to heal our sorrows. We find those things in Philippians 3:13-14 where Paul said:

I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

That one thing Paul speaks about requires two complementary actions: Focus on the Future and Forget the Past.

Please understand that you can't move forward by looking backwards. What's in front of you is more important than what's behind you. That's why your car has a huge windshield and a small rear-view mirror. It's the same way in life. What's in front of you is more important than what's behind you.

Yes, there are things in our past we must deal with and overcome. But to make progress, we need to mainly look forward. We must not allow any excuse, any person, any circumstance or any devil in hell to hold up back from healing and freedom.

There are different Greek words in the Bible that are translated "forget."

One means to put something totally out of your mind. That's not the word used here. And I'm glad for that because you cannot just hit a "delete" key in your mind and have every memory erased.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon says this word "forget" means "to neglect; to be unconcerned about; to stop recalling information; to no longer care for." That doesn't mean you never think about it. It doesn't mean you never deal with it. But it does mean, once you've dealt with it, move on.

Now – the Bible says there are some things we need to remember. Remember the goodness, the blessings, and the promise of God. But there are some things we need to forget.

Some of you are remembering the wrong things. You are constantly nursing wounds and recounting wrongs. That will keep you stuck! So, forget the things that cause you guilt and despair and condemnation. Forget the failure that paralyzes you. Forget the wounds from other people – forgive them and let it go.

I challenge you to resolve to put the past behind you. God does not want you to live your life imprisoned by your past. Lay the ax to the root and then choose to focus on the future, not the past. If you focus too much on your past, it will hinder your future. You can't move forward by looking backwards. You can't move forward by nursing your wounds and holding grudges. That's why we need to appropriately grieve our losses.

Most of you knew I grew up in a home with very little love and a lot of abuse, including sexual abuse by my stepfather. It impacted me greatly and I lived years of my life sad, depressed and defeated. One day I was driving down Shady Grove Rd. and God asked me – "Do you really want to change? Can you believe that I will change you? The reason you are living this way is you are allowing the enemy to lie to you. You are refusing to fight and you are letting the enemy walk all over you."

I'll never forget that moment - I had a revelation of the lies of Satan and I realized that I was believing them. At that moment I knew I didn't have to stay depressed and defeated and the truth began to set me free. God gave me life-changing revelation from Psalm 84:6-7.

***As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs...
They go from strength to strength...***

The Valley of Baca means the Valley of Weeping. This verse implies that because of tears it became a place of springs.

So, as we pass through the Valley of Baca... which implies difficult and painful places in life, where everything seems hopeless and we feel helpless... our tears turn it into a place of springs.

Also, I want you to notice that we pass through this valley ... we don't stay there. And as we pass through, as we weep before the Lord, as we shed tears of brokenness... we turn the dry places of our soul into a place of lifegiving springs.

My journey to change took me through the Valley of Baca. My change started with grieving over the abuse that happened in my childhood. I had to work through a lot of pain. I had to come to the place of being able to forgive my stepfather.

I remember one day I was crying my heart out to God. Suddenly God's presence filled the room. I felt this peace and I knew God was there. I knew God was right there weeping with me. In that moment I was changed by the presence of God. God supernaturally healed me by the power of His Spirit.

It took a while, but God made my Valley of Weeping a place of springs. God had to tear down years of lies and misbeliefs. He had a lot of messes to clean up. But, God took my mess and made it my message. Now, when I share how God healed me, it is a spring that gives life and hope to others who have been hurt. God has used me to minister to countless abused women.

You see, the supernatural power of the Spirit can bring life out of death. It can bring healing out of hurt. Hope out of despair. Joy out of sorrow. Power out of weakness.

Yes, we have choices to make and work to do, but we know that this power is not of ourselves, but from the Holy Spirit. Zechariah 4:6 says:

'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.

You can change some things in your natural strength, but true change comes from the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

No matter how hurt you are, the sovereign power of God can heal you.
 No matter how bound up you are, the power of God can free you.
 No matter how down you are, the power of God can lift you.
 No matter how dry you are, the power of God can refresh you.
 No matter how empty you are, the radical power of God can fill you.

Here's the thing, Psalms 84:7 gives us the result of those who pray and weep.

"They go from strength to strength."

Prayer and weeping before God is powerful.

You go in one way but you come out another. You go in depressed but you come out rejoicing. You go in doubting but you come out trusting. You go in hopeless but you come out hopeful.

If you've prayed and trusted God, then you should have joy. You should have hope. You should have faith.

I know many of you have shed painful tears, prayed agonizing prayers about your dreams and destiny.

And I believe God has heard every pray and saved every tear.

His arm isn't too short.

His power isn't limited.

His mercy isn't in short supply.

We serve mighty God who is able to perform miracles, reverse circumstances, heal our sorrows and change our hearts.

Can you give Him thanks?