The LORD be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant. (Psalm 35:27)

When “troubles without number” had invaded his life, David penned these words in a psalm: “God lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire.” Many Bible heroes knew what it was like being down in the pits.

Take Joseph, for instance. His envious brothers threw him into a pit in the desert, then sold him as a slave to merchants in a passing caravan. Because of the jealousy of his peers, Daniel was thrown into a den full of hungry lions. And Jeremiah, just because he faithfully spoke the word of God, was thrown by city officials into a slimy cistern.

Maybe you’ve been down there with Joseph in the pit of despair. Maybe you’ve been hanging out with David, despondent, in some dark, lonely cave. Your thoughts oppress you. Your emotions paralyze you. Sadness clings to you. You feel like Jeremiah, who, waist deep in mud at the bottom of a well, hadn’t the strength to climb out.

In such times, David said that he waited for the Lord. He looked to God, prayed, and waited patiently. God, his Shepherd, was never far off. David knew that. But still he waited. In time, God came and lifted him out of that impossible situation. He washed off the clinging muck. “He set my feet on a rock,” David said, “and gave me a firm place to stand.”

God is always near. God dwells inside us. Our hearts may have hardened to his presence, and our ears may have become insensitive to his voice. But he has promised always to stay close to the ones he loves.

“Nothing in all creation,” writes the apostle Paul, “can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” As we turn to him, God shines the bright, warm light of his presence into our gloom. He takes us by the hand, holds us in his embrace, and we feel again the firmness under our feet.
Topic Summary

God draws near to his people, especially those who are suffering. In his compassion he comforts them; he encourages the downcast and strengthens the weak. God delights in the well-being of his children.

Preview

Today we read what the Bible has to say about our emotional well-being. We begin in the Psalms with a prayer of David in which he asks for God’s mercy and healing. Then David recalls the days of his youth spent tending sheep, naming God his shepherd in the twenty-third psalm. I will fear no evil, David writes, for God is with me; his rod and staff comfort me; he will lead me beside quiet waters. God has lifted me out of a slimy pit, he testifies in another psalm; God has set my feet on solid rock. So, why so downcast? asks another of the psalmists; put your hope in God!

From the Psalms we turn to the prophets, who speak of the restoration of God’s people. God commands the prophet Isaiah to say to the captives of Israel, “Come out,” and to those living in darkness, “Be free!” Isaiah writes of the Messiah, who is coming to carry the sorrows of mankind and to liberate them from the bondage of their sins. He will release the prisoners, bind up the brokenhearted, and comfort those who mourn, proclaiming God’s favor and acceptance. Jeremiah, sitting amid the ruins of Jerusalem, reminds us that God’s faithfulness is great, that his compassions are renewed each day. He will heal you, says Hosea; he will bind up your wounds. He will take great delight in you, adds Zephaniah; he will quiet you with his love and rejoice over you with singing.

As we turn to the New Testament selections, the Lord Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who mourn. They will be comforted, Jesus says. They will receive counsel and help from God’s Holy Spirit, who will come to dwell in them. So we are not to let our hearts be troubled, and we should not be afraid. Nothing, says Paul, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He comforts us in all our troubles, and with that comfort he enables us to comfort others. He is a God of eternal encouragement, who one day soon will take away all our pain and wipe every tear from our eyes.
Comfort and Well-Being

Psa 6:1-10  My soul is in anguish. How
23:1-6 your staff, they comfort me
40:1-5 lifted me out of the slimy pit
43:1-5 are you downcast, O my soul
73:21-28 God is the strength of my heart
107:1-22 sent forth his word and healed

Isa 49:8-13 LORD comforts his people
52:13 – 53:6 and carried our sorrows, yet we
57:14-19 his ways, but I will heal him
61:1-3 to comfort all who mourn

Lam 3:19-26 for his compassions never fail
Hos 6:1-3 but he will bind up our wounds
Zeph 3:9-17 he will quiet you with his love
Mal 3:13 – 4:6 rise with healing in its wings
Matt 5:4 for they shall be comforted
Luke 4:14-21 blind, to release the oppressed
John 14:15-27 I will not leave you as orphans

Rom 8:28-39* God works for the good of
2 Co 1:3-11 and the God of all comfort
Phil 2:1-13 if any comfort from his love
2 Th 2:16-17 eternal encouragement and
1 Pe 2:18-25 wounds you have been healed
Rev 21:1-5 he will wipe every tear from
To Think About

Emotional pain is slow to heal. But it will heal, if we look for sources of healing. It’s okay to lean upon the shoulder of a loved one. It’s good to read from the Word, even if you’re not feeling up to a Bible study. And it’s necessary to stay in touch with friends in the body of Christ—there are others in similar situations who need you as much as you need them.

Memory Verse

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 8:38-39)