2 Corinthians 4:7-9

When sadness spreads itself like a blanket over our mind, heart, and soul, it's not easy to just shake it off and carry on. Sometimes, despite the encouragement offered by those who care about us, our inner suffering persists. If you have felt this way, it's crucial to understand that you are not alone. Countless others have battled, or are currently battling, through similar valleys of despair. Life can often feel like an endless, uphill battle. We all feel tired and hurt and want to stop and hang it up. But remember, you are not in this alone. There are countless others who have traveled this same path and emerged stronger. Illnesses that seem to persist. The doctor's visits week after week after week. Children need new, but the money is not there. What is a person to do?

There are individuals in the Bible who have experienced depression, emotional anguish, and periods of despair:

- **Moses**, overwhelmed by his responsibilities, pleaded with God to end his life (Numbers 11:10-15).
- **Job** expressed his despair by cursing the day of his birth (Job 3:1-26).
- **Jonah**, displeased with God's mercy towards Nineveh, expressed his desire to die (Jonah 4:3-9).
- **Hannah** mourned her barrenness for many years (1 Samuel 1:1-16).
- **Tamar**, after being violated by her brother, lived a life of desolation (2 Samuel 13:1-21).
- **Naomi** was filled with bitterness and pain after suffering multiple hardships (Ruth 1:1-20).
- **Hagar**, abandoned in the desert, wept as her son was on the brink of death (Genesis 21:15-16).

All of these individuals wrestled with feelings of despair for various reasons. Yet, they all trusted in God, who loved and helped each one.

The Bible assures us that God is close to the brokenhearted and rescues those crushed in spirit. When **Moses** was overwhelmed, God appointed Aaron as his help. **Job,** despite losing everything, was blessed by God in his later years. When **Hannah** poured out her grief to the Lord, He blessed her with a son. As **Hagar** wept in the wilderness, God provided for her and her child's needs.

If you find yourself feeling down, remember that God is with you. He understands your struggles and doesn't want you to remain crushed in spirit. It is important that God hears the voices of those who seek His face. God hears the voice of those open to His counsel.

Are Christians to be Broken or Triumphant?

The Christian life is characterized by both brokenness and triumph, depending on what we mean by these terms. If by broken we mean repentant, low before the Lord (and only before God), aware of personal weakness, self-divesting of our arrogance and privilege, able to laugh at ourselves, of sober judgment, sensitive to the depths of sin within us, then yes, Christians are to be broken.

On the other hand, if by triumphant we mean confident of God's unconquerable purposes in the world through fractured and faltering disciples, bold in trusting the promises of God, surrendering ourselves to God in service to Him, and risk-taking fueled by faith in God, then yes, Christians are to be triumphant.

Brokenness without triumph tells us the enemy has won. It is lifting the crucifixion to the neglect of resurrection. Triumph without being aware of our brokenness emphasizes redemption to the neglect of our sin. While only seeing the resurrection, that is a human triumph to the neglect of the crucifixion. The gospel provides us with the only resource to face our brokenness honestly while reminding us of our unspeakable victory, Jesus Christ.

In the gospel, we are liberated to simultaneously experience failure and redemption, crucifixion and resurrection, brokenness and triumph. Jesus tells us to take up our cross daily (Matt. 16:24), while Paul tells us we have been raised and are seated in heaven (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1). How can both be true? Because Jesus is the only person who was ever triumphant without brokenness.

But brokenness is never a conclusion, only a method that points us toward Jesus. For those who are unaware, there is no brokenness in the first two chapters of the Bible and none in the final two chapters. To God be the glory.

A sound mind is essential in overcoming fear. It allows us to differentiate between thoughts and facts. Too often, we believe our thoughts without questioning their validity. We allow our minds to turn thoughts into truths, even when they are not based on reality. But a sound mind, guided by the truth of God's Word, helps us discern between what is true and what is merely a product of our imagination. As Paul writes in Philippians 4:8, we are to focus on things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.

Blessings,
Pastor Gool