

Minister's Message – September 2009

Depression

Opening a 'To the Householder' letter in the post recently, I found a Depression Checklist Card. First question: 'Have you felt sad, down or miserable' for more than two weeks. Follow up questions included one about loss or gain of weight, or an increase or decrease of appetite. And then there was the question about having 'recurrent thoughts of death'. Putting the card aside, I opened my Bible to the book of Job. I thought about Job taking a look at this checklist.

Job lost all his possessions and all his children in one day. He had reason to be sad and miserable. The next day he broke out in boils that itched terribly. He was most miserable as he sat on the rubbish heap scratching his sores. Job needed help because his life had become unbearable. His wife was there to help him. She advised him to end it all and die. There are those today who give this sort of advice. But Job did not take this advice.

Three of Job's friends showed up to help him. They sat with him, silently comforting him for seven days. But as they sought to counsel Job in his grief and misery, they were soon out of their depth. Not that they were uneducated men. They carefully diagnosed Job's problem and suggested how he could get back on his feet again. But with all the best intentions and all the wisdom of this world, they could not help Job.

Where would Job get help from? Like another man writing in Psalm 121, he looked to the Lord – *From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.* Job looked for a rock on which to stand as waves of sorrow and sadness pounded him. Where did he find that rock? Not in human counsellors but in the divine counsellor. With a torn and broken heart, Job fell to the ground and worshipped God. He uttered some of the most profound words of human history
*Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return
The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away
Blessed be the name of the Lord.*

Job was comforted by the realisation of this basic truth. He lost everything he had in this world. He lost his health. He became skin and bones. He understood, however, that all he had was God's gift, so God could take it away. Job kept on trusting in God because God does not change. No matter what happened, Job knew that God was in charge.

God allowed Job to be tested for his own reasons. Yet he did not let him be tested beyond what he could bear (I Corinthians 10:13). Job kept looking to God and eventually God did answer him. He reminded Job that he is the sovereign Creator and Sustainer of all things.
Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge (Job 38:2)?

How blessed you are if you have the God and Father of Jesus Christ as your counsellor. Life without God is life without an anchor for your soul, without a rock on which to stand in the day of trouble.

Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon