

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.
Psalm 34:18

Living with a Broken Heart

Central church of Christ

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Introduction

Have you ever seen your heart? Most of us never have. So how do you know you have a heart? Well, we have solid physical empirical evidence that our hearts exist even though we can't see them.

Our physical senses tell us. You can touch your wrist or your neck and feel your pulse. You can feel your heart beating. This is not emotional feeling. This is the feeling of your sense of touch.

You can also hear your heart. You can hear it with a stethoscope. You can often hear your heart when your head is turned and your ear is pressed against your pillow.

You can get more external evidence from an x-ray or scan.

We also use the word heart to describe the very center of our beings, the heart of our souls.

There is a beautiful little Hebrew word for heart. It is made up of just two letters, *lamed* and *beit*, the equivalent of our L and B (לב). It is pronounced *lev*. God uses this word to describe our innermost being.

By God's definition, these hearts of ours refer to our inner person, mind, heart, will, soul, tablet of our memory, our affections, emotions, inclination, determination, moral character and seat of pride and character, knowledge and thinking.

So how do we know we have this kind of invisible spiritual heart when we can't see it? Just as we know we have physical hearts we can't see God has created our minds to let us know we have a deep and beautiful spiritual heart and to know when something is wrong and needs attention.

We have solid external evidence in God's Word. From the creation of our souls in Genesis to the end of Revelation, Scripture confirms we have souls, our spiritual hearts.

What Can Break Our Hearts?

Just as our physical hearts can suffer damage these inner spiritual hearts of ours can be broken. What are some of the things that can break our hearts? David knew all about broken hearts. He had one. He wrote this beautiful Psalm 34.

Here are some of the things that broke David's heart. He lost an infant child with Bathsheba. He lost his adult son Absalom. He lost his best friend Jonathon. He had serious marriage problems: his wife Michal "despised him *in her heart*," in her *lev* (2 Samuel 6:16). His boss hated him. He lost his job and was out of work. He lost a dream of a peaceful kingdom and a happy family.

These are hard life changing things that break our hearts. They rock us to the core of our inner being, to the very foundations of our souls. They can happen instantly by surprise or over longer periods of time. We cannot undo them. We know that life will never be the same again. Life changes forever. Fortunately our God is in the business of forever.

An important observation about these things that break our heart is that some are what we can call "internal," within our control, and some are "external" and beyond our control. For example, David's sin that started internally lead to heart breaking consequences of the death of his infant son with Bathsheba. In other cases, he also suffered the heart breaking actions of those around who were beyond his control.

A similar factor that helps us in how we live with a broken heart is how we cope with them "internally" and how we live "externally" with others in the world around us.

How Do We Live with a Broken Heart?

With this brief background on what our hearts are and how they can be broken, our focus today is on how we can go on, how we can live with a broken heart. This message is 90% application. God refers to our hearts most often in the Psalms.

A few years ago we experienced one of these heart-breaking life changing losses. One of our family in Christ sent us a lovely card with verse 18 from David's beautiful Psalm 34 handwritten inside with some heartfelt thoughts:

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Although we had read this verse many times, seeing it handwritten by a caring Christian in a time of crisis and loss made it come alive in new ways.

Here is the first and most important realization of how we can live with a broken heart:

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Living with a broken heart starts with knowing God who is near us. This is YHWH. He is the eternal existing one who created you and knows everything about you. YHWH knows your heart and He understands your broken heart.

The foundation of hope for living with a broken heart is the relationship between God and you. It is the relationship you have with Him in the deepest part of your soul. This is the foundation of the “internal” part. It doesn’t depend on others, on fault or blame, on what’s going on outside in the lives of others. It is your Creator and you.

YHWH is near. This adjective comes from the verb “to draw near.” He is near to the brokenhearted. The verb broken is *shevar* (שָׁבַר). It can mean “broken in pieces.” God is near to us when our lives are shattered and falling apart.

In his penitential lament Psalm 51 verse 17 in which David confesses his sin against God after his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah, David used the same words to describe the brokenness of both his heart and his spirit:

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

David adds that his heart is contrite from the verb דָּכָא (*dacha*) which means crushed, broken in pieces, shattered, made humble, contrite.

The next important realization is that not only is YHWH near, “He saves those who are crushed in spirit.” The word for save here is יוֹשִׁיעַ (*yosheea*) the verb from where we receive the word Joshua, *Yeshua*, Jesus, our Saviour! (Jesus is Greek for Joshua). God is near to save us and help us go on.

Keep your soul awake to God’s presence and His nearness to you: focus on Him daily, hourly, minute by minute when necessary. God is with you in the deepest part of your soul where no one else can go. He wants you nearer to Him more than anything. Your broken heart opens you to a new understanding of who God is and how He feels about you. God is your refuge from everything outside and inside yourself

Next, notice David's expression of God's total awareness and mindfulness of us. In verse 15 David says:

The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous
And His ears are open to their cry for help.

God sees you. God hears you.

In this verse too we see an introduction to the external things that help us live with a broken heart: you are not alone. You are not alone. "The righteous" here is plural..

Next, God is totally aware of adversity around you. This includes your enemies who break your heart. In verse 16 David says:

The face of the Lord is against evildoers,
To cut off the memory of them from the earth.

God will deal with the situations that are beyond our power.

An important feature of Psalms includes prayers for God to rescue us and deal with our enemies. These prayers are called "imprecatory" Psalms. The key is that God deals with those who oppress us. David says that God will even remove their memory from the earth. The face, the *pani*, (פָּנֵי) of the Creator of the universe is against evil doers.

Verse 17 teaches us to tell God about our broken hearts, to cry out to Him in prayer because He hears:

The righteous cry, and the Lord hears
And delivers them out of all their troubles.

God hears and delivers. This implies taking us away, literally snatching us away from trouble, those things external to us and beyond our control. While we are powerless against many external things God is mighty and all things are possible with Him. He wants us to pray to Him.

In verse 19, God knows that regardless of what lead to our broken heart in the past, life will bring more challenges to us,

Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
But the Lord delivers him out of them all.

Afflictions here are those narrow spots, dire straits and distressful things in life. There will be more of them. God is near you and with you to see you through all of them. He delivers, rescues, and recovers us like one strong enough to snatch prey away from predators. Reflecting on how He has delivered us in the past can build our confidence and trust in Him for the future.

Jesus' Mission to Bind Up the Brokenhearted

God has work for the brokenhearted.

At the beginning of His ministry in his sermon at his hometown synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah from the synagogue attendant, opened it to Isaiah 61 and read this to all those listening to His gracious words. Listen carefully to what Jesus said He came to do in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 61:1 in the Old Testament:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted...

God wants us to work with Jesus in His mission of binding up the brokenhearted. When wounds are serious we bind them with bandages. Over time they heal. The bareness of our broken hearts can make us feel beyond hope. Fortunately, this is where God meets us, in the deepest parts of our souls. He binds us up and carries us upward and homeward.

Binding is important in Scripture. God binds Himself to His people by covenants to heal and save them. We are held to Him and one another by bonds, by the binding of love.

Who is better equipped to bind up the brokenhearted than those who have been through it and know what broken hearts are all about? Earlier Isaiah said of Jesus "He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). God understands.

The good news Jesus came to bring is that He died for all those things that break our hearts, our own sins, the sins of others. You may be here today with a broken heart over your own sin or hard things that have happened to you. God is near to help you.

God wants you to be immersed into Christ in the water of baptism where you receive total forgiveness of all your sins and you receive His Holy Spirit to live in the deepest part of your heart. He will give you His righteousness. His eyes will watch over you. His ears will be attentive to your cry. He will help you through everything that lies ahead.

David's Final Words of Confidence

This picture in the PowerPoint of the Dead Sea with the moon rising over Jordan expresses the simplicity but also the harshness and rugged beauty of a place that looks desolate like a broken heart on the surface. It has a captivating beauty, like a soft pastel painting. It expresses the gentleness of God meeting us in our hurting hearts.

The Dead Sea would be a very difficult place to live if not for one other special place that God placed beside it. God created the every flowing springs of the oasis of Ein Gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea. If you are interested in visiting the Dead Sea and Ein

Gedi this year, or sometime in a future year, you are invited to come to an information meeting on Israel in the library after our Bible class in next week on February 12.

When David was being chased by Saul he hid from him in the strongholds of this beautiful oasis at Ein Gedi. Near the end of his life while reflecting on the faithfulness of God to see him through many heartbreaking experiences, David described what God means to him in Psalm 18:1-3, this is an individual royal Psalm of thanksgiving also appearing in 2 Samuel 22,

1 "I love You, O Lord, my strength."
2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge;
My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
3 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,
And I am saved from my enemies.

The Lord is our rock, fortress, deliverer, God, refuge, shield horn of our salvation, and our stronghold.

As Ein Gedi is a source of life to those near the Dead Sea, God Himself is the source of life, comfort, strength, peace and hope for the broken hearted:

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

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