

CONTEMPT

How Life Feels - part 13

Book of Psalms

July 2020

DAY 1: How contempt pummels us ... and ... how we pummel ourselves

1. By the time we're in adolescence we're painfully aware that we live in a painful world. The greatest amount of pain for most of us comes from contempt. Bullies, big brothers, alcoholic mothers, harsh fathers, belligerent coaches, enemies and others can burn us with hot coals of contempt with flaming words and a withering look.

*Psalms 102:6 I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins. ⁷ I lie awake; I have become like a bird **alone** on a roof. ⁸ All day long my enemies **taunt** me; those who **rail against me** use my name **as a curse**. ⁹ For I eat ashes as my food and **mingle my drink with tears** ¹⁰ because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside. ¹¹ My days are like the evening shadow; **I wither away** like grass.*

2. Contempt:

- Isolates me. What is the psalmist highlighting in vv. 6-7? _____
- Ridicules me. What strikes you about v. 8? _____
- Is painful. Notice the psalmist's imagery in v. 9.
- Distorts our view of God. Look at v. 10.
- Saps my strength and joy. Notice his imagery in v. 11.

3. Why is contempt so painful? Consider the following schematic which illustrates how contempt works and grows. The schematic begins to take shape when we first experience pain.

Self=#1 → (Our sin nature reinforces the lie that my life is best when I'm in charge of me) →

I am a victim of sin → (the conclusion we "naturally" draw when Self is #1 →

Protect self → (contempt is seen as my greatest enemy) →

Self-contempt (to protect me from others' contempt. It's less painful) →

Agent of other-centered contempt. (We grab our swords).

4. This pattern of contempt becomes a life pattern. Over time, your heart hardens, love and forgiveness become more difficult, and you are driven inwardly into yourself over and over.

5. To "protect" us from deep pain of other-centered contempt we find a way to avoid deep pain. We beat others to the punch! Before they can pour contempt on us, we pour contempt on ourselves. "I was so stupid." "I should have known better." We say these things in the hope of dampening the contempt we sense is due us! Over time **self-contempt** becomes a way of life.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: Godly response to contempt

Psalms 22:6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.

⁷ *All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:* ⁸ *"He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."*

1. This psalm doubles as a Messianic prophesy. Not only the psalmist but the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was machined gunned from others with vile contempt.
2. Yesterday we looked at how our sinful nature deals with contempt. Today, how did Jesus deal with horrifying contempt? The biblical approach to contempt is 180 degrees different than what comes “naturally” (sinfully).

God =#1→

I am an agent of sin→

Repent (sin: greatest enemy) →

Mercy→

Gratitude→ and thus free to be...→

Compelled to bless others

3. This propels you ever outward, and slowly frees you from the hounding voices of contempt.
4. What strikes you about this schematic?

5. Read again Psalm 22:6-8. How do you think Jesus dealt with the pile upon pile of vicious contempt?

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6. Before we move on to how to some specifics of how to deal with contempt, I'd like to list several consequences of dealing with contempt sinfully.
 - a. Contempt deadens the longing and hope of growing.
 - b. Contempt deadens the longing to be loved and love. It sends a terrible message: “You are unlovable.”
 - c. Contempt shapes us from our early teen years. We make strong promises about what we'll do.
 - d. Contempt hardens our hearts. “I will NOT ever hurt like that AGAIN!”
7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: MERCY: The cracking of contempt

1. Jesus told this parable. Here's the first half.

Luke 18:10 (RSV) "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.'

2. How do you see the contempt playing out in the Pharisee?

a. How much does comparison play a part?

b. How is contempt "useful" (in a bad way)? What things does contempt keep the Pharisee from doing?

Luke 18:13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

3. The tax collector is standing in the same place as the Pharisee, ostensibly doing the same thing, praying.

a. Do you see or feel any contempt from him towards someone else?

b. Do you sense any self-contempt that he heaps upon himself?

c. What do you notice about his simple prayer and approach to God?

4. The offer of mercy communicates:

a. A message from God of hope.

b. A deeper connection with God.

c. I have a future. I need not sit on the bench.

Romans 2:4 Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

5. The more you believe and live as if your Self is #1, the less mercy will mean to you. Instead you'll be on the lookout for any contempt or criticism coming your way. Insecurity will get stronger. The victim mentality and perspective will rule you.

6. In contrast, the more you believe that God is #1, the more mercy will mean to you when you fail. Contempt will have little power over you, just like the tax collector in the parable.

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: HUMILITY: the de-fanging of contempt

1. Jesus give us the lesson from yesterday's parable.

Luke 18:14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

2. Contempt is a double-edged sword. When Self = #1, we will "exalt" self. The effect is to make us more hyper-sensitive to criticism and exacerbates and amplifies the pain when contempt comes. In Jesus' words he "will be humbled."

3. The opposite is true. Look what humility does for us! What do you think Jesus means that the humble "will be exalted"?

4. Instead of being beaten down by either self-contempt or the contempt of others we are lifted up to be engaged in the things of God, to advance His purposes, to love others as highest priority.

5. Humility:

a. Takes the sting out of failure.

b. Takes the sting out of other-centered contempt.

c. Stops self-centered contempt. When we start berating ourselves we can stop and counter with, "You don't know the half of it. But God's mercy is my foundation and security."

6. Humility is seen in this short story. Micah the prophet is surrounded by a sinful nation. But he "preaches" an astounding allegory to rebellious people. He sees himself in a courtroom where he is the defendant. He knows he's guilty "as sin."

Micah 7:7 (RSV) But as for me, I will look to the LORD, I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.

7. In spite of his guilt, he still looks to the Lord!

Micah 7:8 Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; (CONTEMPT WON'T WORK) when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me.

8. In spite of his guilt notice how hopeful Micah is!!!! How can that be???

Micah 7:9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned (AGENT, NOT VICTIM) against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I shall behold his deliverance.

9. And this is why! **THE STUNNING REVERSAL!!!** God starts out as the prosecuting attorney, but somewhere during the trial He becomes Micah's DEFENSE attorney!!!

Micah 7:10 Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will gloat over her; now she will be trodden down like the mire of the streets.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Embracing weakness (the removal of self-protection)

2 Corinthians 12:9 (RSV) ...but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

1. Instead of “protecting” himself from any contempt coming to him, whether for outside or inside, his focus is on the OPPORTUNITY that WEAKNESS provides!

2. This is a stunning paradox. The more we try to “strengthen self” against the contempt and criticisms that are hurled our way or how we berate ourselves, our “strength” only exacerbates the contempt problem! Why? Because we are inadvertently making Self=#1 even stronger! You are **riding the Contempt Train!**

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3. Paul’s approach is the complete opposite. He “**gladly boasts about his weaknesses.**” He is “**content**” with weaknesses, **insults**, etc. How can that be? Because he is not on the Contempt Train. **He’s on the Content Train!**

God=#1 →

I am an **agent** of sin →

Repent (sin: greatest enemy) →

Mercy →

Gratitude → and thus free to be... →

Compelled to bless **others**

4. What strikes you from today’s devotional?