



## DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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### LIVING OUT YOUR HEALING

Rev. Stephen Bringardner & Ben Bringardner

~ Scripture: II Corinthians 12:7-10 ~

#### STEVE'S PART

There is a workbook study based on the book *Healing for Damaged Emotions* starting this Thursday night (7:00 p.m. in Room 207). Today, I'd like to direct your attention to II Corinthians. 12:7-10 as we put the finishing touches on our series.

*<sup>7</sup>To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup>That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

We've been exploring the healing of emotions that have been damaged as a result of experiences, traumas, abuses, negative messages and memories—some in the far-distant past, some in the near past, some are taking place in the here & now (as a kind of living nightmare).

Things that leave us with a sense of unworthiness (or worthlessness), so that we are driven by guilt. . .full of "oughts" & "shoulds". . .full of anxiety, inadequacy and inferiority (always striving to achieve, please, and climbing but never reaching). Many become supersensitive, reaching out for love, affection and approval in any way they can get it.

I'm preaching to (and about) the CHOIR this morning: people who know Christ, people who have placed faith in Jesus as the Lamb of God to take their sins, people who have a daily walk with the Lord. And yet have struggled with low self-esteem, depression and relentless anger.

Maybe you have come through a process of healing. Maybe you have given yourself to much prayer and have sifted through Scripture. . .you have confessed, accepted responsibility and forgiven (others and yourself). . .and you have given Him all your hurts and painful memories. And God has begun "*to work all things together for good*" as He promised [in Romans 8:28].

Praise be to God if that is your experience (or starting to become your experience) this morning.

MY MESSAGE to you today is: Healing is more than soothing painful memories. . .more than forgiving someone or being forgiven of harmful resentments. . .more than making peace with the circumstances of one's birth OR someone's death OR a lingering illness.

Total healing is the miracle of GOD'S AMAZING GRACE whereby He takes it all and makes something beautiful of it. You know the chorus:

*Something beautiful, something good;*

*All my confusion he understood;*

*All I had to offer him was brokenness and strife,*

*But he made something beautiful of my life.*

And He does this not so we'll be a beautiful mantle piece (or a trophy) but because He wants to use us. That's the FINAL STONE to be put in place.

When God is truly at work in your life, He will not only remake, recondition, recycle you. He will use you to serve others and to bring glory to Him.

You can only be SAVED FROM if you understand you are at the same time being SAVED FOR.

You were made for MISSION! That's one of the linchpins in our belief system. You were never put here on earth to take up space. Yet too many believers are all dressed up with nowhere to go!

Listen to the final paragraph of a **PRAYER BY BETTY** who had experienced significant emotional healing (from sexual abuse):

*“God, my dear, dear Father, my heart had turned to frost. But the light of Your love is beginning to warm it. I can feel again. You have begun to work in me a healing miracle. I trust You and I praise You. Your goodness and mercy have been with me always. Your love has never left me. And now the eyes of my soul have been opened. I see You for who You really are: my true Father. I know Your love and now I am ready to forgive. **Please make the healing complete.**”*

God did make her healing complete. He put the frosting on the cake. He used Betty to help someone along a similar path.

Too many of us think we can only minister out of strength. What a misconception! Look at the Apostle Paul: We don't know what his “*thorn in the flesh*” was. It could have been malaria, nearsightedness, epilepsy, insomnia, or a head sickness (e.g.: migranes). It was chronic and debilitating. . . a potential hindrance to his ministry.

He cried out not once but 3 times: “*I've had it*” . . . “*I can't take this any longer*” . . . “*Take this from me*” . . . He was persistent in prayer, as we should be.

For whatever reason, God chose not to remove it, but rather to display His power in the weakness. It kept Paul humble. . . kept him dependent not on himself but God. . . deepened his worship (as he realized the Source of his effectiveness). . . and developed strong character.

He could not use his “weakness” as an excuse not to do what God called him to do. Neither can we.

God can use our weakness; He can use us in spite of our weakness. But, you say, “*I'm not fully healed yet.*” Maybe not. I don't know if we're ever fully healed. I know I'm not.

Here's a word picture of what emotional healing looks like. It's like a *FOREST* at this time of year. It's breath-taking to watch the trees become green again. But as I was walking around in the woods the other day, I saw decaying leaves all around. . . dead branches. . . downed trees. Still it was a spectacular sight.

You & I will always bear the scars.

I can tell you that God has wrought a great deal of emotional healing in my own life and in the life of my family. He's still doing that work. There was a time when I was broken and my relationships were so damaged that I would be hard put to stand in the pulpit and preach like I am today. Often when a death occurs, those who remain do one of two things: either "pull together" or "splinter". We did the latter. But God has done a great work in my life and in my family's life. And He has given me a "calling"—a "mission" to make His love, His truth, His grace known to others by being a pastor.

God has done a similar work in my son BEN's life. In fact one of the greatest acts of healing has been the restoration of our relationship as father-and-son. God has also put a calling to missions on Ben's heart.

But that is his story. And since he is here this morning, I've asked if he would share a bit of it with you. . . .

### BEN's PART

### CONCLUSION

God can take our sins, infirmities, failures, blunders.

Thankfully, we have a High Priest in Christ Jesus [cf. Hebrews 4:15] who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. . .who understands our weaknesses. . .who has shared fully in all our experiences. God wants to take us from needing a High Priest to being a priest.

I dare to believe God wants to make of us [DUMC] a community of healing and healers. He wants us to live out our healing in very practical ways. He has things for us to do. . .a purpose to fulfill. . .a mission to accomplish.

What gets in our way? What holds us back? I'm convinced it's not "busy schedules". Much of our reticence is due to a "perceived weakness" that lingers on the inside (e.g.: "*I'm not good enough*". . ."God could never use me").

What we think is unfit & unusable God uses to do an awe-inspiring work. You may think you've been damaged & weakened by life's stresses and have nothing to offer. That's when God' grace shines the brightest! He desires to use you for His glory, because that's how He proves to the world just who He is.

When it finally happens, you will say: "*This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes*" [cf. Psalm 118:23]

Question is: Are you willing?