

**Series: WORDS**  
**The Cost of a Pessimistic Tongue – Matthew 15:18**

A man wanted to get a hunting dog. One day he found one that the seller said could not only hunt but also walk on water. Although the man didn't believe what the seller said, he bought the dog, since what mattered were its hunting skills.

The next day he went hunting with a friend who was known for being pessimistic. They started shooting and the dog ran to retrieve the birds. To their surprise, they observed that the dog wouldn't sink when it came to water, on the contrary, he walked on it, and this happened all day long.

The pessimistic friend said nothing about it until they were on their way back home. It was then he said: "I'm sorry about your dog!" A little surprised by the statement the hunter asked, "Why you feel sorry?" It was then that his friend said. "Because with so many good dogs available it is a shame that you were sold one that can't swim!"

How is it possible to be in the presence of something so amazing and still focusing on the negative? There are many people like that—and perhaps you are one of them. This is the theme for today's message.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 reminds us of the many blessings that the people of Israel received when they came out of Egypt towards the Promised Land. It says: *I don't want you to forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. All of them were guided by a cloud that moved ahead of them, and all of them walked through the sea on dry ground. 2 In the cloud and in the sea, all of them were baptized as followers of Moses. 3 All of them ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all of them drank the same spiritual water. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ.* But despite the fact that ALL of them were blessed on their journey, and that God provided everything they needed, v. 5 states that *Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness...v.10 and then were destroyed by the angel of death* because they complained.

What happened to them was so awful that Paul doesn't just want us not to forget, but also to take it as (v.6) a warning. What happened for the journey to end up this way? What's the lesson that Paul doesn't want us to forget?

The time that the Israelites spent in the desert was difficult, but it became even more costly by the way they responded to the circumstances. As they walked towards a better life, the people sinned, and because of that they died. They were not content to have what they needed for their journey, they wanted more, better and different. The result was that they coveted (Num. 11:34); they worshiped idols (Exodus 32); they got involved in sexual immorality (Num. 25); and they tested the Lord to see how far they could go (Num. 21). They forgot the blessings that God granted them and, finally, the lack of gratitude for what they already had turned into pessimism and complaints about their life. (Num. 16:41-50)

When we have nothing, it's easy to be thankful for the little we do have, but the more we have the easier it is to take for granted the blessings we receive every day. We forget that God's blessings in our lives give us a bigger responsibility to obey and glorify Him.

What happened to the people of Israel must serve as a warning to us because, if we follow their example, the results will be the same. Just as the Israelites lost their lives because of sin, if we allow or embrace sin in our lives the result will be loss and death. James 1.14-15 says that: *Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.* Perhaps isn't physical death, but it can be the death of our relationship with God, the death of a marriage, a friendship, a business, etc.

Christ didn't promise that our journey would be easy, but He promised to be with us on that journey. Many times our lives become difficult. Maybe it's because we face difficulties and problems that we can't solve ourselves. Maybe it's because we don't get what we wanted or because what we think should happen, doesn't happen. In those moments, it is easy to give place to despair and allow pessimism to flood the mind and heart. We may start complaining, but be careful, because you might let it consume you in such a way that it further darkens your circumstances and make the journey even more difficult.

### **How should we respond when the journey becomes difficult?**

**1. You can complain to God** - We can complain without doing wrong. It was God who gave us the ability to feel different emotions. He made us and knows us very well. So He knows that sometimes we feel outraged and confused.

David did it in Psalm 22.1 *My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far away when I groan for help?* Christ did it on the cross when *called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"* Matthews 27:46

Job expressed his discontentment to the Lord *"Why, then, did you deliver me from my mother's womb? Why didn't you let me die at birth?"* Job 10.18

**2. You can complain to God without denying God** - Despite his suffering, Job did not deny the Lord. Job 3.15 *God might kill me, but I have no other hope. I am going to argue my case with him.* Job 2:8-10 *Job scraped his skin with a piece of broken pottery as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, "Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die." But Job replied, "You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?" So in all this, Job said nothing wrong.* Job was suffering and said to God that he wasn't happy with what was going on in his life. Still, he affirmed his trust in the Lord.

What an example for us! How do you react when your expectations and your reality don't match? How do you react when your circumstances unexpectedly change? How do you adjust? Do you turn your back on God or you maintain your trust in Him?

Contentment is a way of living and thinking that we can learn. That's why Paul says *I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.* Philippians 4.11-13 Every day, Paul had to choose to believe that God was alive and active in his circumstances. If Paul learned to be content we can also learn. Contentment is a choice and reflects the faith that we say we have in God.

### 3. Choose not to be Negative

Pessimism is an option since we have a choice about what we focus on. There is an expression from Alphonse Karr that explains what I'm trying to say: "*Some people grumble that roses have thorns; I am grateful that thorns have roses.*" Because the pessimist focuses on the thorns, he doesn't enjoy the roses. Our focus will determine our attitude.

Winston Churchill explained that "*A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; meanwhile an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty*". If you focus on the difficulties that's all you'll see but when your focus goes from being on the problem to being on the solution, your perspective will begin to change and hope will grow in your heart.

I've heard people say they are pessimistic by nature, but that's not true. And even though melancholic people are more predisposed to pessimism, to be a melancholic doesn't automatically make you a pessimistic person. What makes us pessimistic is the way we view and respond to what happens to us, to our circumstances. What you focus on determines your attitude. Your words and your actions follow your thoughts. What you allow to occupy your mind impacts what you do and who you are becoming. If you don't control your thoughts they will take root in your heart and sabotage your future. Proverbs 23: 7 says: *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.*

The Bible is very clear and commands us to: *Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.* 1 Thessalonians 5:18. A blessed life starts by getting to know God and growing in worship and thanksgiving. The Bible teaches us that a heart that is thankful is a heart that worships. If you want your life to flourish and prosper, start by looking at what you allow to come into your mind.

A life blessed by God is not without problems, but in times of change, of ups and downs, God is not distant. He is the Savior near you that loves you, He is a friend you can trust. No matter what circumstances you find yourself in today, no matter how small or large the problem is in front of you, take the first step towards a life of blessings, lift your voice and praise God!

### Warnings for the PESSIMISTS

1. Pessimism produces fear, while thankfulness produces faith. Maybe the door that allowed fear to come into your life was your pessimistic outlook and your negative words. What you focus on in life determines whether you will experience peace or not.

2. Pessimism is like a snowball, it grows and is contagious. Not only does it spread to all areas of your life, but it spreads to the lives of those who around you. According to Exodus 16.2 ... *the whole community of Israel complained to Moses and Aaron ....* What started with a few people ended up polluting the whole village. Pessimism is toxic.

3 Pessimists are never happy with what they have. The people of Israel had manna every morning, precisely where and when they needed it, without having to do anything to get it. All they had to do was eat, but they still were unhappy.

4 Pessimism sucks your life and the lives of those around you. Consequently pessimism causes people to distance themselves from you. Nobody wants to live near a pessimist.

A group of mothers was asked how many times they gave negative comments to their children compared to positive feedback. Eventually they discovered these mothers criticized their children ten times more often than saying something favorable. What will this do to the lives of your children?

5. Pessimism opens the door for our fears to be fulfilled. Often negative people behave in ways that make what they fear able to happen.

6 Pessimism leads us away from God's best for our lives, while having a positive attitude, faith and trust in God opens doors and shows you new possibilities in life.

7. Pessimism kills. Just like with the people of Israel, pessimism is like poison that kills our relationships and life. Speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said, **the words you say come from the heart, that is what defiles you.** Matthew 15:18

Maybe you're desperately looking for a response to what is happening in your life and perhaps the answer may be to change the way you talk, the way you communicate. Start by recognizing the problem and go to God for forgiveness and help. Open your Bible and start filling your mind with God's promises. Meditate on them, declare them and feed your mind with thoughts of God, strengthening your soul. Ask those whom you love if you are a pessimistic person and allow them to tell you the truth. This will reveal if you need to change as you'll need their help.

In Philippians 4: 8 Paul gives us a powerful advice: **Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy- think about such things.** If we follow his advice we will speak and behave differently. Practice this daily and you will build a healthy mind that is resistant to problems. If you start talking in a positive manner, speaking encouraging, life-giving words, you will not only be a blessing but you will see your life blessed!

*PRAYER: Lord, forgive me for my wrong thoughts and my pessimistic language. Through Your Word, teach me to renew my mind to be healthy and positive. Make the words of my mouth and what you have in my heart be acceptable in Your sight and be a blessing to those around me. In the name of Jesus. Amen!*