

THE CHRISTIAN AND DEPRESSION

Introduction

- 1) It is inevitable that times of mental and physical **depression** will afflict us all. Those times are often very unpleasant and difficult. Some types of depression are the result of chemical imbalances in the brain/body that must be corrected with medication. But there are many other types of depression that must be dealt with patiently and compassionately.
 - a) Depression is the #1 cause of disability worldwide in ages 15-44, is one of the top three causes of workplace issues along with stress and family crises, and is a primary cause of self-harm and suicide
 - b) Depression paralyzes us in fear and doubt, causing us to lose focus and initiative
 - c) Many endure severe depression from time to time: one striving to live godly may endure fear, anxiety, loneliness, discouragement, frustration, anguish, despair, confusion, anger, etc., in the day-to-day effort to serve the Lord in a world of sin and sorrow; Satan seeks to discourage and destroy God's people in soul and body (1 Pet. 5:8; 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 4:27)
- 2) **Spiritual depression** is the most serious problem for it afflicts our very soul and can be fatal to our faith. It must be treated not with human hands, but by spiritual treatment (Psa. 119:25-28)
- 3) Well-known Bible characters dealt with depression – they were real people dealing with real problems in real time – their stories provide real lessons and divine principles to help us today

I) **MOSES** (*Numbers 11:10-15*)

- A) The children of Israel complained about having only manna and *no* meat to eat (vv. 1-6)
- B) Moses felt overburdened and afflicted by the complaining of the people (vv. 10-15)
 - 1) Responsibility of leadership was “too heavy” and he felt helpless
 - 2) In such deep despair, he wanted the Lord to kill him “here and now”
- C) Lord provided for seventy men to help bear the burden with Moses (vv. 16-30)
- D) The responsibility of leadership and influence can become a burden in the face of problems, murmuring among brethren, and disobedience
 - 1) Elders in the local church will face this problem; there is wisdom in God having a plurality of men who serve in each local church (Heb. 13:17)
 - 2) Faithful brethren who stand together will help and encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:12-23)

II) **ELIJAH** (*1 Kings 19:1-10*)

- A) After Elijah's victory on Mt. Carmel and executing the prophets of Baal (18:40), Jezebel sought Elijah's life
 - 1) Elijah feared and ran for his life – former confidence and courage had weakened
 - 2) Wanted to die (v. 4); was nourished and encouraged by Lord (vv. 5-8)
 - 3) Considered himself alone [and ineffective] in the good fight of faith (v. 10)
- B) Times when our courage and confidence are shaken by threats of evil and error
 - 1) Fear that there is no more good we can do; lose focus of service in self-loathing
 - 2) Anguish, despair, frustration, and loneliness as evil gets more aggressive
- C) Lord informed Elijah that he was not alone (v. 18 – 7000 of Israel remained faithful)
 - 1) It can help us be steadfast knowing the courage of other faithful brethren (1 Pet. 5:8-9)

III) **JEREMIAH** (*Jeremiah 20:7-18*)

- A) Psychological stress and depression of prophet vividly portrayed
 - 1) Ridicule and reproach for preaching unpopular word was hard to bear

- 2) Wanted to quit preaching; people tried to scare him, and his “friends” watched for any stumbling to use against him
- B) Could not hold back preaching truth; God was with him – not ashamed, but joyful (1:17-19)
- C) Still struggled with extreme depression (vv. 14-18); love for truth kept him stable throughout

IV) **APOSTLES** (2 *Corinthians* 1:8-10; 4:7-14)

- A) Troubles for Paul – “despaired even of life” – learned to trust in God, not himself
- B) Apostles were earthen vessels hard pressed (squeezed), perplexed (uncertain), persecuted, cast down, but not crushed, not in despair (at a loss), not forsaken (abandoned), not destroyed
 - 1) Many things squeeze, perplex, cast us down, but we have our faith in God always

*Other Bible characters who dealt with depression – **Job** (Job 3:26; 10:1); **David** (2 Sam. 18:33; Psa. 38:4); **Jonah** (Jon. 4:3)

V) **OVERCOMING DEPRESSION WITH GOD’S HELP** (Psa. 46:1)

- A) Read, meditate, pray, and sing the Psalms
 - 1) For the fearful heart (Psa. 27:1, 14)
 - 2) For the waiting heart (Psa. 40:1-3)
 - 3) For the discouraged heart (Psa. 43:5)
 - 4) For the grieving heart (Psa. 6:6-9)
 - 5) For the overwhelmed heart (Psa. 46:1-3, 10)
 - 6) For the terrified heart (Psa. 56:1-4)
 - 7) For the desperate heart (Psa. 61:1-2; 143:7-8) *(list adapted from Micah Maddox. 7 Encouraging Psalms For Help Battling Depression, biblestudytools.com)*

*It is vital to remember that the Psalmist always praised God and sought His divine help!
- B) Seek opportunities for good works and giving to others (Titus 3:8; Acts 20:35; Gal. 6:9-10)
- C) Keep focus on spiritual goals and do not measure your life by worldly standards (Phil. 3:7-8)
- D) Never forget God loves you even in your deepest despair and trouble – as a Christian you are a child of God who humbly needs and seeks help from our loving God (Rom. 5:8; Heb. 4:16)
- E) Let us be nourishing and encouraging to one another – seek the company of fellow saints (Heb. 10:24-25; Prov. 12:25)

Conclusion

We, like righteous Lot, endure a world around us that is perplexing and depressing (2 Pet. 2:8). Only the Great Physician has what we need to lift us from the heaviness of life under the sun. We must not grow weary in well-doing but remain steadfast in the blessed work of the Lord (Gal. 6:9; 1 Cor. 15:58). Fill your mind with His word, and be busy in His good works, and rejoice even in the midst of the greatest trials of your life.