

# **Pain of Mind**

Revised 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

**A Biblical Perspective of  
Depression,  
A Biblical Model for Counselling**

**Earl Cooper, Ph.D.**

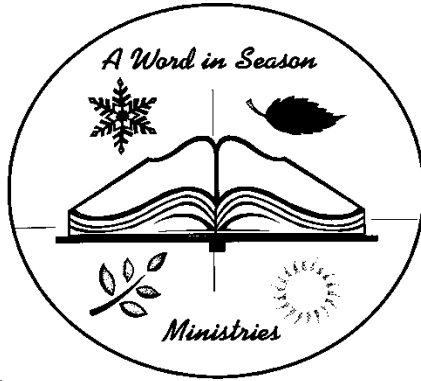
*Pain of Mind: A Biblical Perspective of Depression*

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

A Biblical Perspective of Depression  
A Biblical Model for Counselling

By: **Earl Cooper, Ph. D**  
[www.DiscipleshipMinistries.ca](http://www.DiscipleshipMinistries.ca)



ὁ λόγος ἐν τῷ λαῷ ὁ λαός ἐν τῷ λόγῳ

**Published by:**  
**A Word in Season Ministries**  
**1248 Healey Lake Road**  
**Bracebridge, Ontario, Canada**

*Pain of Mind: A Biblical Perspective of Depression*

**For additional publications:  
Amazon.ca →books →search: Earl Cooper Ph.D.**

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## Preface

The first edition of this book entitled “Pain of Mind: A Biblical Perspective of Depression” was a condensed version of my Ph. D. dissertation. After defending the dissertation several representatives from the dissertation team faculty of Pensacola Christian Graduate school encouraged me to consider publishing this as a tool to assist pastors in counselling those struggling with depression. Several years later, when recuperating from surgery and confined to bed for a lengthy period, I took up the challenge. Focusing on the concept of providing a counselling tool, I restricted the first edition to the details of the study and left, for pastoral counselling discretion, the applications suitable in each counselling situation.

After seven years of local church seminars based upon the study I came to the conclusion that the people most interested in the study were not pastors particularly, but more often individuals who either struggled with depression themselves, or had family members that did. For this reason I again took up the challenge of writing. This time my goal was to rewrite the book and include specific applications for coping with depression. These have been taken from twenty-five years of personal pastoral counselling experience and have been part of the seminars I have shared. The perspective and applications in this rewrite remain based entirely upon the original Scripture.

Although I have sought to explain and apply the truths discovered from this study of the Bible’s perspective of depression, much of this study of Scripture is by necessity technical in nature, dealing with specific Bible language terminology and detailed syntax of related texts. Therefore, the material may seem a laborious read at times. I encourage the reader to work through the material in its entirety, trusting that,

as the pertinent Bible texts are dealt with, whether knowledgeable of the Bible languages or not, the ministry of the Holy Spirit will bring meaningful understanding and personal application:

“...the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him” (1 John 2:27).

## Introduction

The anxious cry of my wife carried across the frozen lake, breaking the solitude of my customary early morning cross-country ski trek and began an arduous trek of another kind. The news was bleak. Doug, our close friend and my pastoral co-worker had been diagnosed with chronic leukemia. My journey of discovery had begun. Although we walked together through various tests and diagnosis stages, bone marrow transplant surgery, months of isolation, more tests and diagnosis, and an ever so slow recovery, the greatest challenge of the trek was the walk through the dark valley of depression.

In the months of recovery following surgery, Doug received regular treatments of steroids and drugs to build immunity as well as prevent marrow transplant rejection. During this time, there was the risk of several possible side effects from these drugs: liver failure, bone deterioration, and chemical imbalance in the brain that could cause depression. Although spared of most of these side effects, my friend did suffer from drug-induced depression. He experienced the typical cycles of despondency: desire for isolation, feelings of rejection.

One of the challenges Doug faced was determining God's answer for dealing with this depressed state. Although given ample warning regarding these side effects, Doug had a desire for clear direction from Scripture regarding the appropriate Christian response. The confusion of multiple approaches and the frustration of no clearly stated Biblical direction added to his state of depression. He disclosed these desires and apparent frustrations to me during hospital visits.

Doug's depression deepened. He began to express doubts regarding his faith and to talk more of suicide. Eventually he could no longer communicate nor function adequately enough to care for himself. His condition deteriorated to the point where he was reduced to sitting cross-legged on his bed while staring at the wall. An attendant was assigned to his bedside to feed him, to provide necessary care, and to

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guard him from attempted suicide. In this state, Doug's family could not bear to visit him because of the pain it brought to their own hearts. Clinical depression became the great silent enemy and the cause of my own journey of discovery. This book documents that journey.

*Quest One:*

**To discover the nature and extent of  
Depression in society:  
Just how serious is depression?**

## CHAPTER 1

*"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now." Paul*

### THE PROBLEM OF DEPRESSION

The first recorded words of man characterize the plight of humanity: "I was afraid" (Gen. 3:10). Humankind, since the fall, has had the potential of becoming victim to emotional bondage "en masse" and individually. Riots and rampage after sporting events demonstrate the corporate hold that emotions can have on humanity, not all of which can be attributed to alcohol. Individual bondage to emotions has never been more apparent than in our present era in which "Americans pay more than \$17 billion annually for psychological therapies,"<sup>1</sup> and "more than 250 different kinds of psychotherapy have been identified within its own profession."<sup>2</sup>

Man's emotional bondage is also apparent among the present North American evangelical churches, among whom the American Association of Christian Counselors reports a membership of 17,500 and the RaphaCare network boasts of 3500 participating churches.<sup>3</sup> This large membership points to the high degree of emotional troubles for which evangelicals seek counsel. This trend has never been more apparent than now as evidenced by the present rise of those seeking help specifically for depression.

While most people experience a measure of emotional "down time" commonly referred to as "the blues," there is a severe state of being emotionally down that interrupts the normal functions and routines of life. The severe state that disrupts normal life functions is distinguished from "the blues" by specific symptoms and is identified by the term *depression*.<sup>4</sup> Those seeking help for this state of depression "doubled from 10 million to 20.43 million within a five-year period between 1988 and 1993."<sup>5</sup>

### The Evidence of Depression in Society

Multiple clinical studies from a variety of perspectives have been cited to support the high incident of depression in society. It is report-

ed that “approximately 17.1 percent of Americans have a lifetime of major depression.”<sup>6</sup> As well, “one woman in five and one man in seven can expect to develop depression,”<sup>7</sup> and “over one in five Americans can expect to suffer from some form of depression in their lifetime and over one in twenty Americans have a depressive disorder every year”<sup>8</sup>

Leading cognitive therapist David D. Burns considers depression as the world’s number one public health problem. He suggests depression is “the common cold of psychiatric disturbances.”<sup>9</sup> The last quarter of a century has evidenced a continual rise in depression as affirmed by Walter Knapp. He states, “An age of depression seems to be descending upon us. According to one survey, over 50% of Americans report feeling depressed at one time or another. In general practice, the depressed state is encountered with increasing frequency either as a cause or a concomitant of physical symptoms and signs.”<sup>10</sup> The effects of depression within society in recent decades have become severe. Hugh Strow ranks depression as the largest single disease cause of suffering. He suggests that depression causes more human suffering than any other single disease, mental or physical.<sup>11</sup> A Louis Harris nationwide poll for the Blue Cross Association revealed that 52 percent of adults polled reported suffering from depression after undergoing medical or surgical treatments.<sup>12</sup>

Depression is no respecter of age. A recent clinical study of children concludes, “adverse parenting, characterized by low care, is a significant risk factor in depressive disorders among children.”<sup>13</sup> Teicher similarly reports a high evidence of depression among the middle aged.”<sup>14</sup> Nolen-Hoeksema offers further statistics that suggest a large incident of depression among aged men. She writes: “Suicide statistics in the United States in 1982 show that the rate of suicide per 100,000 males age 25 to 64 was 25.9, the rate for those 65 to 74 was 33.1, the rate for those age 75 to 84 was 48.5, and the rate for those age 85 and older was 53.9.”<sup>15</sup>

Studies affirm that depression is comprehensive and exhaustive in its scope. It can start with the young, but in its inception or continuation, depression is not limited to any age group or to a particular sex. Yet studies do indicate that the rate of depression is higher among women generally, as Nolen-Hoeksema reports: “Among adults age 19

or older, women are about twice as likely as men to show moderate or severe levels of depression.”<sup>16</sup>

As well, depression is no respecter of particular career positions or professions. In the past such national leaders as Lincoln and Churchill have suffered from depression, as well as novelists, poets, and playwrights such as Poe, Dostoyevsky, Milton, and Eugene O’Neil.<sup>17</sup> So significant is the epidemic of depression that it has been marked as the leading cause of suicide,<sup>18</sup> which in itself is the tenth leading cause of death among college students.<sup>19</sup> Simply stated, depression is the “most common complaint” of people seeking therapy.<sup>20</sup>

### The Evidence of Depression in the Church

This severe state of depression has not escaped the church of North America. Howard E. Butt, Jr., challenges the church to recognize that “there are millions of Christian Americans suffering from severe depression.”<sup>21</sup> In reviewing Butt’s work, Don E. Eberly, former aide to President Ronald Reagan and Jack Kemp, supports the claim that there are millions of Americans who “start their day with prayer and Prozac.”<sup>22</sup> There is evidence to indicate that the high incident of depression in secular society affects the church as well.

### *The Evidence of Depression among Church Leadership*

Severe depression has been evident among church leaders, both historical and modern-day. Among leading figures through church history depression has been a struggle. Church leaders such as John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Charles Spurgeon all suffered from depression.<sup>23</sup> This historical perspective is elaborated by William Kirwan who records that Charles Spurgeon was frequently in the grips of massive depressions, William Cowper was hospitalized several times because of “melancholy” and attempted suicide, and Martin Luther experienced deep depression, which on occasion was so great that “he could consider suicide.” Kirwan also lists John Donne, Alexander Whyte, John Henry Jowett, Andrew Bonar, G. Campbell Morgan as struggling with depression.

All these famous preachers “suffered from lack of self-esteem, anxiety, and other emotional ailments common to humankind.”<sup>24</sup> The list of prominent servants of God who suffered from depression goes



as far back as Bible-times. Dwight Carlson reminds readers that depression among God-appointed leaders can be traced back to such Bible figures as Moses (Num. 10), Elijah (1 Kings 19), Job (Job 3), and Jeremiah (Jer. 20).<sup>25</sup>

*The Evidence of Depression among Church Laity*

Not only has depression been evident among spiritual leaders, but it has also been evident among the church laity. Prominent pastors of the past and the present have published works addressing depression among believers. Richard Baxter wrote *The Signs and Causes of Melancholy*,<sup>26</sup> and David Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure*.<sup>27</sup> Pastoral focus through sermons and publications, especially within the last century, is further evidence of the problem of depression within the church. Church historian P. Lewis cites Puritan writers such as Thomas Brook, Christopher Love, and Archibald Alexander as addressing the topic of depression under the term *melancholy*.<sup>28</sup> He refers to Archibald Alexander who wrote of religious melancholy in his *Thoughts on Religious Experience* (1844) (87), and he quoted the preface of Timothy Roger's *A Discourse on Trouble of Mind and the Disease of Melancholy*" (66-67). Spurgeon also specifically addressed the topic of depression in a message entitled "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" published in 1881.<sup>29</sup>

As depression has grown in society, it has also grown within the church. Because evangelical churches have sought to address the needs of suffering humanity, they themselves have been sought out as a point of help particularly by the depressed of society. Mullen suggests that "depression is slightly more common in evangelical churches" because these churches "deliberately attract seekers who are looking for answers to life."<sup>30</sup> This fact is evident by the growing number of Christians that have sought therapy. John MacArthur points out that in the last fifteen years; Christian psychology has become a billion-dollar industry. He states: "More Christians than ever are lining up at the doors of clinics and professional counselors. Christian psychologists offering live counsel are now heard daily on thousands of Christian radio stations around the country."<sup>31</sup>

My own 25 years of pastoral experience affirmed that depression is not confined to people perpetually inclined to emotional struggles.

Nor is it confined to new believers immature in the faith. Depression can also be the harsh reality of the spiritually mature believer, committed to Christ in every aspect of life. As I journeyed with Doug, I experienced the debilitating effect of depression on a mature believer brought on because of a serious medical condition.

These pastoral experiences are not isolated incidents. In *Moody Monthly*, Susan Pfeiffer reported, “a pastor of a large church on the East Coast recognizes at least ten severely depressed, suicidal people every Sunday as he looks across the congregation.”<sup>32</sup> Depression is a real problem that the church must address. M. J. Brandt affirms this: “Too many fine Christians have suffered, and continue to suffer crippling depression. For them to spend their longing for good health and faith in God, it seems the heavens are closed .nothingness yawns at their feet.”<sup>33</sup>

Sadly, the struggle with depression among believers is faced without help all too often. Bible translator J. B. Phillips suffered greatly from depression. He expressed the dilemma of a lack of sound direction with these words: “It would have been of inestimable comfort and encouragement to me in some of my darkest hours if I could have come across even one book written by someone who had experienced and survived the hellish torments of mind which can be produced.”<sup>34</sup> Doug experienced the same dilemma. Such comments point to the need for the church to address the struggle of depression on behalf of suffering believers.

Finding the Bible as the Source Book for help has escaped the grasp of today’s troubled believers. Added to this challenge facing believers who struggle with depression is the confusion that exists with the proliferation of survivor experiences in publication. Such publications collectively express multiple approaches to depression and respectively claim to be the answer to depression; nevertheless, the struggle continues to affect more Christians each year.

### The Problem of Multiple Approaches to Depression

The high incident of depression reported in American society in particular poses a unique problem. The vastness of the problem of depression in our society has led to multiple diagnosis theories that are very broad in scope and rooted in the historical development of psy-

chotherapy. These broad theories of diagnosis have led to multiple treatment approaches.

### *Multiple Diagnosis-Theories of Depression*

Birkhead offers a brief history, which evidences how broad the approach to general mental disorder has become. She traces the roots of Freudian psychoanalysis to post-hypnotic suggestion from Jean-Martin Charcot, as early as 1825-1893. Her historical panorama follows the “new and innovative approaches” from Carl Jung (1875-1961), highlighting “unconscious processes”; Alfred Adler (1870-1937), emphasizing “the drive for superiority vs. the feeling of community”; Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949), emphasizing “interpersonal relationships and human security”; Abraham Maslow (1908-1970), focusing on the needs for self-actualization; and Carl Rogers (1902-1987), emphasizing feelings and “a sense of genuineness.”<sup>35</sup>

The evident variety of theoretical approaches to the diagnosis of mental disorders has necessitated a standardized classification system among practitioners. Historically, this classification system began with the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, which is now in its fifth stage of rewrite. In *DSM III* there are ten classifications that pertain to a depressive disorder. The more recent publications of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* have reclassified mood disorders into three parts: Mood Episodes (Major Depressive Episode, Manic Episode, Mixed Episode, and Hypomanic Episode), Mood Disorders (Major Depressive Disorder, Dysthymic Disorder, Bipolar I Disorder), and the specifies describing recent mood episodes and recurrent episodes.<sup>36</sup> The continued defining and redefining of the categories of depression demonstrate the difficulty of sustaining any measure of clarity even among medical practitioners.

Among psychiatric practitioners themselves, there is an admission of controversy regarding diagnostic classifications.<sup>37</sup> The names of the mood disorders have been changed repeatedly and “the layperson is generally confused about their meaning.”<sup>38</sup> The multiplicity of diagnostic theories for depression has created an environment of uncertainty and a source of confusion to the average individual as Brant affirms: “We have failed to provide adequate measures for the prevention and

treatment of depression. The reasons for our failure are many. It has been difficult to define accurately, and classify depression. There has also been much confusion because of different theories provided by authorities within the field."<sup>39</sup>

### *Multiple Treatment Practices for Depression*

The multiple approaches to depression resulted quite naturally in a host of treatment practices, many of which are "medically" recognized, some of which are contradictory. Birckhead traces the historical development of multiple treatments for depression from the private offices of psychiatrists to the large public mental hospitals and as part of the curriculum in medical schools. The treatment of mental disorders has included somatic therapies in the 1930s, insulin shock therapy, Meprobol shock therapy (1935), electroshock therapy (1937) and psychosurgery (1935-1936), sedation, tranquilizers, and finally, anti-depressant, anti-excitement, and anti-hallucinatory preparations.<sup>40</sup>

In recent years, treatment approaches have become very broad. For example, Martin Seligman recommends Cognitive Therapy. He suggests that to teach proper understanding of helplessness will create its own cure through cognitive study.<sup>41</sup> As well, these treatment approaches seem to contradict each other. Some focus exclusively on psychological therapy with varying degrees of drug application. Others such as those proposed by Edith Jacobson are vague expressions of psychobabble. To the other extreme, Charles Solomon in developing his "Spirituootherapy" makes no acknowledgment of any area of required treatment other than the spiritual aspect of man.<sup>42</sup>

### *Summarization of the Problem*

There is a high occurrence of what is commonly called depression within modern society, as documented. This high occurrence of depression is equally evident among Christians, as demonstrated by historical testimony, puritan and modern pastoral emphasis, documented pastoral counselling demands, and the more recent published experiences of believers. This fact has been affirmed by my own twenty-five years of pastoral experience. The breadth of meaning of the term *depression*, covering everything from feelings of self-pity that results in emotional despair to the drug-induced postoperative chemical imbal-

ances in the brain, is confusing. The diversity of diagnoses and treatments facing believers who have been diagnosed as suffering from depression is confusing and often conflicting as my friend and co-worker discovered. The high incident of debilitating emotional struggles among believers, the broad use of the term *depression*, and the apparent problem of confusing and conflicting approaches to depression, have created a need. The Christian community needs to define this emotional struggle, identify its common symptoms, and outline an appropriate approach for such emotional trauma, all from Biblical testimony. This Doug sought for, and could not find.

## CHAPTER 2

*"And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh." Solomon.*

### HOW DEPRESSION IS ADDRESSED IN SOCIETY

The symptoms of depression have been identified through clinical studies. These are listed as sadness, unhappiness, the blues, and crying; thought deviations: pessimism and ideas of guilt; behavior and appearance changes: agitation and neglect of appearance; somatic troubles such as loss of appetite, loss of sleep, aches and pains; anxiety features; and suicidal behavior.<sup>43</sup> Even as the more recent *DSM IV* manual has divided and subdivided these symptoms into multiple categories, so the secular approaches have followed suit with multiple approaches. Further, Martin and Deidre Bobgan point out that a broad segment of Christian counselling uses the theories and techniques devised by such men as Freud, Jung, and Rogers.

#### Secular Approaches

Outside the Christian context, the historical development of the treatment of depression and other mental disorders has been bound to the ever growing list of theoretical approaches to man's psychological makeup. A valuable source of the historical perspective of psychotherapies can be found in *Mental Health-Psychiatric Nursing*.<sup>44</sup> Here, the more predominant theories listed and worth examination include psychoanalytical, behavioral, cognitive, sociocultural, existential humanism, biological, and stress.

The central concept of the *behavioral theory* approach to the treatment of depression is that depressed individuals receive insufficient reinforcement from those around them for exhibiting non-depressive behavior but do receive reinforcement for depressive behavior.<sup>45</sup> Simply stated, *cognitive theory* focuses on changing the way people interpret and look at things when feeling upset. Cognitive therapy has a broad application, claiming a measure of success in helping many people with various mood disorders, especially that of depression.<sup>46</sup> The recognized influence of social interaction upon individuals

has led to the *sociocultural theory* of man's psychological makeup. According to this theory, the cause of depression is longstanding life problems that impede culturally expected plans, resulting in the deprivation of sources of reward or value and the loss of control over circumstances.

A typical *existential approach* to understanding and treating emotional disorders emphasizes fulfilling human potential through the hierarchy of needs. Encouragement is therefore to be given with "persistence, persuasion, and kind firmness."<sup>47</sup> *Biological theory* focuses on the influence of genetics and organic factors on a person's development of psychiatric illness. Emphasis is placed upon defective genes and environmental stresses that interfere with biological functions. Treatment approaches practiced by those holding the biological theory include exposure to bright light for two or three hours per day, sleep deprivation for several hours per night, as well as electroconvulsive therapy. In the *stress theory*, greater focus is placed on the effect of strains and stresses of life on mechanisms of the body. Here stress is, by some, viewed as a dynamic state within the organism producing protective reaction patterns. The essence of the stress theory as understanding that "hormonal and chemical defense mechanisms activated in the response to stress are part of the 'fight or flight' mechanism."<sup>48</sup>

In recent secular practice, *psychopharmacological theory* has risen to prominence. Its premise is "the realization that the ultimate function of the nervous system is behavior."<sup>49</sup> Psychopharmacology is a science dedicated to "discovering the molecular problems that lead to abnormal chemical neurotransmission which cause mood disorders as well as diseases in the central nervous system" and to determining a "rationale for developing a drug therapy to correct it."<sup>50</sup> The treatment procedures embraced by a fundamentally pharmacological approach are varied. The prevailing opinion is that "antidepressant medication is most effective for depressive symptoms, such as sleep disturbance, appetite disturbance, and loss of interest."<sup>51</sup> Great advances have been made in developing drug therapy for the treatment of depression, yet there is a growing consensus that "a simple chemical treatment for such a debilitating illness cannot stand alone."<sup>52</sup>

With depression as much of a problem in society as it is, the books available on the subject are practically limitless. The broad so-

cial acceptance and proliferation of written material dealing with the secular approaches to depression have generated a backlash of criticism among the psychiatric and medical community. Among the critiques of secular approaches to depression are those that address the very foundation of modern psychotherapy, namely Freudian-based psychoanalysis.

Thomas Szasz traces Freudian psychoanalysis to Franz Anton Mesmer, 1733-1815, who developed a methodology of magnetic field therapy and formulated an elusive terminology of Mesmerian doctrine.<sup>53</sup> Szasz states that Mesmer stumbled onto “a rhetorical device that the founders of modern depth psychology subsequently transformed into the pseudo-medical entity known as psychotherapy.”<sup>54</sup> Szasz further contends that all forms of psychotherapy comprise one or several elements of religion, rhetoric, and repression. He therefore suggests, “Deception is the cornerstone of modern medical psychotherapeutics” (185).

O. Hobart Mowrer focuses his criticism of Freudian psychology on the influence that Darwinism had on Freud in virtually denying religion. Mowrer contends therefore that Darwinism, influencing Freudianism, led to the “biologizing” of American psychology. . He concludes that psychologists have tended to dismiss religion as irrelevant and suggests that only in religion can guilt, sin, and expiation, be dealt with.<sup>55</sup>

Another criticism focuses on overemphasizing the role of science in therapy. Martin Gross believes that the psychological society has mistakenly equated mental health with an unrealistic and unreachable ideal combining success, love, and lack of anxiety. His conclusion is that after three quarters of a century of Freudian psychoanalysis, research has concluded that it fails to fulfill its extravagant promises and that its pursuit of Freudian ritual and dogma has many of the manifestations of a religion.<sup>56</sup>

Bernie Zilbergeld suggests that psychology has become a replacement for old belief systems and has introduced an era of psychological man and change without limit. He contends that there is no proof that one’s chances for feeling better and doing better are greater with counselling. His conclusion is stated as a caution: “We believe all sorts of things about counselling, things that therapists and many for-



mer clients as well, want us to believe. Some of our beliefs are partly true, and some are held despite abundant evidence to the contrary.”<sup>57</sup>

Criticism is directed not only against the foundational theories of psychological therapy but also against drug use in therapy. Ernest Keen focuses on the comparative similarities between lobotomies and the present-day drug therapy. His criticism regarding the danger of drug use in some approaches to therapy is based upon the fact that modern science knows few specifics about chemical imbalances and knows nothing about what drugs do to brain chemistry beyond “a few elemental facts incompletely understood and not-yet-organized more detailed findings.”<sup>58</sup> Keen maintains that without proof of actual disease, the clinical use of drugs is no different from the recreational use of drugs (195-206).

This review indicates that an evident vagueness of terminology, a neglect of the spiritual aspect of man, and a deliberate absence of reference to God are characteristic of the secular approaches. The secular critiques suggest that secular approaches are steeped with errors and deception. This review supports the proposal that there is an apparent problem of confusing and conflicting approaches to depression.

While in most of the disciplines of science and medicine there is little relationship between secular and Christian thought, in the disciplines of counselling secular and Christian thought has in reality often been united. This reality is particularly true in recent years.<sup>59</sup>

### Christian Approaches

The broad and differing secular theories cited above demonstrate the ambiguity of the secular perspectives, much of which have been adopted by those claiming a Christian approach. The Christian perspectives of counselling have been categorized into two groups, integrationist and nouthetic.<sup>60</sup> Although these perspectives are not mutually exclusive they shall be examined individually.

#### *Integrationist Perspective*

Integrationists combine the secular perspectives with their own Christian perspective. This practice results in various views of therapy being introduced as Christian. Paul D. Maves defines the integrationist view as understanding that human studies in each of the “physical,

moral, emotional, and religious” realms offer equal insight.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, integrationists place their confidence in research and observation from science and Scripture.

Frank Lake offers an integrationist’s understanding of depressed people from a totally psychological perspective based upon his concept of the origins of psychoneurotic reactions.<sup>62</sup> With an existential perspective, Lake suggests that these needs are met in and through the cross of Christ where acceptance and sustenance are found.<sup>63</sup> William Backus defines the purpose of the integrationist approach as the counselor’s attempt “to help the counselee discover his harmful cognitions, grasp their false character, and replace them with the truth.”<sup>64</sup> He summarizes his work as a combining of the two branches into a single therapeutic method of cognitive psychology, which provides for “the practice of counselling based on the Christian belief that truth can make you free.” He understands the answer for depression to be found in reasoning with sufferers within their framework of faith, to invoke behavioral change.

John White embraces a Christian perspective along with secular biological understanding. He admittedly emphasizes bodily processes, suggesting a biological theory perspective.<sup>65</sup> White summarizes his efforts in dealing with depression as helping “the common man” to think more clearly about the relationship between physical bodies and the nonphysical part of man. He places “a grasp of Scripture, a hope in the God of Scripture, and awareness that we humans inhabit both material and a physical world” (185) as foremost in his counsel.

Another prominent integrationist is Archibald Hart. His approach to counselling depressed individuals is not limited to one theory and advises that counselors avoid being locked into any one model or theory. Hart emphasizes the importance of reviewing all options in treatment, suggesting that the psychological, environmental, spiritual, interpersonal, as well as biological factors must be taken into account in an integrated way.<sup>66</sup> Grant Mullen’s integrationist approach to depression leans toward the secular perspective of the cognitive theory. He suggests that “mood disorders” leave individuals helpless by an illness that patients cannot control. He insists that this illness involves “legitimate physical problems” with medical treatments just like any other

chronic illness and that within Christian circles the common embarrassment and condemnation are unfair.<sup>67</sup>

Combining the psychoanalytical and stress approaches, Frank Minirth and Paul Meier acknowledge the struggle that depression is making in society and present their presupposition for recovery as the three basic needs of all human beings: self-worth, intimacy with others, intimacy with God.<sup>68</sup> Hans Brandt suggests depression is multifaceted, dealing with the physical, the emotional, and the spiritual and suggests that counselling approaches need to vary for each of these source problems. His understanding of the biggest problem in counselling the depressed is overlooking a holistic approach by “treating all forms of depression in one manner.”<sup>69</sup>

Lawrence J. Crabb is perhaps the most prominent integrationist of the day. He acknowledges that some feelings of depression have an organic basis and advises medical procedures. Crabb advises that when depression is severe to the point in which a relationship with the sufferer is not progressing, the sufferer should be referred to a physician.<sup>70</sup> Crabb challenge church communities to minister among themselves through authoritative words (Scripture exhortation) and confessional words (personal accountability) and makes distinction regarding the counselling of “empirically researchable concerns” by trained professionals.<sup>71</sup>

Writing from the integrationist perspective, Gary Collins suggests that the causes of depression are grouped into two main categories: genetic-biological and psychological-cognitive. Collins’s approach is to attempt to understand the causes of feelings and to help overcome unhealthy emotional experiences or to express feelings in ways that are more acceptable. This approach is in place of that which calls patients to “snap out of it.”<sup>72</sup>

As evident by these examples, integrationists have gravitated toward the various secular theories. Because of seeking to embrace both secular and Christian approaches, integrationists offer little continuity and often contradict each other. The growing number of Christian writers who are advocating the integrationist approach has given rise to much criticism. John MacArthur explains that while the secular world is disaffected by professional psychotherapy, the Christian world is trying desperately to model its approach after the secular, resulting in a

growing commitment among Christians to psychology rather than Biblical truth. He considers the term *Christian psychology* an oxymoron and claims that the infusion of psychology into Christian teaching has “blurred the line between behavioral modification and sanctification.”<sup>73</sup>

Martin and Deidre Bobgan state, “well-meaning psychologists who profess Christianity have merely borrowed the theories and techniques from secular psychology”<sup>74</sup> and as a result have developed systems of counsel and care apart from Scripture. They challenge believers to review their understanding of acceptable therapy approaches for mental and emotional disorders and warn that Christians were probably naturally suspicious of psychotherapy at the beginning but now they have uncritically accepted it, fearing to challenge a system they do not understand, and losing confidence in spiritual solutions.<sup>75</sup>

Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahan address what they consider to be a major issue—“the power of experiences.”<sup>76</sup> They warn Christians against the seductive power of occult-styled therapy, which focuses on such experiences as visualizing Jesus, or praying through imagination. Hunt and McMahan expose the self-idolatry and self-love foundation of what they call the New Age “paradigm shift” taking place in the thinking of many church leaders. Their challenge for Christians is stated simply, “God’s Word offers the best of counsel in every area of human behavior and relationships.”<sup>77</sup> Ed Bulkley demonstrates the inconsistency and disharmony of the integrationist approach in seeking to embrace secular approaches to counselling with Bible truth. His conclusion is “Psychology points man to self. The Bible points man to God.”<sup>78</sup>

As earlier mentioned, the area of greatest criticism is the integrationist’s replacement of Bible truth with human understanding. There is another area of criticism, less addressed, but documented as well. This criticism deals with “Christian psychology” and the theology of suffering. Jim Owen traces Biblical evidence of the role of affliction as part of the believer’s union with Christ and rebukes counsel that dismisses suffering as outside God’s will. He suggests that seeking deliverance from suffering, as psychology legitimizes, leaves the Christian community spiritually impoverished.<sup>79</sup> William Kilpatrick contends that in psychology, “suffering has no meaning while in Christianity,

suffering has great meaning. He demonstrates that some pain or suffering is beneficial, unavoidable, and wasted when viewed as something to be delivered from as psychology contends. He concludes: “The proper Christian emphasis is not on *our* efforts, *our* abilities, or even *our* faith. It is on our faith in *God*.”<sup>80</sup>

The critiques of the integrationist perspective demonstrate that within the Christian context a number of counselors and writers view the present tendency of the church to move toward the integrationist approach in its many models as dangerous. Ed Bulkley explains: “I readily admit that some of what integrationists write is helpful and Biblically solid. The danger is found in the integrationist’s foundation, which rests upon the psychological concepts of man rather than on the scriptural precepts of God.”<sup>81</sup>

### *The Nouthetic Perspective*

In contrast to the integrationist perspective, which seeks to mix the secular with Scripture, the nouthetic perspective seeks to remain entirely Bible centered. Jay Adams coined the term nouthetic. He referred to this approach in terms of Biblical confrontation. His commitment to Scripture as the final authority for life and practice is evident. He states, “Nouthetic confrontation is, in short, confrontation with the principles and practices of the Scriptures ... bringing God’s Word to bear upon peoples’ lives in order to expose sinful patterns, to correct what is wrong, and to establish new ways of life of which God approves.”<sup>82</sup>

Adams suggests that depression is the resultant downward emotional spiral caused by the mishandling of adverse circumstances such as illness, hormonal changes, and work-related pressures. By citing the example of Cain, Adams points out that sinful habits are hard to break and follow the pattern of good feelings, problem, sinful response, complications, additional sinful responses, and bad feelings.<sup>83</sup> His conclusion is straightforward: “Depression is the result of the counselee’s sin.”<sup>84</sup> He teaches that the Christian counselor’s responsibility is to lead the sufferer of depression to repentance by the effective use of the Word of God

With a similar nouthetic approach, Mel Lawrenz and Daniel Green champion their “Strategic Pastoral Counselling” model. They

suggest three stages of counselling: encounter, engagement, and disengagement, and stress Biblical solutions. They call upon counselees to be open to a direct presentation of special truths.”<sup>85</sup>

Charles Solomon developed what he calls "Spirituootherapy." He maintains that the purpose of the counselor is to act as spiritual guide, giving the most direct route to spiritual maturity while explaining the stops and detours on the way. Spirituootherapy is void of acknowledgment of any other causes of depression other than the spiritual, defined as an internal temper tantrum.<sup>86</sup>

Louise Caldwell deals with the less intense side of depression and suggests that the single solution is found in an understanding of the relationship between the believer and Christ in which, because believers are in Christ, they can deny negative feelings and claim the promises of God to overcome emotional struggles. She states that the abundant life, which Christ promises “can be ours no matter how we feel” and that “inherent in that abundant life are positive strategies and adequate resources for dealing with our negative emotions.”<sup>87</sup>

D. Martin Lloyd-Jones focuses on spiritual depression as that state of “disquieted soul.”<sup>88</sup> While declaring with that the cause of all spiritual depression is unbelief, this fact is a truth he does not apply to the deeper struggle of depression. He emphasizes the sufficiency of Christ, the work of salvation, the liberation of the Spirit, the role of faith, and the place of repentance in dealing with bouts of spiritual depression.

William Bridge’s counsel in depression is a simple call to study the Scriptures as David did.<sup>89</sup> Bridge offers God’s ministry of “lifting up the downcast” in the case of great sins, weak grace, miscarriage of duties, lack of assurance, temptation, desertion, unserviceableness, and temperament-imposed despair. The author’s conclusion is that faith in Jesus Christ is the ultimate cure.

Gary L. Almy also writes from a nouthetic position. He suggests that the modern secular and integrationist definition of depression is reduced to something bad outside of us or to chemical aberrations inside of us. The essence of his approach is to see depression as it pertains to suffering in general.<sup>90</sup>

Elizabeth Skoglund specifically examines Spurgeon’s teaching regarding emotional pain. Spurgeon’s suggests that in the Christian community, depression is not necessarily a sin to be confessed and

should be met with compassion and that God's providential leading includes bouts of depression to further equip the minister for service. In investigating the published and unpublished writings of Spurgeon regarding depression, Skogland offers hope as 'we cling to life even in the darkness' from Ps. 102.<sup>91</sup>

### Summary

The examples of the Christian approaches to depression indicate that as with the secular, there seems to be no limit to the variety of diagnosis and treatments of depression. The high volume of testimonial books and Christian counselling books written to address the issue confirm the Christian community's awareness of the large extent of the problem. Yet the research further indicates that the Christian approaches are broad and often contradictory. Many Christian approaches even include the secular perspectives and theories. This fact has caused a backlash of criticism within the conservative Christian community.

Although the purpose of this paper is to determine what the Bible says about depression, the research covered the broader record of secular as well as Christian approaches. The reason for this approach became apparent as it was discovered that the great portion of modern Christian writing on the subject was founded upon secular theories of psychology. This review affirms the trend toward secularization of Christian approaches to depression. The volume of literature written from the integrationist view far exceeds that of the nouthetic view. As the title indicates, the Christian integrationist approach purposely seeks to embrace both Bible truth and human wisdom. The Bible itself warns against such an alliance.

This review of the current trends in diagnosis and treatment of depression confirms the multiplicity of such. This review also reinforces the confusing nature of these trends to the lay person, and the concerned church counselor. Such confusion only adds to the anguish of a Christian who suffers from depression when forced to make choices regarding personal therapy and prescribed treatment.

The church, having Holy Scripture, a superior resource to draw upon over man's wisdom, must not be reduced to such confusing methodology in helping believers who have been medically diagnosed or counseled as *depression* sufferers. A commitment to inductive Bible

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study should yield a clear understanding and applicable avenue of assistance. A review of Biblical literature must become the foundation for understanding an approach to man's emotional struggles. Man's struggle with depression is evident in the Biblical record.

(The complete report of the literature research undertaken for this study can be found under the heading "Publications" at [www.DiscipleshipMinistries.ca](http://www.DiscipleshipMinistries.ca)).



*Quest Two:*

**To determine a Biblical Theology  
of Debilitating Emotional Despondency:  
Why is humanity vulnerable to emotional  
trauma?**

### CHAPTER 3

*"So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place." Peter*

#### WHAT THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT DEBILITATING EMOTIONAL DESPONDENCY

Just as the term "cancer", strikes fear and panic to those suffering physically, so the term "depression" carries a stigma and a great amount of social baggage for the emotional sufferer. . In order to disassociate the commonly implied social and medical stigmas attached to the term "depression," this study of Biblical evidence reflects a search for Debilitating Emotional Despondency. For the purpose of this study, *Debilitating Emotional Despondency* (D.E.D.) will refer to the emotional state of suffering found specifically in Scripture. This is the evident dejection of spirits, disheartedness of soul, disappointment, or discouragement among Biblical characters. The term *Debilitating Emotional Despondency* makes no distinction in the severity of emotional struggle and makes no allusions to, nor presuppositions about, its cause or its course with respect to sin.

The Bible does address the human experience of Debilitating Emotional Despondency. The volume of Biblical data reveals that there is clear theological teaching regarding the emotional struggles of man. This theological teaching is foundational to understanding the Biblical approach to Debilitating Emotional Despondency and its relation to depression.

There is however a present day danger, perhaps promoted by the proliferation of modern Bible translations which attempt to reduce Scripture to an easy read, and certainly rooted in society's bent toward pluralism which denies absolute truth. The danger lies in viewing *Scripture* as ambiguous and understanding the *Words of Scripture* as without relevance. Yet the words of the "original languages" of Scripture are not ambiguous and they are uniquely relevant. These words were precisely chosen of God. The *Words of Scripture* are the foundation for understanding God's revealed truth and are the building blocks of proper theology.

For this reason and because of the danger cited, this section of study is technical, formulated from the examination of “original language” words. It is upon this study of God’s Word that the conclusions and applications of chapter 4 and 5 are based. Although the reading of this section may be cumbersome to some, a review of the unique words of scripture relating to man’s emotional state should glean an appreciation of God’s passionate concern and determined aid in man’s struggle.

### The Biblical Theology of Debilitating Emotional Despondency

Scripture indicates that man is a complex creature, made in the image of God and only truly understood by revelation from God (Gen. 1:26, Ps. 119:130). Apart from God our Creator’s revelation of man’s design, science is woefully inadequate in providing an accurate understanding of man, particularly concerning man’s immaterial aspects of soul and spirit. Therefore, the Biblical theology of Debilitating Emotional Despondency must begin with an understanding of man’s creative design as revealed by God.

#### *Man’s Creative Design*

In declaring that God made man in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27), Scripture affirms that the very nature of man’s creative design involves the powers of personality. Man is a being capable of thinking, reflecting, choosing, and feeling. These capacities function in both the emotional as well as the physical sense far beyond any other created being designed to exist on earth.<sup>92</sup> Man was created as both material (body) and immaterial (soul), according to Gen 2:7 and 1 Thess. 5:23. In reference to the immaterial part of man, the Bible employs various terms. The predominant terms are *soul*, *spirit*, and *heart*. Soul is designated in the Old Testament by the term *nephesh*, and in the New Testament by the term *psuche*. *Spirit* in the Old Testament is expressed by the term *roo’-akh*, and by *pneuma* in the New Testament, sometimes also translated *ghost*. In the Old Testament, “heart” is the translation of the Hebrew word *leb*; its parallel in New Testament Greek is *kardia*. An understanding of the Biblical views of these terms is important in identifying the Biblical approach to Debilitating Emotional Despondency.

The Old Testament term *nephesh* “soul,” has various shades of meaning: (a) Soul is that which breathes as distinguished from *basar* “flesh” (Isa. 10:18, Deut. 12:23). (b) Soul is the life breath that departs at death (Gen. 35:18, Jer. 15:2). (c) Soul is the individual, personal life inherent in the body (Deut. 12:23, 24). (d) Soul is the center of all our mental, emotional, and volitional activities (Ps. 107:9, Jer. 31:5, Lev 26:11, Ps. 42:2, Job 30:25).<sup>93</sup>

The Old Testament term *roo’-akh* (*spirit*) also has various shades of meaning, often appearing as a synonym for *soul*. In the Old Testament the term *spirit* refers to (a) wind (Gen. 8:1, Num. 11:31), (b) breath (Job 12:10, Job 15:30), (c) figuratively, as God’s anger or fury (Job 4:9, Exod. 15:8), (d) the seat of human intellect, emotions, and volition, (Exod. 28:3, Deut. 2:30, Josh. 5:1), (e) the third person of the Trinity (Gen. 1:2, Gen. 6:3, Judg. 6:34).<sup>94</sup> The occurrence of these two Old Testament terms together in such texts as 1 Sam. 1:15, Job 7:11 and Isa. 26:9, suggests Hebrew parallelism in which the terms are used synonymously. Yet in Job 12:10, Scripture makes clear distinction between the soul or life-breath that is in all living creatures by virtue of creation (Gen. 1:24--living creature, Gen. 2:7--living soul), and the eternal spirit that God breathed into man in creation (Job 12:10), making man unique from animal.

This distinction characterizes the New Testament terms. While expressing similar shades of meaning for *soul* and *spirit*, the New Testament indicates a development of these distinctions because of progressive revelation. In John 19:30 Jesus gave up his *pneuma* to the Father, and in John 10:15 Jesus gave up his *psuche* for the sheep. In Matt. 22:28 he gave up his *psuche* not his *pneuma* as ransom. In these texts, the terms are distinct: the Spirit is the “life principle derived from God” and the soul is “man’s individual possession, that which distinguishes one man from another and from inanimate nature.”<sup>95</sup> To this extent, in reference to human soul and spirit, when using the terms together in 1 Cor. 15:44, 1 Thess. 5:23, and Heb. 4:12, the spirit indicates the point of union of redeemed humanity with God through Christ Jesus. This is also called “the new man” (Eph. 2:15, 4:24, Col. 3:10), “a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17, Col. 6:15), and “the inner man” (Eph. 3:16). In these texts where spirit and soul are both used, the soul refers to the seat of feelings, desires, and affections.<sup>96</sup>

According to the *International Bible Encyclopedia*, the different senses of the Hebrew term *leb*, and its derivatives, and the Greek term *kardia*, an equivalent term translated *heart*, can be grouped under nine categories:

1. The bodily organ, and “by easy transition those experiences which affect or are affected by the body.” Fear, love, courage, anger, joy, sorrow, hatred are always ascribed to the heart (Ps. 27:14, Ps. 4:7, Deut. 19:6).
2. Head and personality in which the "seat of the emotions and passions and appetite" lie (Ps. 104:15, Gen. 18:5).
3. Soul and heart. That which in classical Greek is ascribed to *psuche* (a good soul, a just soul, etc.) is in the Bible ascribed to the heart alone.
4. The center of vital action (Gen. 41:8, Ps. 86:4, Ps. 119:20).
5. Heart and mind where “the process of self-consciousness is carried out” (Gen. 8:21, Deut. 8:5).
6. Figurative senses, referring to “people groups, nations, or individuals” (Jer. 9:26, Prov. 26:23, Matt. 15:19,20).
7. Process of heart renewal (Ps. 51:10, Rom. 10:10, Jer. 31:33).
8. The heart first, whereby “priority is expressed” (Deut. 6:5, Matt. 22:37).
9. A term for "deepest," expressing the innermost being (Exod. 15:8).<sup>97</sup>

Although the Hebrew term *leb* and the Greek term *kardia* are viewed as equivalent terms translated *heart*, a distinction in emphasis between the Old Testament and the New Testament is evident. The Hebrew term *leb*-- while referring to emotional reactions such as joy and grief, courage and fear--has the greatest number of references by far relating to the intellectual, rational functions of man. “Understanding” is found in the heart (Deut. 29:3), “thinking” takes place in the heart (1 Sam. 9:20), “planning” or the activity of the will is exercised in the heart (Prov. 16:9). It is in this sense and preponderance of textual emphasis that our word *mind* is exactly the right word for *leb*.<sup>98</sup> The term *kardia* on the other hand emphasizes the seat of emotions in the larger number of New Testament texts, in contrast to the term *nous*, which extends over the whole mental activity of man and is translated

“mind” twenty-one times and understanding three times in the King James Version.<sup>99</sup>

In summary, man was created as material and immaterial, and the three terms *soul*, *spirit* and *heart* indicate different aspects of man’s immaterial framework. When these terms are used together, the *spirit* of man refers to that immaterial part of man capable of communing with God when so regenerated by new birth. The *soul* refers to the immaterial part of man in its function of animating the body and receiving the impressions from the body in the capacity of intellect, emotion, and volition.<sup>100</sup> *Heart*, although used as a synonym for both soul and spirit, more often in Scripture refers to the mind or to the volitional rather than to the emotional aspect of man’s being. This point is examined in detail under “The Biblical Terminology of Debilitating Emotional Despondency.”

Through the senses, the first man was able intellectually to discern the creative design of all cattle, fowl, and every beast of the field, and name them all accordingly (Gen. 2:20). Adam was able to comprehend the nature of male and female and determine the need for a human helpmeet. Adam was held responsible for his comprehension in obedience to God’s instructions (Gen. 2:16-70, 3:17-19). Volitionally the first man was given free choice to name animals, to fulfill the creative purpose of populating the earth, and have dominion over it (Gen. 1:28). Adam and Eve were given a free choice to eat God’s provision of food, and to obey God in refraining from eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:17). Emotionally, Adam and Eve were given the capacity to appreciate each other within a marriage relationship to the extent that true happiness, true fulfillment, and true love could only be found between man and woman by obedience to God’s explicit directive: “a man shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).<sup>101</sup> They were privileged to enjoy the fellowship they had with God in the garden prior to the fall, as intimated in Gen. 3:8.

Scripture indicates that even in this perfect state of untested holiness, human emotion could potentially experience what might be considered negative feelings. This was due to man being created after the image of God, who grieves at mankind’s sin (Gen. 6:6, Eph. 4:30), experiences anger (righteous indignation) toward sin (Exod. 4:14, Num.

25:4), and knows jealousy for righteousness (Exod. 20:5, 34:14). This is evident in the life of Jesus, a man without sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

Although Jesus lived on earth in a state of holiness, as the unfallen “second man” (1 Cor. 15:47), Scripture states that He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). Within the framework of perfect humanity, Jesus, before the cross, experienced Debilitating Emotional Despondency. “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). Both in the Gospel records and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Scripture conveys this experience in the severest of New Testament terms, evidencing the intensity of affliction upon body and soul. Although this text will be examined further under “The Biblical Testimonies of Debilitating Emotional Despondency,” the theological implications are important to note here.

The circumstances of the coming cross wrought in Jesus the deepest emotional agony. By virtue of His perfect nature, Jesus did not succumb to His emotions by allowing them to interfere with His predetermined responsibility to fulfill the Father’s will, no matter how horrifying. He was without sin. Nevertheless, the reality of His emotional framework in becoming man, even unfallen man, points to God’s creative design. God created man to be both material and immaterial and as part and parcel of man’s immaterial soul, God designed man to experience emotion, as well as exercise intellect and volition. As to the purpose and extent that God intended emotions to play a role in man’s original state, Scripture is silent. However, it is evident that the fall of man marred God’s perfect design until He restores creation (Rom. 8:22-23).

### *The Consequences of Man’s Fall*

Each of these aspects of the soul of man was involved in the fall. Intellectually, the forbidden fruit was seen as “good for food”; emotionally, the forbidden fruit was “pleasant” and “desired”; volitionally, Adam and Eve chose to disobey by eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6). In yielding to temptation by disobedience, Adam and Eve experienced spiritual death and potential soul bondage. By virtue of created design, whereby man functions with intellect, emotion, and will, the fall resulted in man no longer being led by his spirit in union with God.

Rather, he was led by his soul in bondage to the flesh and at the dictates of Satan, as scripture states:

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Eph. 2:2-3).

The emotional bondage of the fall is evident in Genesis 3 where fear dominated the actions of Adam and Eve, and where attempted escape was their only perceived recourse (Gen. 3:10). Denial of personal responsibility was evident, as was desire to escape the consequences by passing the blame to others (Gen. 3:12, 13). Scripture declares man's fallen state as that of dominance by "the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:15-16). Scripture further defines these as the "lust of the world" (1 John 2:17) in parallel with the aspects of the soul involved in man's original fall (Gen. 3:6). This implies that man's bondage is not only to volitional acts of sin by virtue of our inherited sin nature and total depravity (Rom. 5), but is also intellectual bondage. Man rejects God and His truth by reasoning God away through the wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 2:4-16).

Scripture demonstrates that man's bondage in this fallen state is emotional as well. Man, through the fall, is subject to fear, (Prov. 29:25, Heb. 2:15); to anger (Prov. 15:18, Eccles. 7:9); and to despair (Eccles. 2:20, Jer. 18:12). It is uniquely significant in understanding the consequences of man's fall and subsequent potential bondage to emotions, to evidence this in Scripture's first mention of the term "sin." In Genesis 4, Cain murdered Abel because of pride, which led to anger. Although this fact will be examined in greater detail under "The Biblical Testimonies of Emotional Bondage," it is evident that God judged Cain by invoking a life of bondage to Debilitating Emotional Dependency for him.

Therefore, our Biblical Theology of D.E.D. determines that man, created in the image of God, was endued with emotional capacity along with intellect and will as part the function of his soul. Our theology further demonstrates that the fall of Adam and Eve resulted in the inherited spiritual death of all people. Thus, unlike Jesus, fallen



man in the state of spiritual death has the potential to succumb to and become in bondage to his emotional struggles, of which the *foundation* for deliverance is personal salvation. (For an explanation of personal salvation, see Appendix B). God also acknowledges the severity and potential life-limiting nature of Debilitating Emotional Despondency in Biblical record by the use of descriptive terms.

*Quest Three:*

**To determine the Biblical evidence  
of Debilitating Emotional Despondency:  
Does the Bible really address man's struggle  
with emotional trauma?**

## CHAPTER 4

*"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Paul*

### THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF DEBILITATING EMOTIONAL DESPONDENCY

Although the Bible is not a science, geography or psychology textbook, by virtue of Divine inspiration, when information on such topics is introduced, inspiration guarantees accuracy. There is ample information in Scripture regarding D.E.D. to build reliable conclusions upon.

#### THE BIBLICAL TERMINOLOGY OF DEBILITATING EMOTIONAL DESPONDENCY

As examined under "The Biblical Theology of Debilitating Emotional Despondency," the terms *soul*, *spirit*, and *mind* are often used interchangeably in reference to man's emotional framework. As an immaterial aspect of man's framework, God has pointedly exposed this in its frailty through revelation. Various terms are used in conjunction with these to further define Debilitating Emotional Despondency in the Old Testament.

#### *Old Testament Terminology*

Many Old Testament writers expressed their deep emotional experiences. David wrote, "My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?" (Ps. 6:3). In this passage, *bahal* translated "vexed" and used here in the *niph'al* stem, means "to be disturbed, dismayed, terrified, or anxious" and expresses the emotion of one who is confronted with something unexpected, threatening or disastrous.<sup>102</sup> "For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draws nigh unto the grave" (Ps. 88:3). The word *ra`* translated "troubles" means evil, distress, or misery, but not necessarily sin. The person whose way of life is characterized by *ra`* has a bleak future.<sup>103</sup> Calvin suggests that the psalmist speaks of a hopeless condition whereby "calamities so heaped one upon another that his heart was filled with sorrow, till it could contain no more."<sup>104</sup>

In close relation to these terms is the Hebrew word *daka*. This term is used eighteen times in Scripture. It always referring to individuals being crushed or broken: the oppressor is crushed (Ps. 72:4), the wicked are crushed (Job 34:25) but not necessarily in sin, Job was crushed (Job 19:2) but sinned not (Job 1:22), Christ was crushed--emphasizing the emotional and spiritual suffering of the Savior for our iniquities (Isa. 53:10)--yet without sin (Heb. 4:15, 9:28).<sup>105</sup>

Uniquely, the writers, through inspiration, use the adjective form of *daka* in two passages to indicate God's own commitment to those of a "broken heart" and "contrite" spirit:

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saves such as be of a contrite, *daka* spirit (Ps. 34:18).

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite, *daka* and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones (Isa. 57:15).

Here "heart" indicates the whole spectrum of emotions as well as the seat of reasoning and will, as earlier defined. In a broken state *shabar*--in the *niphal*, the heart refers to the maimed, or crippled, inner being of man--the humbling of man in his self-will. The "contrite spirit" refers to that immaterial aspect of man's being, the separated state of man's spirit, which is dead to God (Ps. 90:3) and therefore stands outside of fellowship with God in the place of judgment. The revived heart and spirit refers to the promise of the restoring of the complete man-- the spirit and the inner being of man's intellect, emotion, and volition--to God by making those of humble trust partakers of His salvation.<sup>106</sup> These two passages distinguish between that state of humility, which God acknowledges and a state of being crushed in the inner man. God's promise is to address the needs of the spirit and the heart. Therefore, this is a promise to meet the needs of the dual nature of man's immaterial framework by restoring the spirit of man to communing with Himself (Ps. 34:18--contrite spirit, Isa. 57:13--humble spirit) and to restore the crushed emotional and volitional state of man (Ps. 34:18--broken heart, Isa. 57:15--revived heart).

A key Old Testament term conveying a Biblical understanding of human emotion is the term *leb* translated "heart" as above. The differ-

ent senses of the term *leb* and its derivatives have been examined under “The Biblical Theology of Debilitating Emotional Despondency.” Nevertheless, further clarification regarding the use of this term is merited here.

Although a broad sense of the term is evident, the preponderance of psychological use rather than physiological use is clear in Scripture,<sup>107</sup> to the point in which some would even suggest that “the Bible never mentions about the *lev(av)* anything that is literally physical.”<sup>108</sup> The following summarizes the various nuances of this term as used in Scripture: “By far the majority of the uses of *leb* refer either to the inner or immaterial nature in general or to one of the three traditional personality functions of man: emotion, thought, or will.”<sup>109</sup>

In this preponderance of psychological use, Oehler makes finer distinctions yet:

In particular, the heart (the *leb*, *levav*, Prov. 20:27) is the place in which the process of *self-consciousness* goes on,--in which the soul is at home with itself, and is conscious of all it’s doing and suffering as its own. The heart, therefore, is also the organ of the conscience, Job 27:6. But in general, when a man turns his thoughts within, or appropriates anything, designs anything, is busy with any plan or resolution, this happens in the heart. But the heart is the organ not simply of those acts of consciousness which are purely inward, but also of the act of *knowing in general*, which is essentially an appropriation, so that *leb* has often exactly the meaning of intellect, insight.<sup>110</sup>

It is significant in understanding Debilitating Emotional Despondency from a Biblical perspective that, in essence, the Scriptural use of *leb* makes no distinction between what is commonly viewed as “emotional feelings” and what is medically referred to as man’s psychological framework. Biblically, “heart” when not clearly referring to the human organ, in Old Testament use, is a synonym for “mind,” or precisely what we ascribe to the head, and more exactly, to the brain.<sup>111</sup>

In conjunction with this term are several other Hebrew words defining Debilitating Emotional Despondency. One of these is *shabar*, referring to the “broken heart” (Ps. 34:18). This term means to be “broken in pieces” and therefore “ruined” or “destroyed.” When used in reference to the heart, the term conveys the thought of its being

hopelessly shattered and dysfunctional.<sup>112</sup> It is used this way nine times in the Old Testament (Ps. 34:18, Ps. 37:15, Ps. 51:17, Ps. 69:20, Ps. 147:3, Isa. 61:9, Jer. 23:9, Ez. 6:9, and 27:26).

Ps. 102:4 refers to a smitten (*nakah*) and a withered (*yabesh*) heart: “My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.” Used in the *hophal nakah* means, to be smitten, to receive a blow, to be wounded. The term *yabesh* means, to be dried up like grass. In combination, these terms convey that the psalmist’s energy, beauty, freshness, and joy were utterly gone through the wasting influence of his anguish.<sup>113</sup> Although speaking of the remorse of heart over sin, the Debilitating Emotional Despondency involved is clearly indicated in the terms.

Another Old Testament term used with heart (*leb*) in defining Debilitating Emotional Despondency is *hul*. This is found in Psalm 55 where David states, “My heart is sore pained within me” (verse 4). This combination of “pain” (*hul*) describing “heart” (*leb*) is found only here in Scripture and will be examined with further detail in *Psalm 55, a Psalm of David*, under the heading “Special Bible Texts Dealing with Debilitating Emotional Despondency.”

### *New Testament Terminology*

Many New Testament writers expressed their emotional experiences as well. The Old Testament descriptive language is paralleled in the New Testament by the terms *ademoneo*, *bareo*, *lupeo*, and *exaporeomai*. The first of these terms *ademoneo*, is mentioned three times in the New Testament in reference to great emotional upheaval. In both the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Christ’s torment in the garden before the cross is described by *ademoneo*. This refers to extreme heaviness: “And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and *very heavy*” (Matt. 26:37); “And he takes with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be *very heavy*” (Mark 14:33).

Etymologically, *ademoneo* is derived from the term *demos*, meaning the people, the mass assembled.<sup>114</sup> With the negative prefix “a,” the term conveys the concept of being out of place, of being in unfamiliar surroundings as one “not at home,” and therefore conveys a sense of deep distress.<sup>115</sup> This term suggests an experience with which Christ

was totally unfamiliar, the sensation of inconceivable awe and overpowering mental distress.<sup>116</sup> The term implies a restless and distracted shrinking from trouble, which could not be avoided,<sup>117</sup> taking upon himself the sin of the world in accordance with the Father's will. The emotional heaviness of the cross before Him was an experience in which "he was willing to test the power of obedience in sufferings; to become personally and practically acquainted with the nature of such obedience in the midst of protracted woes."<sup>118</sup> His soul received a new experience: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

This notion of great discomfort is plain,<sup>119</sup> especially because the term is used in conjunction with Matthew's mention of *lupeo* "sorrow," and Mark's mention of *ekphaumbeo* "complete amazement." Christ was completely upset, distressed, and filled with uneasiness and dread.<sup>120</sup> He endured misery of the same kind as that of condemned spirits and as much misery as could possibly consist with a pure conscience.<sup>121</sup> The uniqueness of the circumstances described here, whereby God's own Son would take upon Himself man's sin (2 Cor. 5:21)—a measure of distress inconceivable to common man, suggests acknowledging the New Testament term *ademoneo* as the strongest Greek word for the severe despair commonly known as "depression."<sup>122</sup> The only other Bible reference of this term describes Epaphroditus's deeply distressed state, as being beside oneself, when he learned that the Philippians knew of his sickness (Phil. 2:26).<sup>123</sup>

The term *bareo*, meaning to be burdened, weighed down, or depressed.<sup>124</sup> is used six times in the New Testament. It expresses the heaviness of eyes in need of sleep (Matt. 26:43, Mark 14:40, Luke 9:32), as well as the burden of caring for "widows" (1 Tm 5:16). *Bareo* also expressed the emotionally distressed state of Paul and his coworkers: "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that *we were pressed* out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." (2 Cor. 1:8).

In this text, the extent of emotional struggle is evident. Paul and his coworkers had experienced circumstances of such a pressing nature that they were weighed down, "*bareo*"—"beyond their power."<sup>125</sup> Translated literally this reads: "according to extreme excess we were

weighed down beyond ability.”<sup>126</sup> The term suggests pressure to the point of giving up hope.<sup>127</sup>

In the text above, Paul introduces another New Testament term for a state of Debilitating Emotional Despondency; it is the Greek term *exaporeomai* translated “despaired.” This word is used only by Paul, and only in the Epistle of Second Corinthians, here, as well as 2 Cor. 4:8. The term *exaporeomai* means, to be utterly at a loss, to be “utterly destitute of measures or resources, and therefore, to renounce all hope.”<sup>128</sup> The preposition *ex* in compound with *aporeo* is perfective (denoting an aspect of the verb expressing the completion of an action) and “shows the despondency in its final result of despair,”<sup>129</sup> thus emphasizing the deep extent of this emotional struggle.

A final New Testament word that connotes a severe emotional trauma and contributes to the New Testament expression of emotional despair is *lupeo*. This word, in its broadest sense, means “to make sorrowful, to cause to grieve, to throw into sorrow.”<sup>130</sup> It is significant that of the twenty-one times the term is used in the New Testament, a full one-third of its occurrences are found in the Epistle of Second Corinthians. It is this frequency of use in Second Corinthians, in conjunction with the high occurrence of these other terms, that makes Second Corinthians a text uniquely addressing the subject of Debilitating Emotional Despondency. This Epistle will be examined more thoroughly under the heading “Special Bible Texts Dealing with Debilitating Emotional Despondency.”

### *Conclusion*

In both O.T. Hebrew and N.T. Greek, the Bible uses the strongest terms for D.E.D. By descriptive language of the conditions of the heart, soul, and spirit, the Bible refers to the possibility of man being crushed emotionally, of being debilitated in the immaterial function of man referred to by the heart, the soul, and spirit. In addition to these specific Bible terms, Scripture outlines many testimonial texts regarding Debilitating Emotional Despondency.



## THE BIBLICAL TESTIMONIES OF DEBILITATING EMOTIONAL DESPONDENCY

Through Biblical research eighteen Bible characters that experienced severe symptoms of Debilitating Emotional Despondency were identified. Appearing in order of the books of the Bible in which their Debilitating Emotional Despondency is discussed, they are Cain, Hagar, Rachel, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Naomi, Hannah, Elijah, Ahab, Hezekiah, Job, David, Jeremiah, Jonah, Judas Iscariot, Jesus, and Paul. For the purposes of clarity and flow of thought, research results address the Bible characters in regard to their particular symptoms, causes, reaction to (or approach to), and end result of, Debilitating Emotional Despondency.

### *Testimony Concerning Cain*

Debilitating Emotional Despondency was evidenced as early as the second generation of mankind, recorded in Genesis 4:3-16. Here Scripture records Cain's cry of agony: "My punishment is greater than I can bear" (Gen. 4:13). In response to God's judgment upon him, Scripture indicates that Cain experienced a sense of hopelessness: "My punishment is greater than I can bear." Cain was filled with fear: "Everyone that finds me shall slay me."

The Lord's judgment upon Cain was severe "a fugitive (*noo'-ah*) and a vagabond (*nood*) shalt thou be in the earth" (Gen. 4:12). These terms, used in the *qal* form, suggest a life of staggering, trembling, un-stableness<sup>131</sup> and a life of wandering, fluttering, showing grief, respectively.<sup>132</sup> The terms indicate an aimless wandering as one "condemned to be an unstable person."<sup>133</sup> Morris supports this premise by suggesting that the reference to Cain's dwelling in *Nod*, meaning "wandering," could be a figure of speech expressing Cain's perpetual manner of life thereafter.<sup>134</sup> This aimless wandering further point to the extent of D.E.D.'s debilitating effect upon Cain.

The use of these terms supports the conclusion that God's judgment upon Cain included the curse of continuance in this state of despair. He experienced suffering from the symptoms of hopelessness, fear, uncertainty, physical trembling, and aimlessness. The symptoms of D.E.D. experienced by Cain were severe and life interrupting.

Cain's emotional struggle resulted from the consequences of his own sin. This began with pride at presenting an unacceptable offering to God (Gen. 4: 13). When the offering was rejected, Cain responded with anger and "his countenance fell" (Gen. 4:5).

The word translated "countenance" is *paniyim*, meaning face, or person. As such, the "falling" of Cain's countenance reveals his susceptibility to his own emotions, moods, and disposition.<sup>135</sup> Cain's bondage to his emotions led to a volitional rejection of God's offer of restoration and acceptance if "he did well." This offer was not a reference to good actions, but God's plea for a good disposition or Adirecting the heart to what is good."<sup>136</sup>

God's warning to Cain is significant: "If thou doest not well, sin lies at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him" (Gen. 4:7). The lack of gender agreement between the subject "sin" (feminine) and predicate "lies" (masculine) as well as the masculine pronominal suffixes used ("his desire," "rule over him"), raises several interpretive possibilities.<sup>137</sup> Sin could here be referring to the persuasive labor of Satan, as evidenced in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3), or it could be a personification of sin pointing to how it develops mastery over man.<sup>138</sup> The term *his desire* is the same term describing Eve's desire toward Adam (Gen 3:16). Similarly, what Cain is called upon to do in response to sin--to "rule" over it, is also what is said of Adam regarding Eve (Gen 3:16). This parallelism suggests an emphasis on the curse of sin as consequence of the fall.<sup>139</sup> The sense of "thou shalt rule over him" (second masculine singular, imperfect). This can be interpreted as a promise, a command, or an invitation. In each of these interpretive choices, the significance rests upon the focus of Cain's personal choice. By use of the initial emphatic pronoun literally translated: "*you*, you are to master it" the phrase emphasizes Cain's own responsibility.<sup>140</sup>

As the first reference to the term *sin* in Scripture, God points to man's potential bondage to the soul (intellect, emotions, and volition) in contrast to a God-led life, through obedience to God's Word. In consequence of Cain's rejection of God's advice, he became a slave of his emotional state in which "the seeds of pride and envy and hatred bore their bitter fruit"<sup>141</sup> so that "Cain rose up against Abel and slew him" (Gen. 4:8). Scripture marks the distinction between Abel's righteous

life and Cain's evil life: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:11). It is in the context of Cain's bondage to a soul-led life that he entered the path leading to D.E.D.

Cain's despair was caused by the sin of pride, which led to anger, which led to murder, which led to God's judgment of a life of bondage to severe D.E.D. It is significant that God judged the consequence of Cain's unchecked anger caused by pride and resulting in murder, with unrelenting D.E.D. In Cain's bondage, he turned from God and never found deliverance. It is also significant that this "anger turned inward upon oneself" was an early description of melancholy or depression.<sup>142</sup>

### *Testimony Concerning Hagar*

Hagar's state of Debilitating Emotional Despondency, recorded in Genesis 21:14-17, is expressed with similar hopelessness and fear as that of Cain. Hagar despaired because of the impending death of her child.<sup>143</sup> This was expressed in a hopelessness, "let me not see his death" (21:16)--that led to a desire for escape seen in her withdrawal "a good way off" (21:16). Her response was to "lift up her voice" (21:16). She was overcome with weeping (21:16) and apparent fear as revealed in that God called her to "fear not" (21:17).

In the Old Testament, the term *nasa'* - "to lift up" the voice (*qol*) is used "pleonastically when in conjunction with weeping"<sup>144</sup> as needless, redundant words. This excess and redundancy of words point to frantic pleading in desperation. Throughout the Old Testament, weeping (*bakah*) is the natural and spontaneous expression of strong emotion in association with the voice.<sup>145</sup> These terms describe Hagar's condition as desolate and forlorn.<sup>146</sup> The emphasis points to a Hagar as one experiencing helpless sorrow,<sup>147</sup> and at such great distress that she "despaired of relief and counted upon nothing but death."<sup>148</sup> Hagar's symptoms of D.E.D. involved hopelessness, fear, desperation expressed in escapism, weeping, and frantic pleading. In her depressed emotional state, Hagar's ability to continue had ceased.

Hagar's emotional struggle was due to the stress caused by harsh circumstances out of her power to control. Abraham had separated Hagar and her son from his family. It is apparent from the text that Abra-

ham had abandoned Hagar in the wilderness (21:14) and that her provisions had run out and that her son was at the point of death (21:16). Because of her desolate and forlorn condition, being in a wilderness where she could get no water and her child (as she thought) dying with thirst, Hagar fell into D.E.D.

As mentioned, Hagar's response to this despondency was "a lifting up of her voice" and although the phrase suggests a frantic pleading, Hagar's only resort was prayer. Yet the Scripture states, "God heard the voice of the lad." (Gen. 21:17). Calvin suggests that assisting them, God had respect, not to what they desired of him, but to what he had promised concerning Ishmael.<sup>149</sup> The point to be made is this: whether Hagar's prayers were prompted by God's promise to her of Ishmael's future as a man among his brethren (Gen. 16:12) or whether God spared Ishmael and Hagar because of His promise to Abraham regarding the child (Gen. 17:20), God responded to the need because of His Word of promise.

In the midst of Hagar's deep despair, God answered, providing for her physical need (He directed her to water), and by affirming His promise to spare the child and make him a great nation, thus meeting Hagar's emotional need (Gen. 21:18-19). In D.E.D., Hagar turned to God and He delivered. Triumph was found in a prayerful admission of weakness and evident trust in God.

### *Testimony Concerning Rachel*

A similar pattern of Debilitating Emotional Despondency is also evident in Rachel's life. Scripture states: "And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die" (Gen. 30:1). The Lord had rendered Rachel '*aqar*,' barren (Gen. 29:31). Barrenness "has always been regarded in the East as not only a matter of regret but also a matter of reproach and humiliation."<sup>150</sup> God's blessing on Rachel's sister Leah, in bearing four sons, only compounded the circumstances leading to such emotional trauma.

In her barrenness, Rachel's jealousy toward her sister brought such a deep emotional struggle that she predicted her death: "Give me children, or else I die" (Gen. 30:1). Here '*ayin*' translated "or else" expresses the idea of alternatives where the concept is either/or.<sup>151</sup> In her

barrenness, Rachel's jealousy toward her sister brought such emotional pain that she imagines her life in barrenness as 'too great a burden to bear,<sup>152</sup> and that because of this burden 'she would pine away.<sup>153</sup> Rachel's words were 'full of impatience, bordering upon blasphemy, and striking at God himself.<sup>154</sup> Rachel, falling into rebellious jealousy, was wrought with D.E.D. that severely affected her life.

Scripture indicates that Rachel's barrenness and Leah's fruitfulness were a judgment upon Jacob for not giving due honor to Leah (Gen. 29:30-31). She seemed to blame Jacob for her plight as his response would suggest: 'Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, "Am I in God's stead, who has withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?"' (Gen. 30:2). The presentation of Rachel's handmaid Bilhah, for raising children on her behalf, was a common custom of the day. Yet, it evidenced self-determination to correct the circumstances rather than trust God to meet the need. The lesson of Abraham's similar error should have been sufficient teaching to call for trust in God.

Nevertheless, in God's mercy, He "remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb" (Gen. 30:22). The term *shama*' could suggest that God heard Rachel's complaint to Jacob, or that Rachel had turned to the Lord in prayer and sought His intervention.<sup>155</sup> Gill suggests that God hearkened "to her prayer, which had been made time after time."<sup>156</sup> Rachel's response sheds light on this: "God has taken away my reproach: And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son" (Gen. 30:23-24). Her declaration of praise to God expressed in words of honor as well as in the name of her child suggests that she had truly turned to Him and found deliverance from D.E.D.

### *Testimony Concerning Jacob*

A similar state of personal crisis leading to D.E.D. is evident in Jacob's response to the news of his son Joseph's death.

And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus, his father wept for him. (Gen. 37:34-35).

The evidence of Joseph's torn and bloodied garments pointed to a death by wild beasts. Jacob had lost Rachel only a few years before; and now he had lost her first, and his favorite, son. This is the first Bible mention of mourning expressed in tearing clothes and wearing sackcloth.

Whether this was the custom or became the custom hereafter, Scripture is silent. Nevertheless, it evidenced deep sorrow, the expression of which went beyond that of normal grief. Jacob's grief resulted in the hopeless life of perpetual sorrow. In essence, Jacob "said that he would continue to mourn until he actually died."<sup>157</sup> Jacob experienced an D.E.D. with symptoms of hopelessness, brokenheartedness and "*bakah*" meaning loud weeping or bewailing.<sup>158</sup> The mention of his family "rising up" to comfort Jacob suggests a deliberate agreement to come together, because necessity urged them.<sup>159</sup> This action suggests a concern arising from an obvious despair that went beyond grief to threatening normal recovery. The fact that Jacob refused to be comforted confirms the deep degree of his hopelessness.

Jacob's life was so crushed by his grief that he foresaw only a life of grief until he himself died (Gen. 37:35). He refused comfort. His life was deeply affected by his emotional struggle, to the point of inability to function normally. There is no evidence to suggest that Jacob turned to God and found deliverance, rather Scripture indicates that Jacob continued in his D.E.D. until he became convinced that Joseph was still alive (Gen. 45:26-27).

### *Testimony Concerning Moses*

Moses, described by God as a meek man, also struggled along the path of Debilitating Emotional Despondency because of personal crisis. Num. 11:10-15 records the spiritual struggle of leadership that Moses faced because of the murmuring of Israel. Their lust for meat and discontent with manna greatly displeased God and Moses (Num. 11:1, 10). Moses describes his situation as one of *ra'a*, "affliction." Here in the *hiphil*, the meaning is "to do an injury or hurt to, to do evil or wickedly" and emphasizes the pain one experiences through seeming injustice.<sup>160</sup> Moses further called his plight 'the *massa*,' burden, of all this people" (verse 11), that was upon him. This term referring to the

great load placed upon a pack animal,<sup>161</sup> along with *raw-ah*’, reflects the language of the discontent of despair.<sup>162</sup>

Moses’ response was a bowing to this emotional struggle, whereby he affirmed his D.E.D. with an expression of a sense of hopelessness: “I am not able to bear all this people alone” (verse 14). Here Moses states this burden to be “too *kabed* (heavy) for me.” Here “heavy” refers to the grievous nature of the responsibility upon Moses’ own soul. The term is used in a similar fashion concerning the grievous weight of sin (Ps. 38:4, Isa. 1:4).<sup>163</sup>

Added to this was an expressed desire to escape the burden: “If thou deal thus with me, kill me I pray” (verse 15). “This is the language of the discontent of despair, which differs from the murmuring of unbelief, in the fact that it is addressed to God, for the purpose of entreating help and deliverance from Him... Moses a weak man was wanting in the omnipotent power which alone could satisfy the crying of the people for flesh.”<sup>164</sup> The sense of Moses’ statement was a cry for his life to be forfeited. “Moses was not complaining about his office, but would stake his life for it if God did not relieve him in some way.”<sup>165</sup> Moses pleaded with God to remove him from viewing his own *rah* (wretchedness), a term describing his pain, unhappiness, and misery.<sup>166</sup> The leadership crisis facing Moses brought him to a life stalled by D.E.D.

In facing the severest of emotional despair, Moses cried out to God. The entire passage in review is a prayer of Moses: “And Moses said unto the Lord” (verse 11). It is significant to this study to understand the prayer of Moses as an admission of his personal pain as well as a petition for God to deliver him. Moses did not express his emotional pain with reservation, rather he boldly declared his hurt even to the extreme of blaming God for the burden as indicated by the *hiphel* of *ra’ah*.

God answered Moses’ burdened soul by multiplying the leadership so that the burden of the people would be shared (verse 17) and by providing quail for the people to have meat to eat (verse 31). In Moses’ D.E.D., he turned to God in prayer, cried to God to intercede, and was delivered. Moses was enabled by God to carry on the leadership, Moses was strengthened to bring God’s word boldly to the people (verse 24), to confidently welcome the prophesying of Eldad and Medad

(verse 29), and to bear the consequences of Miriam's and Aaron's rebellious attitude through intercessory prayer for them (Num. 12:13). Triumph was again found in a prayerful admission of weakness, and evident trust in God is once again repeated.

### *Testimony Concerning Joshua*

The burden of spiritual leadership among a disobedient people also led Joshua to struggle with Debilitating Emotional Despondency. Joshua chapter 7 records the consequences of Achan's disobedience in the victory at Jericho, which led to defeat at Ai and the loss of thirty-six lives. Joshua responded with humility and genuine grief before God: "Joshua rent his clothes and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord" (verse 6). The grief of loss of lives and loss of battle was compounded by their vulnerability in the midst of enemy territory. He feared that their defeat would stir the enemy to confidence and result in annihilation, as intimated in Joshua's prayer: "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" (Josh. 7:9).

The grief and fear, resulting from the harsh yet uncontrollable circumstances in which Joshua found himself in as leader, led to D.E.D. This state was expressed in verse 7 as a hopelessness resignation to 'abad (destruction). The *hiphil* use here means, to be destroyed as in the sense of Israel "perishing from the land" (as in Josh. 23:16).<sup>167</sup> This sense of hopelessness is affirmed in Joshua's belief that their name will be *karat* – "cut off" from the earth (verse 9).

Joshua, overcome by despair was speaking with words of weakness, diffidence, and distrust.<sup>168</sup> In this grief and fear, Joshua succumbs to another symptom of D.E.D., a wish of escape: "Would to God that we had been content and dwelt on the other side of Jordan" (verse 7b). In his struggle, Joshua had fallen to distress and feelings of dejection.<sup>169</sup>

Joshua's response to his D.E.D. was prayer. Here again, the nature of prayer was one of admission in acknowledging helplessness. Joshua's prayer was cumbered with his own state of despair and therefore more of a complaint than an expression of surrender. The Lord's stern reproof: "Get thee up. Up, sanctify the people" (verses 10, 13) indi-



cates that Joshua's emotional despair had debilitated him, rendering him to inappropriate inaction and doubting of God's own fidelity.<sup>170</sup> Nevertheless, God delivered Joshua and Israel through the reproof. Joshua was strengthened to rise up and lead the elders in humble surrender before God and to deliver God's discipline through his leadership (verses 16-26).

The Lord's words to Joshua "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" Verse 10 suggests that Joshua's mourning until evening (verse 6) was a call to duty, which had been forfeited to despair. As Matthew Henry points out, "God encourages Joshua against his present despondence, and the black and melancholy apprehensions."<sup>171</sup> Despite Joshua's succumbing to D.E.D., God led him to deliverance by revealing to him Israel's sin and necessary action. Compliance guaranteed God's support in battle and promised blessing. The pattern of triumph found in a prayerful admission of weakness and evident trust in God is once again evident.

### *Testimony Concerning Naomi*

Another Biblical record of an individual experiencing Debilitating Emotional Despondency through personal crisis is found in Ruth chapter 1. Because of the death of her husband and her sons, as well as want of means, Naomi fell into great emotional struggle. Naomi's pain is evident in her description of her state as one of *maw-rar* a Hebrew word used in verb and adverbial form "to express the emotional response to a destructive, heart-crushing situation."<sup>172</sup> The term is defined as a synonym for "much distressed."<sup>173</sup>

The depth of Naomi's emotional upheaval is evident in the three instances of this term's use: in comparison with her daughters-in-law (verse 12) as mentioned, to characterize her life as a chosen name for herself, and as God's own dealing with her (Ruth 2:20). Also significant to this text's description of Naomi's state is the use of the term *ra'ah* "afflicted" (verse 21). As in Numbers chapter 16 concerning Moses, the term describes a life-stalling state of emotional pain.

The feeling of hopelessness caused Naomi to send her daughters-in-law back to their families (verse 12). Naomi estimates her condition as more severe than her widowed daughters-in-law experienced. The text confirms her struggle with D.E.D. by magnifying her mournful lot

as God's hand turned against her.<sup>174</sup> The Scriptures are silent regarding Naomi's response to her suffering other than to leave Moab and return to Bethlehem. However, the fact that the story takes place during the time of the judges (Ruth 1:1) and that this time was characterized by "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 17:6, 21:5) is significant. God's presentation of the historical background, by way of introduction, suggests that Elimelech and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion may not have sought God's direction during the famine, but chose their own path, which led them out of Israel, and God's place of blessing, into Moab.

Naomi's return could be viewed as a return home where help from relatives would be probable, or it could be viewed as a return to following God's will by Naomi in anticipation of God's help. In the latter instance, Naomi's response to her D.E.D. would be a turning to God. Three facts affirm this second option as the case: (a) While in Moab, Naomi heard that the LORD had visited his people, giving them bread (Ruth 1:6). Therefore she returned seeking God's faithful help, (b) God supplied her with Ruth, a daughter-in-law that desired to follow after the God of Israel (verses 16-18) and who became her travel companion, eventually the focal point of meeting the family's needs, and (c) Naomi was able to recognize the goodness of God in dealing with their situation (Ruth 2:20).

Upon returning to Bethlehem and providing a kinsman redeemer, God not only met all physical needs, He also restored hope to Naomi. She responded: "Blessed be he of the LORD, who has not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead" (Ruth 2:20). In Naomi's D.E.D., she returned to God in trust, and found deliverance, great blessing, and a grateful heart.

### *Testimony Concerning Hannah*

Hannah's barrenness and consequent provocation by Peninnah were circumstances of personal crisis that resulted in Debilitating Emotional Despondency in Hannah's life. Elaborated on in 1 Samuel, Hannah's emotional struggle is described as a *yara*, "grieved" heart (verse 8). This term means, "to quiver in terror and distress."<sup>175</sup> Because it was Hannah's husband Ilkanah's description of her state, the term suggests a recognizable physical action such as a visible trem-

bling in weakness and disheartenedness.<sup>176</sup> This state of distress was severe enough to cause frequently repeated weeping, as suggested by the imperfect mood of *bakah* as well as cause a loss of appetite (verse 7).

Although Hannah's refusal to eat could have been a fast in accord with custom in such circumstances, the text gives no indication of such. Rather, the text suggests, "her grief took away her appetite."<sup>177</sup> Hannah's state was characterized by physical trembling, weeping and loss of appetite, as a result of the burden of barrenness. Her state is further described as *mar*, "bitterness" of *nephesh* "soul." The term *mar* is a derivative of *marar*, the term used to define Naomi's "afflicted" state. Here, the abbreviated derivative *mar* is used to express the emotional response to a destructive, heart-crushing situation.<sup>178</sup> These descriptive terms demonstrate that Hannah's D.E.D. was truly debilitating.

Hannah's response was prayer:

And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth (1 Sam. 1:10-12).

The character of Hannah's prayer is consistent with others traumatized by D.E.D. and turned to God for help. In her prayer was an admission of her distress, "look on the affliction." In her prayer was an expression of submission reflected in double use of '*amah* "thine handmaid," a term particularly denoting humility by the one speaking.<sup>179</sup> Her prayer was characterized by perseverance, "she continued praying" (verse 12), here the hiphil '*rabah* means, to pray much, or for a long time.<sup>180</sup> Her prayer expressed confidence by addressing God as "Lord of Hosts." This first appearance in prayer of this designation of God significantly attributes to God a confidence in His sovereign power, as the God-King of Israel (as in Ps. 5:8<sup>181</sup>), to "give her a child."

Hannah's prayer was also characterized by great sacrifice. She promised the Lord to give her son to Him "all the days of his life."

Considering that a common Levite did not ordinarily enter dutiful temple service until twenty-five or thirty years of age, and was not always serving, but was dismissed from it at fifty,<sup>182</sup> Hannah's vow was an expression of deep commitment and sacrifice. When experiencing her severe D.E.D., Hannah turned to the Lord and found deliverance. In God's promise through Eli that she would bear a child, Hannah found strength and peace: "So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad" (1 Sam. 1:18).

### *Testimony Concerning Elijah*

Elijah, struggling with the burden of spiritual leadership, also experienced a time of Debilitating Emotional Despondency. The result was a request to die. Elijah's struggles leading to his emotional trauma are detailed in Scripture. These struggles involved: a great spiritual victory over the Baal prophets (1 Kings 18:20-40), a time of wrestling with God in prayer for rain (1 Kings 18:41-45), a marathon run of sixteen miles (1 Kings 18:46), a confrontation with Queen Jezebel, in which his life was threatened (1 Kings 19:1-2), an escape to Beersheba which was a journey of at least another eighty-eight miles (1 Kings 19:3), and finally, another day's journey into the wilderness (1 Kings 19:4).

In the midst of these struggles, Elijah loses sight of the power of God to protect him. At a time when he had great reason to trust in the Lord, Elijah "arose, and went for his own life" (1 Kings 19:3). This phrase suggests that Elijah acted "according to his own soul, according to his own mind and will, not taking counsel of God, or any direction from him."<sup>183</sup> Elijah fell to fear of man and ran to save his own life.

Because of these struggles, Elijah became emotionally and physically drained. Scripture records Elijah's fatigue-wrought emotional collapse: "He requested for himself that he might die" (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah's D.E.D. led him to retreat from social contact in leaving his servant and traveling alone into the wilderness (verses 3-4). In this state, he expressed feelings of self-doubt in *stating*, "I am not better than my fathers" (verse 4). Elijah's emotional struggle brought a sense of hopeless defeat because of overwhelming circumstances. This he expressed by his cry to God--*rab* "It is enough," implying excess, a situation "too much to bear."<sup>184</sup>

Nevertheless, in expressing his own emotional pain, Elijah did turn in prayer to God. His prayer was an escape-focused request to be free from this burden: “He requested for himself that he might die” (verse 4a). Here Elijah was intimating that he had lived long enough, even as long as he desired; and he had done as much work for God as he thought he had to do; he supposed his service and usefulness were at an end, and therefore desired his removal as suggested by “for I am not better than my fathers” (verse 4b). This desire “was not so much to be with God, as to be rid of the troubles of life.”<sup>185</sup>

In his prayer, Elijah acknowledged his own weakness and dependency on God. Seemingly, Elijah’s prayer was his final surrender into the hands of God, truly desiring the escape to peace that death would bring. Elijah’s next response to this emotionally and physically drained condition, probably out of necessity rather than choice, was to sleep. Once again God answered the cry of one of His servants held in the bondage of D.E.D. God first addressed Elijah’s physical needs, providing food and allowing continued rest (1 Kings 19:1-8).

After physical rest and nourishment supplied by an angel (verse 5), Elijah was strengthened for a forty-day journey to Mt. Horeb. Here Elijah’s despair is still evident. He expresses a sense of hopelessness by seeing all his zeal for God as amounting to nothing (verse 10),<sup>186</sup> and by magnifying the circumstances in his own mind—“I alone am left, and they seek to take my life” (verse 10). These words expressed the greatest sense of despair, whereby in this gloomy state of mind Elijah could not see the faithfulness of God or any vestiges of God’s true worshipers.<sup>187</sup> Nevertheless, God, by a still small voice (verse 12), reassured Elijah of His presence and prompted Elijah to carry on his ministry through the promise of replacement (verse 16) and the assurance that he was not alone (verse 18).

To the extent that Elijah found deliverance from his emotional struggle, the Scriptures are silent. However, the fact that God strengthened him sufficiently to be free from the debilitation of D.E.D. is evident in his continued ministry until delivered from earth. The pattern of triumph found in a prayerful admission of weakness and evident trust in God is once again evident.

### *Testimony Concerning Ahab*

Another instance of Debilitating Emotional Despondency is evident in King Ahab. His emotional anguish was truly self-inflicted. As 1 Kings 21:1-4 indicates, because of Ahab's greed and pride, he could not bear being denied Naboth's vineyard. His response to this denial was to return home *sar*, "heavy" and *za'eph*, "displeased."

The Hebrew adjective *sar*, "heavy," is used in Scripture only of King Ahab (1 Kings 20:43, 1 Kings 21: 4,5). Meaning rebellious or stubborn, the term describes Ahab's "psychological condition as being sullen and aggravated."<sup>188</sup> The unique use of this adjective in describing Ahab suggests that the pattern of his life, in response to rebuke from God for disobedience (1 Kings 20), and in response to refusal from Naboth regarding the vineyard, is to be led by a stubborn will and an unreasoning mind.

The Hebrew adjective *za'eph* completes the picture of the soul-led life, defining Ahab as also being led by feelings of rage, as a storm within the soul. The root of this term means "to storm," "to rage against." The term is used in Jon. 1:15 of the raging sea, and in Prov. 19:3 of the fool who finds ruin in an unreasonable rage in his heart against God. This inner rage dominated Ahab's life.<sup>189</sup> This emotional state was so pronounced that Jezebel recognized it in Ahab's countenance (verse 5). Because of a soul-led life, Ahab fell into the bondage of D.E.D. expressed in 1 Kings 21:4: "And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread."

Ahab withdrew from social contact by retreating to his bed. In describing his withdrawal, the *hiphil* imperfect of *sabab* implies avoidance as to avoid a battle or as to turn away eyes<sup>190</sup> and suggests the desire of escape was foremost. Ahab also suffered from loss of appetite. Clearly, his depressive state affected his life by dramatically debilitating his activity.

In a similar pattern to Cain's D.E.D. leading to murder, Ahab's D.E.D. led to the murder of Naboth and the taking of Naboth's vineyard. God's assessment of Ahab's greed and despondency is significant: "Thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD" (1 Kings 21:20). This suggests that Ahab "allowed sin to acquire the unchecked and habitual mastery" over him,<sup>191</sup> and Amade himself a perfect slave to his lusts, and was as much at their beck and command.<sup>192</sup>

Like Cain, Ahab succumbed to the self-led life. God's judgment was severe: "Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisses against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel" (Gen. 21:21). Unlike Cain, Ahab repented, humbling himself before God in sackcloth, fasting and mourning. As a result, the Lord spared Ahab of seeing the judgment upon his household in his days. Scripture is silent as to Ahab's deliverance from his emotional turmoil. However, in light of the severe judgment upon his household, it would seem that the phrase *halak at* "went about softly" (1 Kings 21:27) could describe the remainder of Ahab's life as one of wandering in misery, mourning, and grief.<sup>193</sup> Therefore, deliverance from D.E.D. seems unlikely.

#### *Testament Concerning Hezekiah*

King Hezekiah fell seriously ill. Upon hearing the news that his sickness would end in death, and perhaps weakened by the illness, King Hezekiah fell into Debilitating Emotional Despondency. With identical terms and grammatical structure noted regarding Ahab, the posture of avoidance, expressed in "turning away the face" is also descriptive of Hezekiah, recorded in 2 Kings 20:1. Two additional and contributing factors may have influenced Hezekiah's emotional despair: his father died when he was about his age, or even two or three years younger,<sup>194</sup> and the Assyrian army was besieging the city (2 Kings 20:6). The combination of these factors undoubtedly weighed heavily on Hezekiah's mind bringing unsettledness and contributed to his personal emotional instability.

His attempted escape by avoidance was accompanied by *bakah* "weeping" (2 Kings 20:3), implying a bitter weeping in the same fashion as Hannah.<sup>195</sup> This is further described as *gadawl*, sore. This term, having as its root *gadal*, meaning to magnify, to be intense,<sup>196</sup> suggests an intense, loud, uncontrolled weeping!<sup>197</sup>

Hezekiah's response to this emotional state was to seek the Lord in prayer: "I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight" (2 Kings 20:3). This was not a prayer of self-righteousness; rather, the focus of his prayer was evidently directed to the promise made to David and his successors on the throne

(1 Kings 8:25)<sup>198</sup> and a claim for God to honor His word to Hezekiah because he had kept the condition required to the extent that human frailty allowed.<sup>199</sup> The spirit of the prayer was one of acknowledgment of weakness as well as dependence and trust toward God. As a result, Hezekiah was delivered from his sickness by healing and, as a consequence, delivered from his D.E.D., as evidenced in his enthusiastic attention given to Berodach-Baladan in showing off his entire kingdom (2 Kings 20:12-13). The pattern of triumph found in a prayerful admission of weakness and evident trust in God is repeated here.

### *Testimony Concerning Job*

In Job, there is a distinct state of Debilitating Emotional Dependency expressed in a wish never to have existed. He curses the day he was born (Job 3:3), desiring that it would never have been. Job curses his life in a fourfold manner: his survival in his mother's womb (Job 3:10), life at birth (Job 3:11), his survival through infancy (Job 3:12a), and childhood (Job 3:12b).

These curses are an expression of desired escape from the incomprehensible dilemma that weighed on Job's mind. His emotional struggle is not due solely to his loss of family and fortune, nor his lost health. These Job responded to in trusting acceptance as evident in Job 1:21 and Job 2:10. Rather, Job's despair becomes debilitating when he looks at God through his affliction. Job sinks into despair when he sees himself forgotten, forsaken, and rejected of God (19:7-10).<sup>200</sup>

Job's D.E.D. led him to desire the escape that nonexistence would have brought and which death and the grave would now bring (Job 3:20-21). Job refers to his life of *amel*, "misery," referring to his suffering,<sup>201</sup> to his *tsar* "anguish" of spirit (Job 7:11), and to his *mar* "bitterness" in soul (3:20, 7:11, 10:1, 21:5). This is the term used by Naomi to express her deep turmoil. This root plus its various derivatives appears more frequently in Job than any other Old Testament book. Here it expresses "the emotional response to a destructive, heart crushing situation."<sup>202</sup> This is the obsession of a troubled soul in a state of total life despair. It expresses a desire that life had never begun, an escape that would remove existence itself, along with all life's woes. Poole suggests that this contemplation of death is to be viewed as:



...strong expostulations with God, and quarreling with His providence [as a man] ... in grievous agonies, being not only under most violent, and yet continual, torments of body, but also under great disquietments of mind, and the deep sense of God's displeasure... [The result being a] despairing, sinful contemplation of the deliverance from all struggle that death would afford.<sup>203</sup>

In his D.E.D., Job sees his way hidden and God hedging him in. This sense of lostness without any means of escape in sight expresses itself in deep feelings of hopelessness.<sup>204</sup> Such struggle affects Job's whole being with *anachah* "sighing" (3:24). This is defined as physical and mental groaning in distress,<sup>205</sup> and is expressed as *sheh-aw-gaw'* "roarings" (3:24), suggesting a loud, deep rumbling cry as a lion, but out of disquietness of heart.<sup>206</sup> This is the heart's cry because of personal agony as David foretold of the Messiah's suffering in Ps. 22:1.

In Job's distress at seeing himself forsaken and rejected by God, he sinks into the symptoms of D.E.D. seen in Scripture. He senses hopelessness, desires escape even to the point of death, withdraws into solitude and silence (2:13), and groans physically and mentally in anguish (23:2), and has no interest in food (6:5-7). In the midst of Job's struggle and while dealing with the false advice and erroneous counsel of his friends, his trust in God remains his response to the emotional despair. Job never denounces God; rather, his faith in God's character holds with a bold statement of trust: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (13:15). Even though Job prays for death so that he did not have to experience this suffering, he holds to his promise of integrity. He states: "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit" (27:3-4). He continues to trust the outcome of his afflictions to God, "But he knows the way that I take: when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

Job's final prayer to God affirms his own weaknesses, "I uttered that I understood not" (42:3), and expresses his humble resign, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:6), while confessing his trust in the power and justice of God, "I know that you can do everything, and that no thought can be withheld from thee" (42:2). In Job's D.E.D. and great trial, he looked with faith toward God. As a result, he was delivered by God and, "the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more

than his beginning” (42:12). The pattern of triumph found in a prayerful admission of weakness and evident trust in God is once again repeated.

### *Testimony Concerning David*

Three times in the Psalms, David specifically cries out “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?” (Ps. 42:5,11; Ps. 43:5). Repeatedly, David refers to the state of his soul-*nephesh*. His soul is “cast-down.” This state is defined in Hebrew with the Hithpa’el form of *shachach*, which means, “to be despairing, to be brought low.”<sup>207</sup> This state is described as the heavy depression resulting from God hiding his face;<sup>208</sup> a depressed spirit;<sup>209</sup> withdrawing as a mourner in deep groaning;<sup>210</sup> the spasm of despondency.<sup>211</sup> The terminology used here expresses an extraordinarily accurate picture of spiritual depression.<sup>212</sup>

David’s soul is disquieted. He defines this state in the Hebrew *qal* form as *hamah*. This is a strong word emphasizing unrest, commotion, strong feeling,<sup>213</sup> and suggests a groaning in distress, a lamentation.<sup>214</sup> These two words are terms expressing deep emotional distress accompanied by crying (Ps. 42:3), as well as by a sense of inner separation from God (Ps. 42:2). A hopeless abandonment (Ps. 43:2) to the unrelenting trouble as “waves” and “billows” which overcome him (Ps. 42:7), is also evident.<sup>215</sup>

As earlier stated, each of these Psalms also makes reference to coming before God: “when shall I come and appear before God” (Ps. 42:2), “bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Ps. 43:3). The importance of these references lies in establishing the sense of the Old Testament writers when referring to escaping while in a state of D.E.D. Whether by referring to “appearing before God” as here indicated, or by other expressions of escapism such as preferred death statements (Rachel, Jonah, Elijah), or “be somewhere else statements” (David), reference to some escape is common; and the views vary.

In the texts of Psalm 43, it is suggested that David’s use of the plural “tabernacles” is significant. The plural use of this term in the Psalms suggests a focus on the promise of God’s future reign from Zion, the city of God, as evident in other Psalms:

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High (Ps. 46:4).

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

My soul longs, yea, even faints for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh cries out for the living God (Ps. 84:1).

They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appears before God (Ps. 84:7).

This focus suggests a contemplation of deliverance not attainable in present life but one longed for as the promise of God in establishing His kingdom and future reign evident in the minds of God's faithful, as indicated by Hebrews chapter 11. Here this fact is supported by the declaration that Abraham, among the list of those honored in Hebrews chapter 11 for their faith, "looked for a city, which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). It is significant that David, along with Abraham, is mentioned among the faithful of Heb. 11 (verse 32), of whom it is said, "they obtained a good report through faith, receiving not the promise" (Heb. 11:32). Therefore, the focus on entering into God's presence can be interpreted as a contemplation of death's deliverance from present troubles. "The all-important thing for him is not the visible sanctuary as such but the assurance of being received and accepted by God."<sup>216</sup>

Nevertheless, the reference to appearing before God could refer to worship at the established tabernacles in Jerusalem and Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:37, 39).<sup>217</sup> "The meaning of these two verses simply is, that David preferred to all the enjoyments, riches, pleasures, and honors of this world, the opportunity of access to the sanctuary, that in this way he might cherish and strengthen his faith and piety by the exercises prescribed in the Law."<sup>218</sup> Whether referring to a desire to be delivered from the pressing circumstances by entering into the available tabernacles, or referring to a desire to be delivered from the pressing circumstances through the promise of eternal bliss enjoyed in the presence of God that death would bring, David's emphasis is on a desire to escape. His focus is to deliverance from the circumstances causing such despair and find rest and peace from God.

Four other significant expressions of D.E.D. by David are found in the Psalms: "My heart is sore pained within me" (Ps. 55:4);

Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul” (Ps. 69:1); “My spirit was overwhelmed within me” (Ps. 142:3); “My spirit [is] overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate” (Ps. 143:4). Psalm 55 is examined independently under “Special Bible Texts Dealing with Depression,” in which David’s approach to this emotional dilemma will be reviewed in detail. It is sufficient for this chapter to recognize that the phrase cited above is David’s description of D.E.D. It is significant that Psalms 55 includes the symptoms of depression: hopelessness, weeping, audible-groaning, and degrees of escapism.

In Psalm 69 David also refers to the low state of his *nephesh*, soul. “Sorrows, deep, abounding, deadly, had penetrated his inner nature.”<sup>219</sup> The term *soul*, without the term *spirit* refers to the “center of man’s mental, emotional, and volitional activities.”<sup>220</sup> The soul is here overcome by *mayim*, ‘the waters of distress’<sup>221</sup> which, is as a figure of speech indicating calamities that come on like a flood and drag one into their vortex.<sup>222</sup>

David describes his state in terms of deep Debilitating Emotional Despondency: “I sink in deep mire”; in terms of helplessness: “there is no standing”; and in terms of unrelenting trouble without any view of escape: “deep waters where floods overflow me” (verse 2). This deep emotional state affected David physically. He experienced constant crying, with dehydration and with exhaustion, expressed in the failure of his vision (verse 3).

David’s use of “spirit” (*roo’-akh*) without (*nephesh*) “soul” in Psalms 142 and 143 suggests reference to the total immaterial function of man as described earlier in this study. In each text, the state of spirit is described in Hebrew by the *hithpael* form of *ataph* translated “overwhelmed.” This form of the term specifically means, “to be feeble, to faint.”<sup>223</sup> It implies a languishing of man’s innermost being in a state of exhausted strength,<sup>224</sup> thus indicating a state of deep emotional struggle. By use of the terms *leb* “heart,” (*nephesh*) “soul,” and (*roo’-akh*) “spirit,” accompanied with personal descriptions of his state, David describes his experience.

Clearly, this state of despair describes the experience of D.E.D. that affected David to the point of limiting his normal activities and physical health. Yet in each of these cited Psalms expressing David’s

emotional pain, there is a plea for help and a prayer of hope and confidence in God. An example of this is Psalm 142:7: "Bring my soul out of prison, That I may praise Your name; The righteous shall surround me, For You shall deal bountifully with me."

*Testimony Concerning Jeremiah*

Jeremiah is another example of a Bible character whose circumstances brought on struggles with Debilitating Emotional Despondency (Jer. 20:14-18). Like Job, by cursing the day he was born "the prophet teaches us here that he was not only opposed by enemies, but also distressed inwardly in his mind, so that he was carried away contrary to reason and judgment, by turbulent emotions."<sup>225</sup> According to Biblical record, various circumstances contributed to Jeremiah's emotional struggle. He was physically weakened by beatings and imprisonment (20:1-2), his trusted friends turned against him (20:10), and his faithful declaration of the Word of God resulted in personal *kher-paw*, 'reproach' and *keh'-les*, "derision" (20:8), terms meaning to be taunted and scorned, mocked and scoffed.<sup>226</sup>

Jeremiah's life was reduced to shackles, to ridicule and to disgrace. These circumstances led to Jeremiah's bout of D.E.D. expressed in the language of hopelessness, the result being, like Job, that Jeremiah entertains a despairing, sinful contemplation of the deliverance from all struggle that death would afford: "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed" (Jer. 20:14).

Henry suggests that the cursing of his birthday expressed the despair of "the ferment he had been in while he was in the stocks, out of which by faith and hope he had recovered himself."<sup>227</sup> Others suggest that he presents a picture of what his wounded spirit had been previous to his deliverance "to show how great the deliverance was."<sup>228</sup> Jeremiah clearly struggled with ungodly thoughts of ingratitude and bitterness prior to his victory. The point to be recognized is that the prophet, in his state of emotional struggle, relates how "grievously he had been harassed by his own thoughts,"<sup>229</sup> even to remorse for his life.

The order of the text is unique. In contrast to any other Bible reference to the sufferings of those struggling with D.E.D., Jeremiah begins with a complaint to God for leading him into a stressful ministry of the Word. He prays: "O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was

deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocks me” (verse 7). Following this Jeremiah expresses trust in God and confidence in deliverance from his enemies; “But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail” (verse 11).

Nevertheless, Jeremiah ends his prayer on a note of overwhelming D.E.D. by denouncing his significant life experiences: “Cursed be the day” (verses 14 through 18). The severe depth of Jeremiah’s despair is evident. Jeremiah was not only opposed by enemies but also distressed inwardly in his mind so that he was carried away contrary to reason and judgment by turbulent emotions, which even led him to give utterance to vile blasphemies.<sup>230</sup> Keil suggests, “the curse on the day of birth closes with a sigh at the wretchedness of life, without any hint that he again rises to new joyful faith.”<sup>231</sup> Like Job, this is the obsession of a troubled, a soul in a state of total life despair expressing a desire that life had never begun.

This passage reflects a consistent pattern of prayer, which affirms the admission of weakness and faith in God to deliver, even though the order is confusing. Varying and often opposing views have been presented to explain how Jeremiah could go from thanksgiving to cursing in virtually the same breath. Scripture appears silent as to any other response by Jeremiah to his emotional turmoil. Nevertheless, Scripture gives the testimony of Jeremiah’s continued ministry for the next approximately 16 years. This was a journey from his imprisonment by Pashhur [20:2], sometime nearing the end of Egyptian control under King Jehoiakim, 609-597 B.C., to his ministry conclusion in 580 B.C. The testimony confirms the Lord’s strength and Jeremiah’s victory, if only to forbear over D.E.D. God indeed was with Jeremiah “as a mighty terrible one” (20:11).

God’s unique call to Jeremiah to bear the ministry of the Word to an obstinate and rebellious people wrought a heavy toll on the prophet’s emotional state. This is borne out clearly in Jeremiah’s Lamentations, written soon after Jerusalem’s destruction in 586 B.C., which closes with a similar paradox of praise and gloom: “Thou, O LORD, remainest forever; thy throne from generation to generation. Wherefore dost thou forget us forever, and forsake us so long a time? Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.

But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us” (Lam. 5:19-22).

### *Testimony Concerning Jonah*

Another Old Testament record of self-inflicted Debilitating Emotional Despondency expressed in escapism is found in the life of the prophet Jonah (Jon. 4:3). Jonah’s emotional dilemma is clearly the result of a self-imposed burden. He pronounces himself completely out of sympathy with God’s grace. Jonah’s prayerful response was not typical of others who confessed weakness and expressed faith. In contrast, Jonah arrogantly claimed his own word as correct and implied that God’s grace toward Nineveh was wrong (4:2). Jonah had sunk into D.E.D., and succumbed to despair, feeling he can no longer represent God.<sup>232</sup> He became hostage to his anger (4:9), which led to the emotional bondage whereby he preferred death to responsibility. He was not free from blame in hastily wishing to die outside of God’s will for the one who hastens to death with so great an ardor no doubt offends God.<sup>233</sup> The focus of Jonah’s desire to escape was his displeasure with the circumstances in which God had placed him. Jonah was quarreling with God<sup>234</sup> in selfish displeasure! This self-centered, soul-led life resulted in his D.E.D. In this state, Jonah withdrew in solitude and succumbed to *rah*, grief (4:5).

The Hebrew word *rah* reflects the physical pain of exposure to the sun as well as the emotional pain descriptive of despair.<sup>235</sup> In giving way to his dispute with God, Jonah ended up in a struggle with D.E.D. The text ends with an appropriate contrast of Jonah, left in his gloom, while God expresses His grace; “And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand” (Jon. 4:11). Jonah missed the point. While he brooded over his misery and the misfortune of losing his shade (confirming in his mind that nothing could go right for him), God, by grace, delivered a city from destruction and could, by similar grace, deliver him.

### *Testimony Concerning Judas*

Another Bible example of a life burdened with Debilitating Emotional Despondency is found in Judas Iscariot. While the apostle’s

treasurer, his greed had led him to steal (John 12:6) and eventually to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26: 15). When Judas realized that the consequences of his actions resulted in the condemning of Jesus, he repented (*metamelomai*).

This term simply expresses regret, merely an emotional change, in contrast to *metanoeo*, which refers to a true change of heart, reflected in a reversal of moral purpose.<sup>236</sup> Judas did not repent of the sin of betrayal, nor of the greed that led to betrayal; rather, he felt remorse for the consequences of sin leading to the judgment against Jesus.<sup>237</sup> Judas did not seek God in humble prayer, nor did he acknowledge his sin in true repentance, nor did he affirm his weakness, nor did he express any faith in God to deliver.

This feeling of remorse caused Judas to attempt to make personal amends by returning the silver (Matt. 27:3). However, he could not escape the D.E.D. that gripped him. His sense of guilt (Matt. 27:4) resulted in his suicide (Matt. 27:5). This was “the act of a desperate man”<sup>238</sup> “unable to cope with the despair of remorse and guilt.”<sup>239</sup>

### *Testimony Concerning Jesus*

The Biblical records Jesus’ experience with Debilitating Emotional Despondency while facing the cross. This merits full quotation: Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered (Heb. 5:7-8).

The text reminds the reader that the incarnation of Christ (“days of his flesh”) rendered God’s Son susceptible to the full experiences of humanity including D.E.D. defined for this research study as the emotional state of dejection of spirits, or disheartedness of soul, making no distinction in the severity of that state. Yet Jesus did not succumb to this emotional struggle, despite its severity. The depth of Jesus’ emotional pain is evident with the two unique words used for Jesus’ actions, “prayers” and “supplications.” The term *deesis*, translated “prayers,” refers to prayers imploring God’s aid while giving “prominence to the expression of personal need.”<sup>240</sup> The term *hiketeria* “supplications,” used only here in Scripture means, “to entreat for aid.”<sup>241</sup> The



root meaning of this word pictures imploring aid by extending an olive branch to one able to meet a need.<sup>242</sup>

Each of these terms in reference to Jesus imply humble, lowly pleading<sup>243</sup> and are accompanied by “strong crying and tears”—verse 7, referring to loud pleas and weeping “expressing the intensity of the prayers and so the keenness of the suffering.”<sup>244</sup> In Matthew’s account of the garden scene, Jesus expressed the extent of this sorrow with the phrase “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). Jesus’ choice of the term *perilupos* “exceedingly sorrowful” is significant in that it expresses “affliction beyond measure.”<sup>245</sup>

The full extent of Jesus’ experience with D.E.D. is further explained in the Gospel of Luke: “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). In this text, the term *agonee’ah* describes Jesus’ state. This is a term referring to severe mental struggles and emotions reflecting agony, anguish.<sup>246</sup> This affliction was so intense that “his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” The phrase “great drops of blood” describes Jesus’ physical reaction to the severe agony.

The aorist indicative form of the verb *ginomai*, used with the adverb *hosei*, presents an illustrative comparison such as found in Matt. 28:4 where the tomb guards “became as dead men.” Yet, because of the detailed graphic nature of the description here, this is understood as a real physical reaction whereby “the tiny blood vessels of the skin are ruptured and permit blood to mingle with sweat.”<sup>247</sup> Whether Jesus reacted physically with intense sweat or sweat mingled with blood is textually debatable; however, this does not alter the point of the text, which emphasizes the severity of emotional trauma provoking physical reaction.

Within the framework of humanity, Jesus, before the cross, experienced D.E.D. Both in the Gospel records and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Scripture conveys this experience in the severest of New Testament terms, evidencing the intensity of affliction upon body and soul. Although the circumstances of the impending cross, wrought in Jesus the deepest emotional agony, He did not succumb to His emotions as others did. Although this must be contributed to His divine nature, in light of the Biblical evidence that others did not succumb to

D.E.D. as well, the victory must also be seen as an obedient and dependent heart expressed in trust through prayer. Jesus prayed, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup from Me, nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done” (Lu. 22:42).

Christ’s withdrawal to the garden was for the purpose of prayer. His cries and pleas were bathed in earnest trust of God’s provision and complete surrender to the Father’s will. Although the emotional pain that Jesus experienced was a part of His *pascho*, “suffering,” as the term denotes,<sup>248</sup> the writer of Hebrews indicates that Jesus’ victory over this emotional struggle was through trusting obedience to the Father’s will: “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he sufferer” (Heb. 5:8).

Scripture clearly states that Jesus was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). To be touched with all human infirmities must include, together with external evils, the feelings of the souls such as fear, sorrow, the dread of death, and similar things.<sup>249</sup> To be tempted “in all points” means that He was subjected to all the kinds of trials to which man can be. He was tempted in the literal sense; he was persecuted, he was poor, he was despised, he suffered bodily pain, he endured the sorrows of a lingering and cruel death, and he was wrought with the emotional turmoil of facing the cross.<sup>250</sup> There was no latent sin in Jesus to be stirred by temptation, and no habits of sin to be overcome. But, he did have “infirmities,” or weaknesses (*astheneia*), common to our human nature (hunger, thirst, weariness, etc.).<sup>251</sup> Heb. 4:15 and Heb. 5:7-8 indicate that the emotional struggle Jesus experienced before the cross involved all the full measure of impact that any human could experience. It further illustrates the potential avenue of victory over emotional struggle, which any believer determined to walk by faith, can experience to keep one from falling into the sin of bondage to D.E.D.

### *Testimony Concerning Paul*

A victory such as Jesus had is also evident in the life of the apostle Paul. The testimony of Paul’s experience with emotional upheaval is particularly evident in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. This epistle, along with David’s Psalm 55, offer two special Bible texts

dealing with Debilitating Emotional Despondency. There is a significant passage in 2 Corinthians that expresses the experience of Paul and reveals God's perspective on this human dilemma with clarity. In the midst of many conflicts and trials revealed in 2 Corinthians, Paul, by the inspiration of Scripture, declared the essence of experiencing D.E.D. without falling into bondage to it:

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4:6-11).

In this passage Paul, by the use of four clauses, powerfully expresses his extreme suffering along with his experienced victory. Each clause follows the similar pattern of a passive participle, expressing an aspect of suffering, which is contrasted by "but not," followed by another passive participle more severe than the first.

At the same time, each of the two paired participles expresses a suffering more extreme than the corresponding participle in the line preceding it. The trend in the development of severity of suffering is expressed in Paul Barnett's translation: "afflicted .but not trapped," "bewildered .but not in despair," "persecuted .but not forsaken," and "felled .but not destroyed."<sup>252</sup>

Here, Paul expresses many of the stresses of life, both physical and emotional. He was troubled. This is a term from "*thlibo*," which means, to "experience pressures brought about by persecution and mental anguish."<sup>253</sup> He was perplexed. Here the term used is from "*poreuomai*," which means, "to be in doubt, not knowing which way to turn."<sup>254</sup> He was persecuted. The term used is from "*dioko*," which means, "to be persecuted, or be mistreated."<sup>255</sup> And, he was cast down. This term, from "*kataballo*," literally means, to throw to the ground

and implies both physical blows dealt by force,<sup>256</sup> as well as the demoralizing impact of adverse circumstances.

Yet Paul declares triumph over each. The emphasis is, for each word expressing what Paul was experiencing in life, there is a corresponding phrase for the power of God he was also experiencing. “Paul was not... distressed, despairing, forsaken, destroyed.”<sup>257</sup> Even in stressful times of physical distress and D.E.D., God faithfully sustained Paul. Through the sustaining power of God, Paul found victory in not succumbing to these physical and emotional stresses.

It is important to note that this passage follows Paul’s confession of 1:8. He admitted being weighed down “beyond their power, “and “utterly destitute of measures or resources.” In this state, he renounced all hope, “showing the despondency in its final result of despair,”<sup>258</sup> thus emphasizing the deep extent of this D.E.D. Paul’s second clause of 4:8 “perplexed, but not in despair (*exaporeomai*)” is not a contradiction of 1:8, but a revelation. There was the greater anxiety and perplexity, so that Paul did not know what to do, yet he had confidence in God that all would end well.<sup>259</sup> These verses elaborate the contrast between the frail body, vexed and harassed on all sides, and the divine power which not only sustains him, but enables him to rise above the experiences and triumph.

The key to Paul’s triumph is his reference to “the treasure in earthen vessels” (4:7), which was “the knowledge of the glory of God” (4:6) securing a relationship with the living God whereby “the excellency of the power may be of God” (4:7). Paul here and elsewhere sees that God’s power is available in human weakness; indeed that human weakness is an opportunity for God to manifest His power (4:11, 12:9).<sup>260</sup> This demonstrates the same triumph over D.E.D. evidenced in Christ and is the essence of God’s perspective on dealing with the emotional struggle.

The concept brought out in Paul’s testimony is that all the stresses of life, including emotional upheaval, can be faced in the power of God without falling into the sin of bondage to them. This is the essence of overcoming D.E.D. that is examined in detail in later chapters.

*Conclusion*

In both the Old Testament and New Testament and among both believers and unbelievers, there is evidence of debilitating emotional despondency. Many of these people succumbed to their despondency, never finding relief. Others found strength to endure and carry on with their responsibilities, still others found deliverance. The same D.E.D. of these O.T. and N.T. people is evident in the life of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane as He faced the coming of the cross. Nevertheless, He too found strength to endure and fulfill His Father's will.

(A summary of the "Biblical Testimonies of Debilitating Emotional Despondency" is charted in appendix A.)

***Quest Four:***

**To discover a Biblical definition of  
Debilitating Emotional Depression and its  
relationship to modern day Clinical Depression:  
Is depression really addressed in the Bible?**

## CHAPTER 5

*"I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation." David.*

### CAPTURING A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF DEBILITATING EMOTIONAL DESPONDENCY

The Scriptures contain much information regarding Debilitating Emotional Despondency. This fact is in evidence by the Biblical research findings of this study. The summary of these findings answers the need for a study that will meaningfully define the emotional struggles, identify symptoms, and outline a response to them, all from Biblical testimony. The study of related terms, theological considerations, testimonies of Bible characters, and specific texts offers much data. This Biblical data, which indicates Debilitating Emotional Despondency is acknowledged in the Scriptures, can be summarized generally.

#### A Theological Summary of D.E.D.

As part of God's creative design, man is an emotional being. As to the emotional aspect of man being able to sense anguish prior to the fall, Scripture is silent. However, the fact remains that Jesus, God's Son and a man without a fallen nature, did experience Debilitating Emotional Despondency--defined in this study as the emotional state of disheartedness of soul, making no distinction in the severity of that state and carrying no allusions to, nor presuppositions about its cause, or its course, with respect to sin. This truth suggests the depth of God's creative design of the emotional aspect of man, after God's own likeness. Therefore, Debilitating Emotional Despondency in itself is not sin, but as Psalm 55 indicates, it is pain. Jesus, who experienced this pain, was without sin (Heb. 4:15).

It is evident that the fall of man affected his whole being with the curse of death (Gen. 2:17, Rom. 5:12). Scripture clearly relates this curse of death to physical separation of the spirit from the body (2 Cor. 2:5, Heb. 9:27) as well as the separation of the spirit from relationship with God, even at birth (John 3:6, Rom. 8:9). It is important to recognize that the curse of death affected the "soul" of man as well. That

man, in his fallen state, is born flawed of soul--the seat of intellect, emotion, and volition--seems evident. The Scripture defines the wisdom of man as foolishness (1 Cor. 3:19), the choices of man as leading to destruction (Prov. 16:25), and, as this research data indicates, the emotional framework of man as unstable, subject to worry, fear, and therefore susceptible to falling into bondage to Debilitating Emotional Despondency. Man's death of the "soul" appears to be the missing "anchor" of relationship to God that can only be restored through salvation (Heb. 6:19).

Therefore, Debilitating Emotional Despondency, as evidenced in Scripture, has the potential to lead people to a "soul-led" or "self-led" life and to bind people to such a life. The *soul-led life* is that life whereby an individual *allows* his/her intellect, emotions, or will to govern the reaction to "pain of heart" rather than allowing the Spirit of God to lead. Therefore, the soul-led life is a wrong response to life's difficulties.

At this point, where the soul-led life is *allowed*, one is outside God's will and in sin. Scripture verifies that a self-centered life that is soul-led in contrast to a God-centered life that is Spirit-led, can lead to being in bondage to Debilitating Emotional Despondency. However, there is also Scriptural evidence to indicate that even individuals whose lives are God-centered can still experience Debilitating Emotional Despondency. The majority of Bible characters experiencing this struggle did so as a result of stressful circumstances either outside their control or known to be God's will for them, even as all manner of pain was God's will for His Son (Isa. 53:10-11).<sup>261</sup> The Bible demonstrates that this emotional dilemma, which can lead to sin, can also lead to a dependence upon and affirmation of surrender to God's will, as evident in Jesus and other Bible characters. The Bible also indicates that when people allow themselves to be led into sin by emotional struggle, restoration is possible. Returning to God, as is the case with Hezekiah, David and others is the means.

The Biblical data also indicates that victory over Debilitating Emotional Despondency can be a restoration of emotional peace and joy such as the case with Naomi, Hannah, and David. As well, Scripture indicates that deliverance can simply be a sustaining strength to continue with responsibilities despite the pain, such as the case with



Elijah and Jeremiah. The Bible data also affords opportunity to make a comparative summary.

#### A Comparative Analysis of D.E.D.

As discovered in this study, the Scriptures are very thorough in addressing the state of Debilitating Emotional Despondency. Not only does the Word of God give incite through expressive terms, but the testimonies of Bible characters add to understanding as well. From the descriptions of Bible characters experiencing this emotional turmoil, a comparative analysis indicates a measure of commonality. This commonality is evident in the causes of D.E.D.

#### *Commonality of Causes of Debilitating Emotional Despondency*

These causes fall into two classifications; those who experience D.E.D. because of *sinful choices*, and those who experience D.E.D. because of *stressful circumstances*. Within these general classifications, Scripture indicates a broad spectrum of causes of Debilitating Emotional Despondency.

For some, such as Rachel and Hannah, the stress was founded upon social expectations such as child bearing. Here the cultural environment of the day was a major factor in creating pressure. For others, such as Elijah and Hezekiah, the great contributing factor of stress appeared to be physical and emotional exhaustion. Moses, Joshua, and Paul fell to the weight of the stress of leadership. Here worry for others, concern about God's honor and purposes, as well as high personal expectations undoubtedly entered into the equation. In these cases it was often the appearance of obstacles to perceived goals or unfulfilled anticipated blessings that prompted the emotional response. Zeal in the face of delay or detour deeply stirred the hearts of these men.

Another contributing factor to the stress causing D.E.D. was overwhelming grief. Hagar grieved for the imminent death of her son; Jacob grieved for the loss of his favorite child, Job grieved for the loss of all his children. There is Biblical record of many who grieved the loss of loved ones; nevertheless, these in particular, bore a grief that deeply interrupted their lives and led to severe D.E.D.

As to those who suffered as a result of sinful choices, Scripture clearly marks their error. Cain chose selfish pride and jealousy instead

of God's way; Ahab and Judas were in bondage to their greed; and Jonah was stubborn in his self-righteousness. None of these men repented of sin. They were all sorry for the consequences of their sin, as it affected them. None of these men truly sought God in admission of weakness and surrender to His will. Therefore, none of these men found deliverance. From the descriptions of Bible characters experiencing D.E.D., a comparative analysis indicates a measure of commonality in its symptoms.

### *Commonality of Symptoms of Debilitating Emotional Despondency*

Although varying in circumstances as to cause, a pattern of recurrent symptoms can be deduced. These symptoms include a sense of hopelessness, fear, withdrawal, diffidence, sullenness, weariness, loss of appetite, weeping, physical trembling, audible groaning, and varying degrees of escapism. Although not all of these symptoms are mentioned in each case, combinations of them are.

It is significant to note the distinction in Scripture regarding symptoms. Scripture distinguishes between symptoms that are emotional in nature (feelings such as hopelessness and fear), symptoms that are mental in nature (limited to thoughts such as thinking about running away), symptoms that reflect volitional activity (choices such as actually running or staying in bed), and symptoms that reflect involuntary physical reaction (such as weeping and trembling). It is, generally speaking, in the distinction of these symptoms that sinful succumbing to D.E.D., or victory over it, is indicated. This conclusion is based upon the manner in which God, through His Word, orders the walk of a believer.

In both the Old Testament and New Testament, God promises to be with and strengthen the believer, yet He clearly indicates that the believer has personal responsibilities as well. This divine-human cooperative is often referred to in Scripture. Examples follow:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy

God is with thee whithersoever thou goest (Josh. 1:8-9).

Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil (Prov. 4:27).

I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment (Prov. 8:20).

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:19-20).

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

In relation to the distinction of symptoms of D.E.D., this divine-human cooperative is significant. God calls believers to order their actions and choices in obedience to His Word (Deut. 6:6-7, Josh. 1:8, Matt. 7:24, John 14:21, 1 Tim. 4:16, Rev. 22:14). God also calls believers to discipline their thoughts in accordance to His character (Ps. 19:14, Ps. 66:18, Phil. 4:8). Yet nowhere in Scripture does God order believers to desist from emotional pain, even as He does not call believers to desist from physical pain.

It follows therefore that believers are not held accountable for the symptoms of D.E.D., which are distinctively emotional (feelings) and can lead to physical (weeping, trembling etc.). Nevertheless, believers are called to resist being led by these emotional symptoms which results in a self-led or soul-led life. God does hold believers accountable for the symptoms that are in the mental and volitional realm.

It must be acknowledged that fine distinction of the symptoms of D.E.D. cannot be fully realized through simple categorization. Only God truly knows the heart of man (Jer. 17:9-10). Scripture indicates that for the believer facing the Biblical causes of D.E.D., somewhere within the experience, there is a point of accountability where choice is made. God alone knows when a believer comes to that point of choice. Although by others actions and choices are often readily identifiable as either sin or obedience, this is not always the case. The point at which

thoughts pass from a fleeting temptation to the indulgence of sin, only God can truly judge “for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts” (1 Chron. 28:9).

While it is evident that some symptoms are difficult to classify because they encompass emotion, thought, and action, generally the symptoms<sup>262</sup> that are emotional in nature include a sense of hopelessness, feelings of fear, being distraught or worried, anxiousness, unsettledness (in the sense of emotional instability), discouragement (in the sense of weakened courage), remorse, dejection, and sorrow. Symptoms that weigh on the thoughts of sufferers are contemplations of escape, thoughts of self-distrust or diffidence, selfishness (in the sense of perpetually thinking of the woes of self), and perceptions of rejection. Symptoms that are volitional in nature are discouragement (in the sense of being dissuaded from responsibility), withdrawal, selfishness (such as the selfish sorrow of Ahab), aimlessness, sullenness, suicide (as with Judas). All of these are sinful responses. Symptoms that reflect involuntary physical reaction include trembling, weeping (although there could be a selfish motive for weeping which is not involuntary), sleeplessness, unsettledness (in the sense of restless wandering), moaning and groaning, weariness, and sweating blood (as with Jesus).

In summary, these Biblically identified symptoms indicate that the state of D.E.D. involves some measure of interrupted normality ranging from physical symptoms of great stress, as with Christ, to taking one’s own life, as with Judas. Yet in distinguishing the common Biblical symptoms for D.E.D., Scripture distinguishes the experience of true *pain of heart (mind)* (the strictly emotional and mental symptoms) from the resulting accountable response symptoms (the volitional and inappropriate mental [thoughts] symptoms) and from the involuntary physical symptoms. Such extremely differing results reflect the nature of individual responses to D.E.D. A review and categorization of the varying Biblical responses to D.E.D. are therefore beneficial.

### *Commonality of Responses to Debilitating Emotional Despondency*

The responses of Biblical characters to D.E.D. can be grouped into three common categories. First are those who pressed on in obedience to God despite suffering. These individuals experienced immedi-

ate victory. Second are those who temporarily succumbed to the suffering but found victory over it. These individuals in succumbing to the temptation sinned but then experienced victory. Third are those who succumbed to the suffering and the temptation of sin and never gained victory. In each situation, some measure of true *pain of heart (mind)*--emotional and mental symptoms, are evident.

Examples of those who pressed on in obedience to God despite suffering are Jesus and Paul. As examined earlier in this study, the terms describing their respective emotional struggle as well as their testimonies, leave no doubt that these individuals experienced D.E.D. Jesus' anguish and emotional and physical trauma are well documented; Paul's sense of hopelessness, weariness, emotional pain, and physical trembling is evident. Nevertheless, in the record of their struggles, thoughts of escape and acts of withdrawal are meaningfully absent.

It might be argued that Jesus' prayer "remove this cup from me" (Luke 22:42) was an expression of escapism; however, the cup referred to was the cross itself--the bearing of man's sins in spiritual and physical death, not the burden of D.E.D. "This was part of His moral perfection. His love made Him a willing victim; but it would have been a blot on the moral beauty of His journey if He did not express His horror at taking upon himself, on the cross, the sin of the world. Jesus shrank from no suffering and weighed before God all that was before Him. He watched, prayed, and suffered being tempted but never succumbed. We see his dependence in prayer and His tried but perfect submission to the will of His Father."<sup>263</sup> Jesus, although in deep emotional pain which had severe physical results, never wavered in thought (mentally) or in choices (volitionally) from God's will.

As reviewed under the heading "Testimony Concerning Paul," Paul's testimony recorded in 2 Corinthians 4:6 -11 elaborated on the contrast between the frail body, vexed and harassed on all sides, and the divine power which not only sustains him but enables him to rise above the experiences and triumph. Although suffering true *pain of heart (mind)*, Paul reflected hope and thanksgiving: "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant

grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God” (2 Cor. 4:13-15). Paul, although in deep emotional pain, which had severe mental and physical results, never wavered in thought (mentally) or in choices (volitionally) from God’s will.

Examples of those who temporarily succumbed to the suffering and thus sinned but found victory over it are Moses and David. The Biblical record of their D.E.D. has been examined under “A Testimony Concerning Moses” and “Testimony Concerning David” as well as “Special Bible Texts Dealing with D.E.D.” The leadership crisis facing Moses brought him to a life stalled by emotional despair. Falling into hopelessness, Moses allowed his *pain of heart (mind)* to cloud his attitude toward life. This temporarily obscured his commitment to his God-given call to lead Israel. He was persuaded in mind that he could not continue in his “wretchedness” and cried for God to take his life. In his D.E.D. Moses allowed his mind to dwell on, and be controlled by, his sense of wretchedness. As a result, he made this ungodly request and lost sight of the power of God. This fact is evident in Moses’ doubt regarding feeding Israel flesh (Num. 11:21).

Moses’ D.E.D. and consequent succumbing to a soul-led life resulted in an ungodly request and temporarily weakened faith. Nevertheless, in being given encouragement by the Lord with the promised help to lead, Moses pressed on in obedience. Although there is no record that his *pain of heart (mind)* was relieved, Moses found victory in his emotional struggle and was restored to a God-led walk of obedience.

In a similar fashion, David, in the state of D.E.D. particularly recorded in Psalm 55, temporarily succumbed to a soul-led life. His focus on escape with the three-time repeated desire to be free from the circumstances seems prolonged and intensified. In it he did not speak of longing for “the courts of the temple” as at other times, rather he appears to mentally dwell on just getting out of the struggle. Whether these thoughts passed into the realm of sin, Scripture is silent. However, given the evidence that the circumstances in which the Psalm was written involved the takeover of Jerusalem by Absalom and the abandonment of David by Ahithophel, Scripture does reveal that David was rebuked by Joab to take up responsibilities again (2 Sam. 19).

David, according to 2 Samuel 19 and Psalm 55, had succumbed to his D.E.D. His life had been, even if temporarily, debilitated by this emotional state. Nevertheless, these texts also indicate that David found victory and was able to exercise faith and obedience toward God. Further, Psalm 55 indicates that David was delivered from the emotional despair: “He has delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me” (verse 18). The majority of Bible characters evidencing D.E.D. fall into this category of succumbing but gaining victory. They are Hagar, Rachel, Moses, Joshua, Naomi, Hannah, Elijah, Hezekiah, Job, David, and Jeremiah.

Examples of Bible characters that succumbed to D.E.D. and fell into sin but never found victory are Cain and Judas. Their emotional struggles were severe. They suffered hopelessness, trembling, aimlessness, diffidence and remorse, guilt and escapism leading to suicide respectively. They completely succumbed to their suffering by allowing their emotions (feelings) to dictate their actions and choices.

In summary, Cain’s bondage to his emotions led to a volitional rejection of God’s offer of restoration and acceptance. Cain’s emotional despair was caused by the sin of pride, which led to anger, which led to murder, which led to God’s judgment--a life of bondage to severe D.E.D. Judas was a soul-led man. His greed and subsequent betrayal of Jesus resulted in D.E.D. Judas did not repent of the sin of betrayal, nor of the greed that led to betrayal; rather, did he feel remorse for the consequences of sin leading to the judgment against Jesus. Judas did not seek God in humble prayer, nor did he acknowledge his sin in true repentance, nor did he affirm his weakness, nor did he express any faith in God to deliver. He could not escape the D.E.D. that gripped him. His sense of guilt (Matt. 27:4) resulted in his suicide (Matt. 27:5). Scriptures are also silent regarding any deliverance from D.E.D. for Jacob, Ahab, and Jonah.

Identifying these common categories of responses further evidences the distinction of symptoms as a point of reference to victory over D.E.D. or resultant defeat and sin because of it. All suffered D.E.D. Yet Jesus was without sin, and Paul did not succumb to the weakness in which this hurtful state left him. Moses, David, and most of the Biblical characters succumbed to their emotional struggles in differing degrees but found victory. Some clearly fell into sin; others

seemed to indulge in inappropriate thoughts beyond the point of simple temptation. Nevertheless, they pressed on with responsible actions and choices and some even enjoyed release from the emotional pain. Cain and Judas succumbed to their emotional pain and continued in perpetual emotional pain and sinful behavior. The purpose and value of this study is to identify any unique common ground among those who found victory over D.E.D. A comparative analysis indicates a common approach to D.E.D. or *pain of heart* among those who found victory.

#### *Commonality of Approaches to Debilitating Emotional Despondency*

The Scriptures do address the debilitating effects of D.E.D. The Bible not only acknowledges the symptoms but gives clear direction for the believer. Comparative analysis indicates that every Bible character that experienced deliverance from D.E.D. turned to God. In some instances, such as the case with Hagar, Rachel and Naomi, few details are given other than the clear fact that God responded to the faith that looked to Him in the hour of need.

Nevertheless, there are a sufficient number of cases evident where the turning to God follows a pattern of approach. In each case that pattern of approach involves a prayerful admission of weakness, a plea to God for help expressed in faith, and a surrendered dependency upon God to intercede, according to His will. In every case where this approach was followed, deliverance was found. This deliverance was either a single, permanent recovery from the D.E.D. or the strength to continue from day to day with victory over the severity of its debilitating effects. In this commonality of response leading to deliverance, the Biblical approach to severe D.E.D. is found.

#### A Distinctive Definition of D.E.D

This research has identified many terms used in Scripture that relate to D.E.D. These terms relate back to the creative design of man, which distinguishes between man's body, soul, and spirit. In this context, as previously demonstrated, the terms *soul*, *spirit*, and *heart* (mind) often are used interchangeably to refer to the center of man's being--the place of intellectual, volitional, and emotional function. To be consistent, an appropriate defining phrase should continue to express that distinction by the use of one of these terms. Further, the de-



scriptive nature of terms used to modify the specific emotional trauma requires a defining phrase.

David offers just such a phrase in Ps. 55:4: “My heart is sore pained within me.” The phrase “pain of heart (mind)” perfectly summarizes and defines D.E.D. In the context of this Psalm, this phrase stands distinct from the symptoms enumerated as a defining expression of the state of David’s soul. While maintaining Biblical consistency with the term *heart* (mind), the word *pain* accurately summarizes D.E.D. as evident in Scripture. The Old Testament descriptive words for D.E.D. discussed in this study such as *daka’* --crushed, *bahal*--vexed, *rah*--misery, *shabar*--broken, *nakah*--smitten, along with the New Testament terms such as *ademoneo*--extreme heaviness, *bareo*--burdened, *lupeo*--sorrowful, all share an element of pain.

“Pain” also summarizes the state of our fallen world. Nature is in pain due to the fall (Rom. 8:22). The flesh of man knows pain (Job 14:22). Nations are in a state of pain (Ezra 30:4). It seems appropriate then to define the state of the soul in D.E.D. with the term *pain*. The general summary and comparative analysis of the Bible data related to D.E.D. supports the phrase “*pain of soul (mind)*” as the distinctive Biblical definition of D.E.D.

## CHAPTER 6

*"Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness:"*  
*Job.*

### APPLYING THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF D.E.D. TO MODERN CLINICAL DEPRESSION

The Scriptures are not silent regarding the emotional struggles of man. The Bible is explicit in defining Debilitating Emotional Despondency as well as setting forth the symptoms. Therefore, in order to fulfill the purpose of this study, it is necessary to relate the Biblical perspective to that diagnosed today as clinical depression.

#### A Point of Reference between Debilitating Emotional Despondency and Clinical depression

The literature review of this study revealed a variety of secular opinions about the causes of clinical depression among the medical and psychiatric professions. These causes range from childhood trauma to chemical imbalances and genetic factors. Despite the different opinions about cause, the diagnosis of clinical depression continues to be based solely upon the emotional symptoms. The pattern of symptoms of clinical depression have been identified through clinical studies as sadness, unhappiness, the blues, and crying; thought deviations: pessimism and ideas of guilt; behavior and appearance changes: agitation and neglect of appearance; somatic troubles such as loss of appetite, loss of sleep, aches and pains; anxiety features and suicidal behavior.<sup>264</sup>

A comparative analysis of the Biblical symptoms of Debilitating Emotional Despondency with those of clinical depression as listed indicates they are virtually identical. Therefore, the point of reference between Debilitating Emotional Despondency and clinical depression is the listed parallel symptoms. Believers who have been diagnosed as *depression sufferers* whether by secular professionals or by Christian counselors will have no difficulty relating their symptoms with the Debilitating Emotional Despondency of Bible characters. This point of

reference provides a link between those diagnosed with clinical depression and the Biblical perspective of Debilitating Emotional Dependency determined by this study. In essence, D.E.D. and modern day clinical depression, as defined by symptoms, are identical.

### Distinctives between Debilitating Emotional Dependency and Clinical Depression

Modern psychiatric practice defines clinical depression and D.E.D as identical based solely on symptoms. This is not an adequate Biblical conclusion. From a Biblical perspective, there is a unique difference ‘by definition’ between the two in that the secular approach to clinical depression fails to make distinction between the emotional response of the soul, and the cognitive (mental) focus and the volitional (willful) determination of the soul. The term *clinical depression*, as secularly defined, fails to distinguish between experiencing negative *feelings* and correspondingly dwelling on wrongful *thoughts* and making bad *choices*. This results in excusing this behaviour as ‘just part of depression.’ Whereas, in scripture, it is evident that God hold the believer accountable for the wrongful thoughts and bad choices.

The result of this lack of distinction is that “clinical depression,” from a Biblical perspective, must sometimes (as evident in the testimonies of Biblical people suffering from D.E.D.) be defined as *the inappropriate response* to emotional suffering by dwelling on sinful thoughts and making sinful choices. In such situations, the Christian sufferer defaults to a total soul-led life rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to lead in spite of the emotional pain.

This conclusion is supported by the clear categories of responses in Scripture previously examined. There were Biblical characters who suffered *pain of heart* (emotional symptoms of clinical depression) and never succumbed to dwelling on wrongful thoughts nor pursuing irresponsible actions (cognitive and volitional symptoms).

There were those Biblical characters who temporarily succumbed to *pain of heart (mind)*, fell into sinful thoughts and choices, but regained proper thoughts and conduct. Some of these were delivered from the emotional pain, others were strengthened to persevere.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that the ‘parallel symptoms’ are the reference point of Clinical Depression and D.E.D. The clear distinctions of what is ‘excused’ or ‘condemned’ between the secular term Clinical Depression and Biblical D.E.D. are established. Further, these two terms are singularly defined by the Biblical phrase ‘Pain of Mind.’

With this conclusion, a few points of clarity are in order. Scripture does address the human experience of ‘clinical depression’ by common symptoms and responses. Further, the Biblical record of D.E.D. or ‘clinical depression’ in modern vernacular, traces the cause to sin, to stressful circumstances, and to possible physical causes such as exhaustion (as with Elijah) and illness (as with Hezekiah). This does not preclude other possible physical causes such as chemical imbalances or genetic factors, which are not recorded in Scripture. As Scripture addresses each ‘victory over’ or ‘perseverance in’ clinical depression with the same approach, it is that Biblical approach which is pursued as God’s direction for the clinical depression sufferer, regardless of cause. This approach is examined in detail in the remainder of this study.

Finally, although not the focus of this study, Scripture evidences this same approach among those with other physical illnesses (the leper--Mark 1, the centurion regarding his servant--Luke 7, blind Bartimaeus--Mark 10). Therefore, this Biblical approach to depression, defined, as Pain of Mind” is also valid as God’s method of dealing with all manner of pain. The Bible addresses physical and emotional struggles with the confident assurance of God’s power to assist the believer in bearing pain and by God’s grace, even finding deliverance from it.

*Quest Five:*

**To discover the Biblical Approach to Depression (D.E.D) and a Biblical model of counselling Depression Sufferers:**

**Does God have an answer for depression?**

## CHAPTER 7

*"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him." God*

### DISCOVERING A BIBLICAL APPROACH TO D.E.D. OR CLINICAL DEPRESSION

This study thus far has established the fact that the Bible does address man's emotional struggles. The examination of Debilitating Emotional Despondency as evidenced in Scripture has been identified as identical to the modern condition of 'clinical depression.' It has been demonstrated that the symptoms of depression are clearly enumerated in scripture. The scriptures have further delineated God defined causes, responses, and end-results of depression as evidenced in the many Bible sufferers. A defined approach has also been referred to in the examination of the evidence of depression in Scripture. This approach, earlier stated as God's direction for depression sufferers, is examined in detail in this chapter. (Note: For the remainder of this study D.E.D. identified as Clinical Depression will be referred to simply as depression.)

#### Special Bible Texts Dealing with Depression

The Biblical research undertaken for this study has identified two unique Bible texts, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament that offer a deeper understanding of this Biblical approach to depression. Having just dealt with the "Testimony Concerning Paul," the first text to be examined under this heading expands this testimony by relating Paul's experience with depression as portrayed in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians in its entirety.

#### *The Second Epistle of Corinthians*

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, written according to the subscription in the King James Version "from Philippi, a city in Macedonia" approximately 54 or 55 A.D.,<sup>265</sup> is the most intensely personal and emotional of the Pauline epistles.<sup>266</sup> Within its thirteen short chapters are no less than thirty references to the stress and suffering of Paul

in his efforts to serve Christ. Paul, in so candidly revealing his heart under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has furnished the church with meaningful and practical advice regarding Debilitating Emotional Dependency.

### Paul's Depression

Paul refers to the key terms for expressing depression frequently in 2 Corinthians. He refers to *bareo*, meaning "to be burdened, to be weighed down or depressed" (1:8). He refers to having "despaired"-- (*exaporeomai*) (1:8, 4:8). He refers to *lupe* ("heaviness or sorrow") five times (2:1, 2:3, 2:7, 7:10, 9:7). Besides these expressions of dependency, Paul also makes mention of *stenochoria* ("distress") twice (6:5, 12:10), *kopos* ("intense labor united with trouble") four times (6:5, 10:15, 11:23, 11:27), *pathema* ("suffering") three times (1:5, 1:6, 1:7), and *thanatos* ("death") eight times (1:9, 1:10, 2:11, 3:7, 4:11, 4:12, 7:10, 11:23). The high incident of these words found in this epistle emphasizes the depth of Paul's ministry stresses and leads the reader to appreciate the significance of Paul's evident victory over such.

The expression of Paul's depression is particularly clear in the following passages:

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life (1:8).

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings (6:4-5).

For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforts those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus (7:5-6).

In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (11:27).

Paul had experienced (*thlipsis*) “trouble” (1:8). This term, rooted in the idea “to press; to squash,” refers to oppressive affliction and suggests unbearable pressure in itself. He adds explanation of this “trouble” as pressing them beyond their strength so that they despaired “*exaporeomai*” of life. This compound word consists of the primary preposition “*ex*,” denoting origin (the point where action or motion proceeds from), and the root word *poreuomai*, meaning, “to lead over, carry over, transfer,” with the negative particle “*a*” as a prefix, thus expressing “complete loss.” The form of *exaporethenai* is the first aorist passive infinitive and is to be understood as being used perfectly, denoting completion of action<sup>267</sup> and points to the depression of being “utterly destitute of measures or resources, to renounce all hope, to be in despair.”<sup>268</sup> Calvin affirms the severity of the despondency by suggesting that the term “denotes a trembling anxiety.”<sup>269</sup>

In relating his experiences as a minister of Christ, Paul expresses both the mental and emotional as well as the physical struggles (6:4-5). In so doing, he describes his experience again as *thlipsis* “afflictions” and adds *stenochoria*, a term rooted in the idea of being “squeezed or pressed; confined.” Here, in the context of 5:20-6:1, Paul orients his ministry to the passion of Christ,<sup>270</sup> a deeply emotional experience as examined earlier.

Paul again refers to his *thlipsis*, “trouble” (7:5) as fears “within”--*esothēn* in reference to the inner being or the soul of man as he thinks and wills and feels.<sup>271</sup> Paul also relates experience with *kopos* “weariness,” a term expressing “intense labor united with trouble and toil”<sup>272</sup> and *mochthos* “painfulness,” a term relating to toil, travail, hardship and distress<sup>273</sup> (11:27). According to the references cited, each of these terms go beyond the physical challenges and address the emotional state of distress. It is evident by the terms cited, that the tone of this second epistle to the Corinthians, while dealing with many areas of stress, uniquely addresses the depression under which Paul was laboring and validly serves as a special text for understanding the Biblical perspective toward it.

Paul’s burdensome circumstances

To appreciate Paul’s struggle with depression, an examination of his circumstances must first be undertaken. Paul’s despondency as ex-



pressed in 2 Corinthians was a result of burdensome circumstances. He refers in the epistle to burdens due to uncontrollable *physical challenges*. He provides a brief summary of these challenges in 11:23-27.

Here he mentions *plege* “stripes” or beatings, described as *hyperballontos* or “surpassing all measure,”<sup>274</sup> which focuses on degree rather than number. Paul further mentions multiple imprisonments, being left for dead, receiving 39 lashes five times, being beaten three times with rods, being stoned, suffering shipwreck three times, and spending a night and a day adrift. He speaks of multiple journeys and *kindunos* perils or dangers of waters, of robbers, by his own countrymen, by the heathen, in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, and among false brethren. In summary, Paul refers to the “soul” struggles of weariness and painfulness and concludes his summary with mention of his physical challenges with hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness (11:23-27). This assessment leaves the reader to surmise that the physical challenges alone that Paul endured were stressful to the extreme. Grover concurs with the comment that “we can endorse the judgment that his life-work as a mere physical performance challenges our admiration.”<sup>275</sup>

In addition to these troubles, Paul makes clear reference to an apparent physical sickness or ailment. He thought these could threaten his ministry: “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me” (2 Cor. 12:7-8). Paul gives no precise detail regarding this infirmity; however the severity of it cannot be overlooked. It was an affliction of such severity that, apart from divine intervention, he could not hope to survive it.<sup>276</sup>

Along with these crushing *physical challenges*, Paul refers to the burden of *personal cares* exercised by himself: “Beside those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28). This was a weight of care beyond any single church, encompassing his apostolic responsibilities toward a number of churches over a large geographical area. Paul probably wrote this epistle shortly after the Demetrius Riot of Acts 19:23-41, referring in 1:8 to the plot of Demetrius when he tells that he had been in danger of

losing his life in Asia, but had been wonderfully rescued.<sup>277</sup> Although Paul was himself safely removed from the immediate threat of reprisal by his quick escape out of the region, undoubtedly, his mind returned often to the scenes of violence and the ensuing storm of controversy that the believers of Ephesus were troubled with.

This burden of care for the safety of the saints and the progress of the church at Ephesus was compounded by Paul's evident concern for the church of Corinth as well. Certain persons belonging to the household of Chloe had come to Ephesus and brought him a sad report of the state of the church.<sup>278</sup> A perusal of the respective texts suggests that Paul had sent Titus to represent him in Corinth. Titus was to secure a resolution to the church troubles, which apparently included the elements of division referred to in the Epistle of 1 Corinthians along with inappropriate behavior referred to in the second letter (drunkenness, profanation of the Lord's Supper, and misunderstanding of spiritual gifts).<sup>279</sup>

The wicked environment of Corinth was decidedly against the work of Christ as James Stalker suggests, "There were other elements of discouragement in Corinth. It was the Paris of ancient times--a city rich and luxurious, wholly abandoned to sensuality. Vice displayed itself without shame in forms, which struck deadly despair into Paul's pure Jewish mind. Could men be rescued from the grasp of such monstrous vices?"<sup>280</sup>

The point for consideration here is the unavoidable stress such care and concern would have had on Paul. This is especially true in light of the fact that he was still awaiting word of Titus's success as indicated in the following:

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia. (2 Cor. 2:12-13).

Paul, expecting to meet Titus in Troas, did not find him, and was consequently troubled. Although there was an opening to preach the gospel, he was in such turmoil that he left Troas and came into Macedonia, where, still not hearing from Titus, his distress continued.<sup>281</sup>

In the context of Paul's care-giving, he had a sense of responsibility to his own coworkers. The long journeys through dangerous country

into which Paul sent his colleagues and the sparse news of their condition unquestionably left Paul very anxious.<sup>282</sup> Further to the burden of *physical challenges*, and *personal care*, was the agony of *pressing confrontation*. In 2 Corinthians, Paul makes several references to charges addressed to him, designed to undermine his apostolic authority:

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God. By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report (2 Cor. 6:4,8).

For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible (2 Cor. 10:10).

For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things (2 Cor. 11:5-6).

Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more (2 Cor. 11:22-23).

It is evident that Paul faced a continuing challenge to the validity of his apostolic office. Paul's enemies had not failed to reach Corinth. They created resentment toward Paul among the body and undermined Paul's prestige<sup>283</sup> and more important, his integrity.

Confrontation came as an attack on Paul's personal appearance: "They say .his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible" (2 Cor. 10:10). The impact of their accusations was significant in the culture of that day as D. A. Hayes points out: "These Greeks who are accustomed to the perfect physique of their statuary and their art and to the ideal human form as developed by their athletes and their warriors simply turn up their noses at this comical crooked Jewish dwarf."<sup>284</sup>

An appearance that struck the Greek as below the expectation of social leadership would threaten the acceptability of Paul's claim. This, when supported by Paul's apparent "commonplace" speech, was a great hurdle to overcome. They said, "his speech was of no account." The form of his speech was uncouth and the matter of it was worthless. The Greeks cared not for what one said, but how one said it.<sup>285</sup>

Such confrontation had to be dealt with firmly but tactfully, especially when the whole matter of Jewish-Gentile tension within the

church is brought into consideration. Paul had the responsibility of challenging the false claims and pretentious attitudes of these “official” visitors without compromising the authority of those who recommended them. “He was concerned to avoid the slightest appearance of a breach between his Gentile mission and the Jerusalem church.”<sup>286</sup> Paul’s distress due to pressing confrontation is summarized by Matheson:

The signs of an apostle were the possession of healing gifts. Was not the very fact of such bodily weakness a conclusive and irrefragable proof that Paul did not possess those powers which he professed to wield, and that the heavenly vision on which he based his apostolic claim had existed only in the dream of his own imagining?<sup>287</sup>

This was the attitude of Paul’s antagonists which, when added to the other obstacles mentioned, only deepened Paul’s struggles.

Paul enumerates these burdensome circumstances throughout the epistle. In the context of the difficulties “which came to us in Asia” (1:8) he calls them “trouble.” This he further described by terms of his emotional struggle. He was “pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life,” as defined earlier in this chapter. Therefore, in the mind of Paul there was a correlation between his burdens and his emotional struggle. These burdens contributed to that state described by Paul with terms of the emotional struggle paralleling our modern day’s symptoms of depression. Against the backdrop of these circumstances that brought such struggle, 2 Corinthians also provides specific references to Paul’s suffering. This is evident in Paul’s use of *astheneia* and *astheneo*.

### Paul’s physical afflictions

The weight of stress upon Paul as indicated by the trials cited in 2 Corinthians must be given greater significance yet by virtue of the physical suffering he underwent. Twelve times in the epistle, Paul refers to *astheneia* (“infirmity”) and *astheneo* (“being weak”). The emphasis of the word group in the language of Paul’s epistle was literal, pointing to a physical illness, and figurative, suggesting an “inner poverty” or “incapacity.” In its literal sense, the word defined a special

form of bodily sickness<sup>288</sup> indicating something far more serious than the commonly suggested eye weakness or stomach ulcer.

Paul focused on the literal aspect of the term relating to his physical weakness. This is evident in the emphasis of 2 Cor. 4:8 through 5:10. This passage as a whole shows that Paul was suffering from bodily illness when he wrote.<sup>289</sup> Regarding the use of the term in 12:9, Gilbert adds insight to the significance of the sickness.

He refers to it as a weakness, and classes it with injuries, necessities, persecutions, and distressed for Christ's sake. The passage leads us to think of some sort of physical suffering, but affords no certain clue to its particular character. Epilepsy, malarial fever, headache, disease of the eyes, and other forms of physical ailment have been thought of, but they are mere conjectures. The important fact, however, for the biography of Paul is that he was subject to some form of suffering which was severe and humiliating.<sup>290</sup>

Without doubt, Paul was deeply affected by physical affliction. In similar fashion with his stressful circumstances, Paul relates his physical afflictions to the “trouble” in Asia described in terms of depression. He views his afflictions as the “dying of the Lord Jesus” in his body (4:10). He regards these sufferings as an abandonment to death (4:11), and as the *energeo* (“working”) of death (4:12).<sup>291</sup> Here Paul paradoxically addresses his supreme identity with the passion of Christ’s suffering. This involved the struggle of extreme human emotional along with the spiritual victory of faith, which clung to the hope in Christ—the expectantly awaited coming glory (4:14, 4:17). While this faith afforded victory over the “trouble” in Asia as Paul noted in 4:8-9 (earlier examined), it in no way diminished the depth of emotional despair Paul experienced as related by his choice of descriptive terms. Paul’s emotional struggle was humanly severe, but not spiritually defeating.

In reality, the Second Epistle of Corinthians wraps Paul’s depression, extreme burdens, and intolerable affliction up in one bundle and designates it “suffering.” It is to this end that the epistle offers such practical insight to the suffering believer. Whether suffering from physical illnesses or the stress of circumstances or from emotional upheaval, Paul’s view of suffering lays down a Biblical foundation for victory.

### Paul's view of suffering

In examining Paul's view of suffering, this epistle of 2 Corinthians portrays his unique attitude. He viewed hardship with an attitude of complete acceptance, "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" (4:11), understanding that others could claim hardship as well: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" (2 Cor. 11:28). Paul appears to accept with contentment his infirmity as a part of the general suffering to which he was called.

Paul viewed suffering with an attitude of undeterred hope: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver [us]" (1:10). Accepting that the Lord had delivered him from death in the past, he was confident that deliverance was assured again, even if it was the deliverance through death into the presence of God: "We are confident, [I say], and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (5:8). This hope of glory was indeed preferred by Paul. He was able to project his thoughts into the promised future experience of heaven and, therefore, accept all manner of suffering on the present as a "momentary affliction" (4:17).

Paul viewed suffering with the attitude of special privilege. In realizing and affirming that believers are the temple of the living God (6:16), and God's own people (6:16), Paul viewed suffering as the privilege of a special commission by God (2:17) as ambassadors for Christ (5:20). The whole emphasis of 6:4-10 focuses on the privilege of being "ministers of God." He sees this privilege carrying the believer through every trial with honor. His goal remained a determination to please the God who possesses: "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in [them]; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16).

Paul views stressful ministry, sickness, and depression with purpose. He states that through suffering "the life of Jesus also might be manifested in our body, so then death is working in us, but life in you" (4:11-12). In this, God's grand purpose of suffering is defined. The suffering "for Christ's sake" drew attention to the value of the apostolic message, marking such suffering as real in their lives. The bold confi-

dence, sure hope, and true life in Christ of Paul and his coworkers overflowed through suffering, drawing the dying world of Corinth to the living Savior. The Corinthians are brought to regeneration; made spiritually alive as "the living ones," like Paul and his helpers (4:11); and develop in spiritual life until they at last enter the life of glory.<sup>292</sup>

In addition to understanding Paul's view of suffering as embracing a unique attitude, Paul refers to specific expectations of suffering. He expected to see God glorified: "For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death works in us, but life in you... For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God" (12:11-12, 15). Although Lenski suggests that this is a final thanksgiving for God's glory, raised when believers are glorified,<sup>293</sup> the text cannot be limited to a time to come. The heartbeat of Paul is to see God glorified as the One True God, all-sufficient in times of trial and distress. Paul had already alluded to this: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5).

As well, through suffering Paul expected to grow in godliness. To this, he made clear reference in the epistle:

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? (3:7-8).

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (3:17-18).

Here Paul speaks of the practical effect of living by faith in the all-sufficient God. The path of suffering that evidences human weakness necessitates a deep dependency upon the provision of God. This deep dependency demands a close communion with God, which, in turn, results in the transforming of a life into godlikeness. What Moses ex-

perienced in a transient outward way is granted to all believers in the New Testament in a permanent, inward way.<sup>294</sup>

Paul speaks of practical sanctification, raised to a higher level by the sufferings of ministry: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (4:17). Paul expected to experience a greater measure of God's power, his third expectation: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (12:9-10).

Paul's stressful circumstances and physical afflictions contributed to his emotional turmoil. In Second Corinthians Paul presents all these together as the 'suffering,' which made him more like Christ. Therefore, by grace, he was assured of more of the unique power of Christ in his life. There had burst upon him the conviction that the divine power of Christianity was itself simply the strength to sustain weakness.<sup>295</sup> Having outlined his unique view of the suffering which includes the experience of depression, it is therefore appropriate to examine the theological framework of Paul's view of suffering with a focus on depression.

### Paul's theology of suffering

It is evident that Paul had a firm grip on his spiritual resources. Throughout the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul shares many of the spiritual resources he found effective in enabling him to deal with the suffering that included depression. These can be outlined as objective resources and subjective resources.<sup>296</sup> As to Paul's understanding of objective resources, he refers to *God the Father*. Paul spoke in terms of the significance of:

1. His identity: "He is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort to us" (1:3), "the Lord Almighty" (6:18), "the God of love and peace" (13:11).
2. His attributes: His grace (1:12), faithfulness (1:18), glory (3:18; 4:6), transcendent power (4:7; 6:7; 13:4), mercy (4:1), surpassing grace (9:14), love (13:14).



3. His acts on our behalf: In the past, He put His seal on us (1:22), He gave us His Spirit (1:22; 5:5), He commissioned us (2:17), He has shone in our hearts (4:6), and has reconciled us (5:18), in the present, He comforts us (1:4; 7:6,7), establishes (causes us to stand firm) (1:21), always leads us in triumph (2:14), makes us competent (3:5,6), and continually renews our inner nature (4:16); and for the future, He will deliver us (1:10), will raise us and bring us into His presence (4:14), and will give us an eternal body (5:1).

Paul refers to *God the Son*. He understood the wonder of:

1. His identity: Paul declared: "He is Lord" (1:2, 4:5), he is "the Son of God" (1:19).
2. His attributes: The apostle made reference to His glory (4:4), love (5:14), grace (8:9, 12:9, 13:14), meekness and gentleness (10:1), truth (11:10), and power (12:9).
3. His acts on our behalf: Paul affirmed that He died for us and was raised again (5:15), became poor for us (8:9), and He dwells in us (13:5). The promises of God find their YES in Him (1:19,20). His power rests upon us as we look to Him in weakness (12:9).

Paul also refers to *God the Holy Spirit* as an objective spiritual resource. He appropriated:

1. His identity: Paul recognized the Spirit as our Guarantee (1:22; 5:5).
2. His acts on our behalf: Paul stated that the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts (1:22), He gives life (3:6), He gives us freedom (3:17), He changes us into God's likeness (3:18), He fellowships with us (13:14).

Paul held onto God as surely as any child would hold onto a parent in times of crisis. The complete nature and ministry of the Triune God was a tangible source of strength, courage, comfort, and stamina to the apostle. Paul's theology was no mere academic exercise; on the contrary, it was a sustaining, vibrant relation with the living God.

In addition to objective spiritual resources, Paul refers to His subjective spiritual resources. Paul expressed faith. The apostle affirmed this in his statements: "We rely on [trust in] God, not on ourselves" (1:9). "We have confidence in God through Christ" (3:4). "We believe"

(4:13); "We walk by faith" (5:7). Paul had spiritual vision. Paul and his coworkers declared, "We behold the glory of the Lord" (3:18), "We look to (fix our gaze upon) the unseen" (4:18). Paul labored in prayer. Paul saw thanksgiving as a prayer resource (2:14; 4:15; 9:15). Paul understood prayer as two-way communication with God (12:8, 9).

Paul's final subjective spiritual resource was his comfort from the Body of Christ. He spoke of the comfort of others (1:4; 2:7; 7:4-7, 13), and took strength from the prayers of others (1:11), the love of others (2:8), and the joy shared through others (7:4, 13, 16). In addition, Paul was not forgetful of the earnest care of others (8:16). Though less certain than the never-failing nature of the Lord, these subjective resources were a meaningful part of Paul's life-resources. As a part of his spiritual understanding of man and the church, Paul expressed a clear confidence in the human aspect of salvation, knowing that even here, all was empowered of God: "For when I am weak, then I am strong" (12:10).

In addition to Paul's firm grip on spiritual resources, he had a fixed focus on spiritual reality. The by-product of Paul's deep theological understanding of spiritual resources was a practical focus on the reality of suffering. This is evident in the following text: "We are troubled *"thlibo"* on every side, yet not distressed *"stenochoreo"*; we are perplexed *"aporeo"*, but not in despair *"exaporeomai"*; persecuted *"dioko"*, but not forsaken *"egkatalaipo"*; cast down *"kataballo"*, but not destroyed *"apollumi"*" (4:8-9).

As addressed under "Testimony Concerning Paul," in each of these comparative statements using terms of depression, stress and affliction, Paul fixes his focus on the reality of resources in God. The passage does not deny nor contradict Paul's earlier expressions. Rather, the terms of comparison suggest two possible outlooks within the choice of every believer. They are: (1) To see with simple human eyes, is to see through the lens of hopelessness trouble, perplexity, persecution and being cast down, or (2) To see with believing eyes, is to see through the lens of spiritual resources the true reality of faith's empowerment through God.

In each comparative couplet, although emphasizing the constant and severe nature of Paul's emotional struggle, stress and affliction, he maintains an expression of faith in the never failing, always available

resources of God. Paul did not succumb to physical suffering, stressful circumstances, nor to the consequent depression he clearly experienced. Paul's theology, firmly gripping his spiritual resources and focusing on the believer's spiritual reality, developed in his life a proper philosophy of suffering. This in turn helped him embrace a practical Biblical approach to suffering which included depression.

Paul's philosophy of suffering

From this epistle's detailed reference to the response to suffering exemplified in Paul, his philosophy of suffering is evident. Through suffering, Paul developed a simple but beneficial philosophy. This is summarized in two statements. First, Paul repeatedly stated, "We faint not" (2 Cor. 4:1, 2 Cor. 4:16). In 2 Corinthians 4:4, the apostle and his coworkers were under the greatest of pressures, yet, they refused to be discouraged, they would not become spiritless. Paul knew that they could not fail as long as they attended to their ministry because their ministry was of righteousness and was destined to exceed in a glory greater than even that of Moses (3:9). In 4:16, Paul and his coworkers refused to be discouraged in view of the resurrection and glory it would bring. This was Paul's expression of a lesson of trust as Hughes states: "The great lesson of this overwhelming affliction, which had befallen him was that he (and all who are Christ's) should trust, not in self, but in God "the Raiser of the dead. This is, indeed, a theme which provides a key to the whole epistle."<sup>297</sup> Despite what suffering would bring in this present life, the certainty of the resurrection moved Paul to live without restraining discouragement in the face of hardship.

Paul expressed his philosophy in this additional statement: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9). God's grace had assured Paul of strength in weakness. His philosophy included a rejoicing and delight in weakness in order to experience God's greater power. This stated philosophy is the climax of the epistle as affirmed by Hughes:

The climax is reached in the twelfth chapter where Paul explains how through the endurance of a "thorn in the flesh" he was taught that God's grace is all-sufficient and that His pow-

er is made perfect in weakness (12:7ff). This was a principle to which even our Lord submitted in procuring our salvation, for His was crucified through weakness, but is alive through the power of God (13:4). It is a theme, therefore, which points to the unity of this epistle, and which in particular links the concluding to the opening chapters.<sup>298</sup>

In addition to a philosophy of suffering, Paul learned to apply specific principles in the environment of suffering. This enables a understanding of Paul's approach to suffering.

### Paul's approach to suffering

Ten specific principles evident in 2 Corinthians in which Paul found strength in stress are paraphrased below:

1. He acknowledged the suffering (1:8-10, 2:4). The denial of struggle weakens the determination to persist. Paul freely admitted His suffering.
2. Paul shared the pain with God (12:8). Paul did not hesitate to cry out to God for help. His prayers involved the admission of weaknesses and a faith in God to deliver.
3. Paul shared his struggles with others (1:8,9; 6:4), and Paul took particular comfort in the coming of Titus (7:6).
4. The apostle allowed God to minister directly to him as well as through others (1:3,4). Paul saw the mutual sharing of comfort as a great ministry of the body of Christ.
5. He enlisted prayer support (1:11). Paul refers to the benefit of the prayers of the saints at Corinth.
6. Although Paul's troubles were not a result of sin, he does remind the Corinthians of the necessity of confession and repentance if sin were a factor (7:9,10).
7. Paul urged forgiveness, if others had caused pain (2:5-11). This necessarily followed the importance of repentance.
8. The apostle fixed his eyes on the Lord (2:14; 4:6). This was evident in Paul's understanding of spiritual resources already mentioned.
9. Paul accepted God's grace in place of weakness (12:9, 10). Paul's philosophy of suffering is founded upon the very nature of God's grace.

10. Paul gave thanks to God, even in trial (2:14; 8:16). It is apparent that God, in his wisdom, has furnished His church with a valuable and practical understanding of the place of depression, stress, and affliction in the believer's life. As Paul unfolded his own heartache, he also revealed the strength and stamina he found in the Lord.<sup>299</sup>

In the face of great trial as seen in the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, the apostle does not outline any "prosperity gospel," nor does he propagate "the power of positive thinking." Instead, he relates his personal struggle, including depression, in terms of the importance of prayer, dependence upon God, and the sufficiency of God. His proper handling of life's difficulties was not release from suffering, but strength from God in suffering. Paul's acceptance of suffering and weakness, indeed, his welcoming of such for the sake of the glory of God, flies in the face of today's fretful saints. All believers, whether undergoing stressful circumstances, physical affliction, or depression, would benefit from a closer look at the theology of suffering and subsequent approach to suffering evident in this great epistle.

#### *Psalm 55, a Psalm of David*

Within the New Testament God affords a special examination of depression in 2 Corinthians. However, the Old Testament offers a significant single text as well. It is no surprise that the search for an Old Testament text relating to depression is found in the Books of the Psalms. Here the inspired writers of Holy Scripture express the emotions of the heart to a degree found nowhere else in the Bible. Here God opens His heart to the heart of man. David's Psalm 55 affords the student this privilege.

There is a broad and in-depth view of depression in Psalm 55. From the language of urgency with which the Psalm opens, "Give ear to my prayer, O God, and hide not thyself from my supplication" (55:1), by which "David expresses anxiousness to convey an impression of his wretchedness, by intimating that he was constrained to cry out aloud, we may conclude that David at this time was laboring under heavy distress."<sup>300</sup>

The Psalm is a "supplication," *atekh-in-naw'* which is the special Hebrew term for a "prayer for grace"<sup>301</sup> to God (55:2). This prayer is

described as a *ruwd* (in the *hiphel*) “restless,” *siah* “painful meditation” expressed as a “complaint” because of its negative nature.<sup>302</sup> The prayer is offered with *huwm* (in the *hiphel*) “noise” or murmuring to show disquietude.<sup>303</sup>

These introductory verses set the context of the Psalm as one of emotional passion. These verses describe the language of a troubled heart, expressing itself as “sorrows loosed and groans of grief.”<sup>304</sup> It is in this context that David expresses his depression with a phrase unique to this Psalm.

The statement of David’s depression

David made his statement of depression as God led him to express in the Hebrew language the anxiety and pain that consumed his very being to the point of inability to continue to function. David cried, “My heart (*leb*) is *chuwl* (sore pained) within me.” Calvin affirms the magnitude of suffering expressed:

Here we have additional evidence of the extremity of David's suffering. He that uses these words was no soft or effeminate person, but one who had given indubitable proofs of constancy. Nor is it merely of the atrocious injuries inflicted upon him by his enemies that he complains. He exclaims that he is overwhelmed with terrors, and thus acknowledges that his heart was not insensible to his afflictions.<sup>305</sup>

That this statement represents an expression of emotional pain is attested to by Alexander MacClaren:

The psalmist pictures his emotions in the first part, with but one reference to their cause, and but one verse of petition. But very pathetic and true to the experience of many a sorrowing heart is the psalmist's immediately subsequent dilating on his griefs. There is a dumb sorrow, and there is one which unpacks its heart in many words and knows not when to stop. The psalmist is distracted in his bitter brooding on his troubles.<sup>306</sup>

A closer examination of the terms used in David's statement clarifies the relationship to severe depression. The different senses of the term *leb* “heart” and its derivatives have been examined under “The Biblical Theology of D.E.D.” Nevertheless, it is important at this junct-

ture to repeat that the preponderance of psychological use rather than physiological use is clear in Scripture,<sup>307</sup> to the point that some would even suggest that "the Bible never mentions anything about the *lev(av)* that is literally physical."<sup>308</sup> Biblically, "heart" when not clearly referring to the human organ, in Old Testament use, is a synonym for "mind." The content of Psalm 55 suggests that the particular nuance of *lev(av)* in verse 4 fits more suitably with the idea of "the centre of conscious thought," the innermost aspect of man, and would relate to the English term *mind*. David is the subject of "great mental stress"<sup>309</sup>; indeed, "he was mentally as much in pain as a woman in travail physically."<sup>310</sup> There is little doubt that the pain David suffered of mind was genuine. The Hebrew term for pain, *hu*), denotes travail and anguish and is used in the Old Testament to define the writhing movements of labor contractions, anguish in witness of God's judgment, the idea of inner mental anguish, mental anguish or remorse, the anguish of the good man oppressed by the wicked.<sup>311</sup>

The future form of the verb "implies an apprehension that the pain will continue and be permanent."<sup>312</sup> David feels nothing less than anguish.<sup>313</sup> Spurgeon affirms that this is a state of melancholy and despondency.<sup>314</sup> In this, there is a clear point of comparison to other Bible characters suffering from depression.

David's expression of mental anguish is parallel to Jeremiah's: "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart makes a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war" (Jer. 4:19). The notion of "pain of heart" is clearly an expression of anguish, misery, and deep grief. The proper meaning is "my heart (mind) is disturbed within me; I can have no rest nor quiet within."<sup>315</sup> The severity of such mental anguish has, in both contexts, left David and Jeremiah overwhelmed with sorrow and apparently distraught in action. In each text, there appears to be an inability within David and Jeremiah respectively, to get beyond the impact of their grief.

### The symptoms of David's Depression

This inability to move on is corroborated in Psalm 55 with the evident symptoms of depression that are expressed: "The terrors of death are fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and

horror has overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest” (Ps. 55:4b-8).

The specific Hebrew terms point to distinct symptoms of David’s depression, which can be identified in Psalm 55. David experienced overwhelming fear: “The ‘*ema* (terrors) of death are fallen upon me.” In all of its occurrences the word ‘*ema* connotes the concept of “fear.” It occurs only once in a metaphorical sense in Jer. 50:38 where it means “idol,” evidently in the sense of that which is to be feared.<sup>316</sup>

David was plagued with “terrifying thoughts about death.”<sup>317</sup> The terrors David feels are like the terror experienced by Israel’s enemies when she passed through them on the way to the Promised Land (Exod. 15:16).<sup>318</sup> Leopold calls the “terrors of death” the most formidable kind of distress.<sup>319</sup> David describes this fear as *napal* “fallen upon him,” denoting a violent circumstance as opposed to a physical action.<sup>320</sup> The impact of such circumstance resulted in the inmost center of his nature to be moved with dismay.<sup>321</sup> Accompanying this overwhelming sense of dread was “fearfulness and trembling” and overwhelming “horror” or “shuddering.” David’s body was out of control with fear (55:5).<sup>322</sup>

David underwent emotional trauma-- *yir’ah* (fearfulness), resulting in physical effects—*ra’ad* (trembling), *bow* (are come upon me), and *pallasut* (horror), *kasa* (has overwhelmed me) (Ps. 55:5). The terms of this verse are descriptive of a man who is physically affected by severe depression. Gill compares this text to Mark 14:33 describing Christ in the garden who “began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy.”<sup>323</sup>

As well, the use of the term *yir’ah*, translated “fearfulness,” focuses on the emotion of fear (in contrast to intellectual anticipation of evil or reverent respect of God).<sup>324</sup> By its use, David identifies the source of the physical effects he experiences as emotional trauma, lest any confusion arise in dismissing his “trembling” as some illness. In his emotional trauma, David experienced physical *ra’ad* “trembling,” the same term used to describe Job as his bones shook (Job 4:14), the people of Judah sitting and shivering before the house of God because of fear and the rain (Exod. 10:9), earthquakes (Ps. 104:32), and Daniel



trembling before a vision (Dan. 10:11). David describes it as *bow*, a term usually meaning “to go in or enter.”<sup>325</sup> This clearly refers to the physical trembling of the body.

The additional term *pallasut* translated “horror” means “to shudder.”<sup>326</sup> Its four uses in Scripture (Job 21:6, Ps. 55:5, Isa. 21:4, Ezra 7:18) suggests reference to both the emotional experience and physical effects of these emotions. The fear resulted in uncontrollable physical shaking. David’s emotional state affected his physical state. The multiple uses of terms descriptive of bodily trembling emphasizes that shakiness had taken control and completely consumed David, even as it had with Job who cried, “Trembling takes hold of my flesh” (Job 21:6).<sup>327</sup>

The horror is described as *kasa*, and is used here in the *piel*. This term means, to cover or overwhelm as the waters covered the earth (Gen. 7:19), as locusts covered the land (Exod. 10:5), and as darkness shall cover the earth (Isa. 60:2). It is significant to note that in the two uses of *pallasut*, translated as “horror” (Ps. 55:5, Ezra 7:18) *kacah* (has overwhelmed) is used each time. This term suggests the sense of descending darkness as though it had come upon him so as to cover or envelop him entirely.<sup>328</sup> In the context of fear and horrors, this term suggests being “enveloped in a darkness that might be felt.”<sup>329</sup>

This mental and emotional trauma caused David to desire to flee the circumstances rather than face the pain: “And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest, ‘*shakan*’ (55:6). This term, here in the *qal*, means to “settle down to abide,”<sup>330</sup> with a sense of permanency<sup>331</sup> and suggests that a desire for complete withdrawal was heavily on David’s mind. The analogy of the dove used with this term suggests a lingering sense of hopelessness by intimating that only a miracle could save him because even the privilege of retreat was denied him.<sup>332</sup>

The overwhelming sense of despair had provoked David to long for an oasis of retreat. The shepherd who faced the lion and the bear, the soldier who faced Goliath, desired to run when facing these circumstances. Depression had embraced a desire to withdraw and replaced courage with cowardice, as Spurgeon confirms, “It is cowardly to shun the battle which God would have us fight. It would have been more honorable for him to have asked for the strength of an ox to bear his trials, than for the wings of a dove.”<sup>333</sup>

In this overpowering state of desired withdrawal, David was consumed with escapism: "Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness" (55:7). David's focus changed from the place of withdrawal, to the means of escape. He now contemplates *naw-dad*, a term meaning to wander or stray with an emphasis on "motion away from" something.<sup>334</sup> David searches "for a place of rest" and contemplates fleeing to "a place far off" described as a *midbar* (wilderness), here meaning uninhabited land as Barnes suggests: "The word *wilderness* means, in the Scripture, a place not inhabited by man; a place where wild beasts resort; a place uncultivated. It does not denote, as with us, an extensive forest. It might be a place of rocks and sands, but the essential idea is, that it was uninhabited. In such a place, remote from the habitations of men, he felt that he might be at rest."<sup>335</sup>

These five symptoms suggest a deepening state of despair, implying that as David contemplated his circumstances, the light of hope became more dim and distant in his perception. Calvin summarizes this descent into deepening depression: "We may surely say that these are the words of a man driven to the borders of desperation. Such was the extremity in which he stood, that though prepared to abandon all, he could not obtain life even upon that condition. In such circumstances, in the anguish of this anxiety, we must not wonder that his heart was overwhelmed with the sorrows of death."<sup>336</sup>

It is with appreciation to the text's implied descent to deepening despondency that David's final expression is one of urgent escapism: "*chuwsh* (I would hasten) *miphlat* (my escape) from the windy storm and tempest" (55:8). Up to this point David consistently used the *qal* form in expressing thoughts of escape. Here he departs from the usual *qal* to the *hiphil*, translated "I would hasten." This form emphasizes the causative action suggesting that David's focus is now drawn to an immediate escape. Alexander explains the possible meanings of the verse:

*I will hasten my escape from rushing wind, from tempest.* Another construction of the first clause makes the verb intransitive and the noun a local one, as indicated by its form, *I will hasten (to) my refuge.* It is better, however, to give the *hiphal* verb its proper meaning, and nouns of the form here used denotes not only the place of action but the act itself. *My escape,*

literally *an escape for me or for myself*. The preposition in the last clause, though it properly means *from*, is constantly employed in Hebrew to denote or indicate comparison. If thus explained in this case, it would make the clause descriptive of the speed with which he wishes to escape, *more than the rushing wind and tempest*.<sup>337</sup>

Two points need emphasis. Alexander identifies the emphasis of personal focus. It was an escape for himself, or that he himself could secure. Alexander also points out the validity of comparative emphasis: that the escape planned would be a fast one, almost an instant one. That David emphasized the quickness of escape is conceded by Perowne:

In the first clause the word *miphlat* (occurring only here) may mean, according to its form, either the escape itself .or the place to which the escape is made. And, in the second, the preposition may mean either "from," or be used in comparison, as it often is. Maurer, Hupfeld, and others think that a comparison is here implied, to mark the exceeding swiftness of the flight, which would be more rapid than that of the storm.<sup>338</sup>

This extended contemplation of quick escape is suited to the severe measure of depression that David expressed, and is consistent with other passages such as Psalms 42 and 43, where David also expresses escapism while in emotional despair. As in these texts, the sense of David's remarks is deliverance from the circumstances causing his emotional struggles to find rest and peace from God. The triple reference to departure, "fly away" (verse 6), "wander off" (verse 7), "hasten my escape" (verse 8), suggests that David's thoughts of escape moved from simple contemplation to a higher degree of urgency and energy in keeping with a higher degree of emotional pain than that expressed in Psalms 42 and 43.

These six experiences--fear, trembling, sensing descending darkness, desiring withdrawal, cowardice, and intensifying degrees of escapism--are evident in this Psalm, and clearly identify the symptoms of depression. David defined this as "pain of heart (mind)."

### The circumstances of David's Depression

Psalm 55 indicates the circumstances of David's depression. The terminology of his emotional turmoil is evidenced in Psalm 55 as well. It remains to examine the background of the text to determine the factors leading to it. As much as various opinions are held regarding the author and historical circumstances surrounding Psalm 55, the text clearly establishes David as author: "To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A Psalm of David" (verse 1). It should be noted that there is sufficient information within the Psalm, regardless of establishing the historical circumstances surrounding it, to develop a Biblical approach to depression. Within the Psalm itself there are no less than five factors listed which contributed to the cause of this emotional state. David's mournful complaint was "because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked" (verse 3). Oppression is the translation of *'aqah*. The term is used only here in the Old Testament and alludes to pressure,<sup>339</sup> having as its root *'uwq* meaning to totter or cause to totter.<sup>340</sup>

In addition to oppression, the psalmist faced persecution: for they *mowt* "cast" *'awen* "iniquity" upon me, and *'aph* "in wrath" *satam* "they hate" me (verse 3). These terms present a picture of deliberate persecution. The sense of the verse is that out of spiteful and vicious animosity, David's enemies cast mischief or calamity upon him, maliciously laying snares for him, thus causing his heart to writhe.<sup>341</sup> Their anger and rage against David "is no sudden and transitory passion, but is boiled up into malice and hatred."<sup>342</sup>

David describes yet another cause of his depression: *ra'ah* "I have seen" *hamas* "violence" and *rib* "strife" in the city (verse 9). In the *qal*, as here, *ra'ah* emphasizes mental observation, perceiving, understanding,<sup>343</sup> and suggests contemplation of what is viewed. This term points to the fact that David's mind is weighed down. What pressed on his mind was *hamas*, meaning sinful violence (in contrast to natural catastrophe). This same term described the extreme wickedness of the world causing God's judgment of the flood (Gen. 6:11, 13).<sup>344</sup>

What further pressed on David's mind was *rib*. This has the broad meaning of verbal combat including quarreling and chiding, as well as physical combat, where the cause is foremost.<sup>345</sup> David was deeply disturbed by the wicked violence that had come upon Jerusalem: "Day

and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets” (55:10-11). The impending consequences of such offensive wickedness led to worry and contributed greatly to his depression.

David also refers to the pain caused by betrayal: “For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company” (55:12-14).

David was wounded in heart by the betrayal of a close friend and advisor. The tenor of this entire text is one of deep hurt—“not an enemy” (v. 12), bitter disappointment—“thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance” (v. 13), and crushing defeat—“I could have bore” (v. 12), implying he now could not), which led to severe depression—“my heart is sore pained” (v. 4). The fact that depression has resulted from oppression (v. 3), persecution (v. 3), violence and strife (v. 9), offensive wickedness (v. 11), and betrayal (vv. 12-14) allows the Psalm to stand alone as God's Word, in the matter of how the author dealt with the circumstances.

Nevertheless, a clear understanding of the exact life-context will enhance the understanding of the sources of stress and further provide a specific context for a Biblical approach to gaining victory over depression. Title and tradition ascribe the authorship to David, a position that has as much merit as any other conjecture.<sup>346</sup> As Scripture has detailed most of David's life, several instances in his experiences could fit the general tone of despair reflected in the Psalm. Calvin ascribes the Psalm to “a period when he [David] was reduced to extreme danger by the persecutions of Saul.”<sup>347</sup> The content of the Psalm, however, points toward the time of “Ahithophel's unfaithfulness and the rebellion of Absalom.”<sup>348</sup>

Ascribing the context of the Psalm to David's reaction to Absalom's rebellion finds good support within the text itself. The *Pulpit Commentary* details this support:

The probable date of the psalm is the time of Absalom's rebellion. David, still a dweller at Jerusalem (verses 9-11), has be-

come aware of the conspiracy which has been formed against him (verses 3-8), and of the participation in it of his "familiar friend," Ahithophel (verses 12-14). He is already contemplating flight from Jerusalem (verses 6-8), since he knows that his enemies seek his life (verse 4). Under these circumstances, he pours out his supplication.<sup>349</sup>

Although not without its own difficulties, especially in finding a suitable harmony of events (David's being still in the city yet knowing Ahithophel's betrayal seems to conflict with the order suggested in 2 Sam. 15), this position appears most agreeable with the content of the Psalm.

Barnes acknowledges the merits of this position with the following summary:

Of all the known events in the life of David, the supposition which regards the Psalm as composed during the rebellion of Absalom, and at the special time when he learned that the man whom he had trusted--Ahithophel--was among the traitors, is the most probable. All the circumstances in the Psalm agree with his condition at that time, and the occasion was one in which the persecuted and much-afflicted king would be likely to pour out the desires of his heart before God.<sup>350</sup>

Accepting the circumstances of Absalom's rebellion and Ahithophel's betrayal as the context of the Psalm, the sources of stress are more significant when understood to be from David's own son and from his closest advisor. Although the Psalm expresses how emotionally and mentally low David sunk, Scripture indicates that he recovered, reassumed the leadership of the nation as king, and continued as a God-fearing and divinely blessed king.

David's song, recorded in 2 Sam. 22 expresses His resolve. Although clearly after Ahithophel's disloyalty and compounded by his son's rebellion and death, followed by famine and war, David expresses a continued reliance upon the Lord. He wrote: "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my Saviour; you save me from violence. I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies" (2 Sam. 22: 2-4). David obviously overcame the

great despair and urgent escapism of Psalm 55. He found the solution to his severe emotional trauma. This solution expresses a Biblical approach to depression and is evident in Psalm 55.

### David's approach to Depression

The real value in this study is found in the discovery of David's methodology for dealing with his "pain of heart" or depression. Consistent with other Bible characters who experienced depression and found victory, Psalm 55 evidences David's prayerful admission of weakness (verse 2), a plea to God for help expressed in faith (verse 16), and a surrendered dependency upon God to intercede (verse 22), according to His will.

David's path to recovery began with his admission in prayer before God of the condition of his heart. He cried, "I mourn in my complaint, and make noise. My heart is sore pained within me" (verse 4). David followed this cry with a complete admission of the horror he experienced as addressed previously. The value of an honest expression of one's condition of heart before God is important. God sees the heart: "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

God knows the state of the inner man: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). Confession that leads to forgiveness begins with an acknowledgement of one's sinful heart: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:1-3). The Lord will not turn away from a truly repentant, totally open heart: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). Indeed, the point of man's continued walk with God is a willingness to concede the state of the inner man in relation to God: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if [there be any] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

The prayerful admission of weakness is evidenced in Psalm 55 as the beginning step to recovery from depression. This first step came because of his deep knowledge of and intimate relationship with God as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). David understands the loving care of God reflected in his admitted weakness. He also understood the righteous justice of God, which he expressed as a desire to see justice done by pleading for God to judge his enemies:

Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them (55:15).

God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abides of old. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God (55:19).

But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee (55:23).

Out of his close relationship with God, David took the first step toward victory over depression. David expressed honesty about his own pain, and honesty toward the source of his pain, namely, those who treated him unjustly. His was a free admission that he was helpless to do anything about either. Despite his walk with God, emotional pain persisted, and despite his call as king, wickedness prevailed. His desire was expressed in the confidence of a holy and just God and he asked for nothing more than what God had already promised to do, to sustain the righteous (verse 22) and to judge the wicked (verse 23). The cause that David gives for his plea for justice, "for wickedness is in their dwellings" (verse 15), is proof that he was not influenced by any personal resentment against his enemies, but simply denounced the just judgments of God upon those who persecute God's own.<sup>351</sup>

In conceding the horror he faced, David expressed a genuine, faith-filled call for help. Detailed information is given regarding this call for help: "As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice. He has delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me" (55:16-18).

There are several important aspects of David's pleas for help, which require careful examination. It is important to note the clear object of David's faith, "I will call upon God." In the heart of David, the



LORD (Jehovah), who revealed himself uniquely to His own people as the all-sufficient-one, alone could and would save him. This confident trust he expressed in his prayer. There is no self-determination present, no "mind-over-matter" confidence, and no "power of positive thinking." mentality. David is simply turning from his pain and consequent self-destructive thoughts to faith in the living God. He is turning from his own weakness to depend upon the strength of God, as Barnes affirms:

*As for me, I will call upon God.* That is, I have no other refuge in my troubles, yet I can go to him, and pour out all the desires of my heart before him. *And the Lord shall save me.* This expresses strong confidence. David was driven from his home, and his throne, and from the house of God,--a poor exile, forsaken by nearly all. But his faith did not fail. He confided in God, and believed that He was able to effect his deliverance, and that He would do it.<sup>352</sup>

In addition, this call for help was protracted over a period of time. Deliverance did not come instantly with prayer. David's faith took action by going to God in prayer, and that same faith kept him going back again and again: "Evening, and morning, and at noon" (verse 17), these being the stated times of prayer with the Jews.<sup>353</sup> Yet the emotional intensity of the whole text also suggests that David understood the call to importunate prayer. The phrase "Evening and morning and at noon" can also refer to a comprehensive expression meaning "continually, at every moment of the day."<sup>354</sup>

Prayer was foundational to David's approach to depression. David defines his expression of prayer in specific terms: "pray and cry aloud". These terms constitute a third important aspect to consider. Here, the word translated "pray" is *siah* and suggests either inward (silent) or outward (audible) expression: "The basic meaning of this verb seems to be "rehearse," "repent," or "go over a matter in one's mind." This meditation or contemplation is done either inwardly or outwardly. Since English differentiates these two notions, the word is usually rendered "meditate," or "talk."<sup>355</sup>

"To cry aloud" is a translation of the term *hama*, which emphasized an outward expression of unrest. This root term, used thirty-four times, means "cry out," "make a loud noise," or "be turbulent." It is a

strong word emphasizing unrest, commotion, strong feeling, or noise.<sup>356</sup>

The only two times that these words are used together in Scripture are here and in Ps. 77:3: "I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed." In each text, the emphasis appears to be an audible prayer expressed in troubled times during private devotion with God. This fact suggests that the prayer was in the company of others (hence out loud), or that there is something to be gained during a state of mental and emotional upheaval, when one is able to hear oneself articulate one's request to God.

Whether to share in corporate prayer, to affirm the reality of prayer when troubled of mind, or to confirm the tangibility of personal faith, voiced prayer is meant. This prayer led to an expressed sense of certainty regarding God's answer, "He shall hear my voice. He has delivered my soul in peace from the battle" (verses 17b-18). This certainty is indicated by the phrases, "He shall hear," and "He has delivered". Kirkpatrick explains the nature of these expressions of certainty: "*And he shall hear*: By an idiom which cannot be translated, the psalmist speaks of this hearing as a present fact. So in v. 18 he uses the 'perfect of certainty,' *He has redeemed*, for the context makes it clear that deliverance has not actually reached him."<sup>357</sup>

David's faith expressed in calling for help through importunate, audible prayer affirmed in his heart a certainty of victory, which ultimately secured the hope of peace of soul (verse 18). This was a *shalom* (completeness or soundness)<sup>358</sup> of the *nephesh*--the very center of his depression. This certainty moved him to the freedom of complete hope, by surrendering his life into the care of God.

David reached this conclusion: "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Ps. 55:22). The final answer for David was to see his burden of depression as *ye-hawb*, 'meaning, "what had been given or ascribed to him"<sup>359</sup> from the Lord. This called for a resolve to accept the circumstances and their consequences as the will of God, even if it meant emotional struggle. In seeing this trauma as from the Lord, "David *shaw-lak* – cast or abandoned it into the care of God."<sup>360</sup> This called for a surrender to the present and future will of God.

David, in his state of turmoil and genuine mental pain, was to leave the matter in the hands of God, accepting by faith the Lord's decision, whether to remove the pain or to strengthen the weak in the pain. Calvin captures the essence of verse 22:

The exhortation is to the effect that we should resign into the hands of God the care of those things which may concern our advantage. David recommends it as a due part of modesty in our supplications, that we should transfer to God the care of those things which we ask, and there can be no question that the only means of checking an excessive impatience is an absolute submission to the Divine will.<sup>361</sup>

The Psalmist's ultimate expression of faith was not one of demanding deliverance, nor one of focused future blessing, but one of acceptance of God's will. David was resigned to accept the pain or the deliverance, in the power and grace of God, believing God would sustain him, not necessarily removing the burden, but giving strength to bear it, upholding him lest he should fall under its weight.<sup>362</sup> The final phrase of the Psalm captures the essence of David's approach to depression. "I will trust in thee" (55:23).

The evidence of Scripture supports the premise that David's approach to depression--prayerful admission of weakness, a plea to God for help expressed in faith, and a surrendered dependency upon God to intercede, according to His will--sustained him through the crises and restored him to his God-given responsibilities as King of Israel. This approach is further elaborated in the section chapter 7: "Coping with Depression."

It is evident in the text that David's approach rested upon his understanding of God. It is therefore valuable to this study to examine more fully David's theology in depression.

### David's theology in Depression

It is evident that David had a firm grip on his spiritual resources. Throughout Psalm 55, David shares the spiritual resources he found effective in enabling him to deal with depression. These are outlined as objective resources and subjective resources.

As to David's understanding of objective resources, he refers to God:

1. To His identity: “Destroy *O Lord*, and divide their tongues” (55:9). David refers to God as ‘*Adonay*, referring to “His sovereign dominion”<sup>363</sup> and therefore His authority to judge all. “As for me, I will call upon God; and *Yehovah* (the LORD) shall save me” (55:16); “Cast thy burden upon *Yehovah* (the LORD), and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (55:22). Twice David refers to God as *Yehovah*, the name given to Israel for God as the “self-existent One who reveals Himself,”<sup>364</sup> denoting His special relationship to His people.

2. To His nature: David understands God as a merciful God, willing to save (55:16); a redeeming God (55:18); an eternal God (55:19); a righteous God, judging wickedness (55:19, 23); a sustaining God (55:22a); and a faithful God (22b).

As to David’s subjective spiritual resources, he refers to:

1. Prayer: “Give ear (*teph-il-lah*)” “to my prayer, O God” (55:1); “I mourn (*siyach*)” “in my complaint,” and make a noise” (55:2); “As for me, “I will call upon God (*qara*)” (55:16); “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud (*haw-maw*)” (55:17). David’s use of multiple terms for prayer, covering a broad spectrum of special manners of coming before God, demonstrates his familiarity and reliance upon prayer in life.

2. Faith and trust: He alludes to his faith in God as the certainty of help: “The LORD shall save me” (55:16); “He shall hear my voice” (55:17); “He has delivered my soul in peace” (55:18); “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved” (55:22). He speaks specifically of his trust in God: “I will trust in thee” (55:23).

It is evident that God has furnished the believer with an in-depth Biblical view of depression from the single and relatively short Psalm 55. Here God has furnished a Biblical definition of this emotional state: “My heart is sore pained within me.” God has also identified many of its symptoms: fear, trembling, sensing descending darkness, desiring withdrawal, cowardice, escapism expressed in varying degrees.

## Conclusion

In each of these specific texts, God has revealed the Biblical approach to gaining victory over depression. This approach is consistent with other texts of Scripture where other people also found deliverance. This approach is summarized as follows:

1. A prayerful admission of weakness
2. A plea to God for help expressed in faith
3. A surrendered dependency upon God to intercede according to

His will.

The pain of David's suffering as expressed in Psalm 55 was as real as that of Paul's expressed in 2 Cor. 12. David's victory was as sure as Paul's, because God's sensitivity to the pain of His children does not diminish with time nor change with circumstances. Charles Stanley points out: "Pain, once it is brought into the throne room of God, commands His personal attention. Paul's unwavering faith brought a new sense of strength to his life, one that he had never experienced before this moment. Strength that knows it is strong is really weakness. But weakness that cries out to God for help is strength far beyond human understanding."<sup>365</sup>

## CHAPTER 8

*"That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth, That you may answer words of truth To those who send to you?" Words of The Wise*

### USING PSALM 55 AS A COUNSELLING TEXT FOR DEPRESSION

As indicated, the Biblical record indicates that many Bible passages uniquely address depression. Two of these passages stand out: Psalm 55 and the Epistle of 2 Corinthians. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians, while expressing in broader terms some of the symptoms of depression, presents specific New Testament terms to clarify it. The passage 2 Cor. 4:8-12 also suggests that there is a point in which depression leads to a self-led or soul-led life and becomes sin. That point is evident in Paul's life as the choice either to succumb to depression or to trust in God for enablement to persevere despite the struggle.

Further, Paul's response to the apparent stressful condition of his ill health parallels the Biblical approach to depression established through comparative analysis:

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.  
(2 Cor. 12:7-9).

Although no reference is directly given here to define depression, Paul's expressed dependency upon God alone for strength supports the premise established as the Biblical approach. Whereas 2 Corinthians is a valued, single epistle resource, for the purposes of simplifying counsel, Psalm 55 offers a more concise text.

One of the purposes of this book is to simplify a Christian counselling approach to depression leading to depression by determining the suitability of a single text for such counsel. Psalm 55 addresses that

purpose. Psalm 55 is a single, suitable point of Scripture reference for distinguishing the definition, causes, and symptoms of depression and outlines the Biblical model for overcoming it.

### Implications of the Biblical Definition of Depression in Counselling

As summarized earlier, Ps. 55:4 expresses the Biblical definition of depression as “pain of heart (mind).” Defining depression as “pain” during counselling sessions offers a number of immediate advantages. The confusion created by medical terminology is minimized. Even a child can understand pain. To see depression as “pain of soul” even as an individual experiences “pain of body” opens the door for the sufferer to view emotional trauma immediately from a Biblical perspective. Viewing depression as pain diminishes the sense of isolation from others by relating suffering to something very common.

The fact that a prominent Bible character such as David is identified as a depression sufferer also offers a point of reference in council. This commonality with David, a “man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14), offers a sense of hope as well. Viewing depression as pain helps overcome the stigma and self-incrimination often associated with emotional suffering. This is especially true within a Christian environment where the symptoms of depression are viewed as sin. With this definition of depression, the counselor can relate emotional suffering to the physical suffering of broken bones or even cancer.

Although emotional pain and physical pain are obviously different, each can be severe enough to cause a measure of debilitation, and each must be approached with confident trust in God to empower the life to overcome the resulting debilitation. This too offers a common point of reference for the sufferer. Because of the commonality of pain in society, Psalm 55 is particularly suited as a text for counselling the sufferers of depression. With David’s definition of depression as a starting point, not only is much confusion over terminology bypassed, but clear and identifiable symptoms are also available to simplify council.

### Implications of the Biblical Symptoms of Depression in Counselling

Ps. 55:4-8 presents a unique summary list of the symptoms of depression: fear, trembling, sensing descending darkness, desiring with-

drawal, cowardice, and escapism expressed in varying degrees. These symptoms, readily identifiable within four short verses of Scripture, offer a point of identity with David for the sufferer. It has been this researcher's experience to see David's expression of the symptoms of depression invaluable in counselling believers suffering from depression. The phrases, when explained in terms of symptoms, are readily identified in the lives of sufferers.

The relatively thorough list of symptoms referred to in this passage encourages important discussion of key issues relating to depression. These issues cover struggles with such symptoms as constant weeping to the weightier matters of escapism. In particular, David's description of depression as "descending darkness" has matched the experience of counselees.

The concise yet brief list of symptoms evident in this Psalm also enhances the sufferer's confidence in the Scripture, which in turn minimizes the inclination to seek other sources. With the opportunity that this Psalm affords to progress through a single text and identify as many as seven common symptoms of depression, it has been my experience to find counselees comforted by the accuracy of Scripture. They become eager to understand the Biblical approach clearly laid out in this Psalm.

### Implications of the Biblical Approach to Depression in Counselling

David's clear and simple approach to his personal struggles with depression, as set forth in Psalm 55, is a definite asset to counselling depression sufferers. In the distress of depression, the Christian is urged to adopt this Biblical approach:

- Step 1. Acknowledge in prayer before God the emotional struggle.
- Step 2. With a firm belief in the mercy and grace of God, plea in prayer for the help of God.
- Step 3. Trust in the wisdom of God to complete His perfect will and rely on the strength of God to sustain through suffering.

The counselor, in explaining this Biblical approach from Psalm 55, has opportunity to lead a sufferer through critical areas of faith, regardless of the cause of emotional pain. If sin is the root cause, step one affords the opportunity to address the need for repentance and faith in God. If circumstances are the root cause, step 1 affords the oppor-



tunity to address the need of acceptance of God's path in life.

Step 2 and step 3 afford the counselor opportunity to explain the God-appointed responsibilities and privileges of His children to express their dependence upon Him. David's theology evident in Psalm 55 offers a background for discussing one's personal relationship to God. These steps afford a measurement of the depth of personal knowledge of God and the state of 'sustaining faith' in a counselee's life. It has been my experience to see God use the truths of this passage to deliver many Christian sufferers, even as He did in Bible times. The counselor is urged to review Chapter 9, "Coping with depression: God's help for the sufferer" which presents practical help during counselling sessions.

As this research indicates, difficulty and confusion have arisen because of the increasing number of believers who seek secular counselling as well as the increasing number of "Christian" counselors who adapt secular terms and philosophies. This biblically based approach helps alleviate that dilemma regarding depression and is equally helpful in counselling many other circumstances of emotional trauma and pain. Scripture indicates the necessary personal conditions for finding God's help in coping with depression as well as all manner of pain and trauma.

***Quest Six:***

***To develop a Biblical strategy for  
coping with depression:  
Can God help the depression sufferer?***

## CHAPTER 9

*"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." David*

### COPING WITH DEPRESSION: GOD'S HELP FOR THE SUFFERER

It is evident from our study that the Bible has much to say about depression. We have looked at the Biblical perspective, theology, definition, and evidence of depression. From the terminology and testimonies, the reality of what modern society calls depression was evident, even in Bible times. The Bible information has availed the opportunity to identify the common symptoms of depression and a Biblical definition of depression: 'Pain of Mind.'

Further, from the specific Scripture evidence of Bible characters, primarily David in Psalm 55, but also Paul and Jesus Christ, a unique Biblical approach to depression for the people of God has been identified. Now attention is given to making application of what has been discovered. From the examples of Bible sufferers, and with focus specifically on Psalm 55 for guidance, the Scriptures do address the sought after answer of how to cope with depression. The answer begins with the prerequisite of salvation.

#### The Prerequisite: SALVATION

As our theology of depression indicated, fallen man requires a renewal of the Spirit-led life. Therefore, God's help for the sufferer has a prerequisite, and that prerequisite is salvation itself.

Why is salvation necessary? The reason is that man, who is born with his spirit out of fellowship with God, cannot be led by God. Jesus said a man must be 'born again.' The need is to bring men and women into fellowship with God in order for God to deliver them from soul-bondage. The prerequisite involves the Spirit of God restoring the spirit of man. When we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, the Spirit of God enters into the being of man and makes alive man's spirit that was dead to God from birth. When salvation takes place the spirit of man is restored to fellowship with God. Sin this act of salvation man comes to truly know God (see appendix B for further explanation) and

therefore is able to be led by the Spirit of God. Paul describes this transition: “If any man is in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”

All things are new because now the Spirit of God is in the believer and the believer’s spirit is alive to God. The believer is a new person! The Spirit of God residing in man is not just a matter of declared salvation. Rather, that new life is qualified and defined as having fellowship with God. His Spirit is *actively* residing the believer’s life. At salvation, the Spirit of God immediately and permanently resides: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” said Jesus.

The fact that one cannot lose salvation is foundational to God’s help for the sufferer. A believer can break fellowship with God by sin but is still alive to God and under His promised care. We cannot lose our salvation, the Spirit of God is in us. He abides in us from salvation and throughout eternity.

This is where we begin with the Biblical perspective of coping with depression. It was difficult for me as a pastor when unsaved people would come to me for counsel as depression sufferers. I would begin counsel with sharing the need for salvation. Often the counsel was dismissed as irrelevant, or deemed to be the inappropriate remarks of an overzealous religious fanatic obsessed with a ‘born again’ mentality.

The flip side of this counsel was the reality that salvation in itself does not remedy depression. I could not make that promise any more than I could state that salvation guarantees a painless life. Jesus Himself said that his disciples would bear the same cup (suffering) that he bore. The Bible makes no promises of a painless and prosperous life on earth for every believer. But, the Bible clearly indicates that the guidance, sustaining strength, and tender care of God in such suffering can only come by those whose spirit is alive to God through salvation.

Depression sufferers have to be in a position where the Spirit of God can lead. The only people that are in such a position are God’s people who have come to know Him by faith in Christ’s substitutional sacrifice for sin and victorious resurrection over death. Such are those who are regenerated by God’s Spirit (Titus 3:5), those who have received the gift of eternal life in Christ. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom.

6:23). Possessing the gift of salvation is the prerequisite for coping with depression. Following the ‘prerequisite of salvation,’ there is the necessary ‘preparation of transformation.’

### The Preparation: TRANSFORMATION

Salvation is more than an insurance policy to guarantee heaven, it is a transformation of life! The Bible teaches that this transformation is a result of the cooperative effort of the indwelling Spirit of God and the believer’s disciplines of the Christian life. Here the personal and progressive transformation of life in Christ is the essential factor. It is this progressive transformation, otherwise known as sanctification, which enables depression sufferer to cope. This transformed life begins with a renewed mind by the Word of God. This is clearly seen in David’s life.

#### *David’s Difficult Circumstances*

As reviewed earlier, Psalm 55 indicates that the reason for David’s struggle with depression is his friend’s abandonment of him. David is referring to the time when, as king, his son Absalom desired to return to Jerusalem. David would not welcome Absalom back. Consequently, the prophet came and encouraged him to do so. David responded by allowing his son to return however he would not permit Absalom to enter into the king’s presence. In defiance of this restriction, Absalom commenced sitting at the gate and ‘winning the hearts of people.’

At the opportune moment, Absalom rebelled and took over the throne. This undoubtedly caused emotional turmoil within the heart of David. However, the text indicates a greater disappointment to David. Perhaps not surprised at Absalom’s actions due to his own mishandling of his son, David was definitely surprised and deeply hurt at Ahithaphel’s betrayal. This closest friend of David’s jumped ship! As soon as Absalom took over, Ahithaphel joined Absalom. The text indicates that David and Ahithaphel used to go to the house of the Lord and worship together, obviously suggesting a close personal friendship. Therefore, loyalty would have been expected and sought after as a

source of council and comfort. This betrayal led to David's deep depression.

### *David's Relationship with God*

It is in this deep state of depression we see David's relationship with God as a meaningful help. In Psalm 55 David gives testimony to a walk with God, which prepared him for coping with the depression. He acknowledged several things about God, which indicates that he knew God intimately. David knew God's unique identity; he referred to him as Adonah and Yaweh or Jehovah. These names indicate who God is toward His own children. David, choosing these names specifically acknowledged God's Sovereign Dominion and authority to judge as Jehovah. This name, given to Israel reflects God as the self-existent One, who chose David as His regent king. These names were precious to the Israelites, conveying security in the covenant keeping God.

David further acknowledged God's unique nature. He knows God as merciful, willing to save, redeeming the estranged. He declares the eternal God as the righteous God, the sustaining God, the faithful God. All of this David knew, not only intellectually, but experientially. He knew who God was, he knew the greatness of God, not only in being Creator, but the greatness of God in his life as he defeated the lions and the bears as a boy looking after the sheep, and as he defeated Goliath. He knew God who had blessed him with wisdom and strength as Israel's king.

In our examination of Psalm 55 the evidence of David's deep knowledge of God was very clear. The reason for that was due to his personal pursuit of God through the Scriptures. David's high esteem and tremendous value of Holy Scripture is repeatedly stated throughout Psalm 119. This is summarized in Psalm 19:8-10:

The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Paul was a student of God's Word. His approach to, and theology of suffering evident in 2 Corinthians was an extension of his under-

standing of God. This is collaborated in Paul's expression of purpose in life: "That I might know Him, and the power of his resurrection , and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death" (Php 3:10).

These texts and additional scriptures of David and Paul reveal that they not only knew the facts about God, but experienced God in their lives. These experiences affirmed the truth of God's attributes, the reality of His care, and the certainty of His promises as declared in Scripture. Their lives had been transformed by God's Word as God's Spirit brought renewed thinking and divine insight, according to promise: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Believers have to think the way God thinks. It's not enough just to be saved, an individual must be saved and then renewed in mind. In Romans 12:2 Paul says "Don't be conformed to the world." In other words, don't think the way the world thinks... in terms of what man is regarding his origin, his inherent weaknesses, or the source of his problems. Paul goes on to say, "be transformed by the renewing of your mind." God does not want the believer to be entangled in the world's pattern of thinking, but to be "transformed" or changed from within, "by the renewing of our mind." The indwelling Spirit who transforms our thinking through the Word of God accomplishes this.

The single greatest discipline of the believer's life is to be in the Word of God daily. If you were to ask the members of each of the two churches I pastored what my most frequent call to them was, what I 'badgered' them the most about, they would say Bible devotions every day and prayer. These are the foundation of all the other disciplines in the Christian life. Personal Bible study is the means by which our mind is renewed by the Spirit of God. Through the process of meaningful Bible study, we grow in the knowledge of God so that knowing Him becomes the grounding for our life.

Transformed thinking leading to transformed lives are preparatory for coping with depression. Believers who suffer from depression must be honest about their devotion to personal Bible study as a Christian discipline of life.

As a pastor, I used these questions to help believers evaluate the extent of transformation of life through the word: How well do you know God? Do you know him beyond the statement of Bible facts such as “God is Love,” “the Lord is my strength,” “I will never leave you.” Have the truths of these facts been realized in your experiences of life? Have you discovered what the names of God mean, and should mean to you? Do you know the character of God? Are you confident in God’s love or do you question his love when challenging times come?

After salvation, to grow in your knowledge of God comes from the first Christian discipline of letting your mind be renewed on a daily basis through study of God’s Word. The transformation of our lives cannot take place adequately unless we read the Word of God, study the Word of God, memorize the Word of God, meditate on the Word of God, and follow the Word of God.

Here is a very significant fact from 25 years of pastoral ministry and counselling dozens of people, mostly church members, for multiple reasons. Apart from pre-marital counselling, helping young couples establish a family budget, and dealing with believer’s struggling under reactions to medications, I have never counseled any believer seeking help with personal relationship problems or emotional problems, which had consistent, meaningful personal Bible centered devotions every day.

God leads His people to life’s answers when they spend the time being transformed by Him. The truth is clear, God convicts, leads, directs to resolve issues, and strengthens to persevere, His own children as He promised: “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). Understand that there is a necessity for all of God’s people to be transformed. Each believer must let God change their lives, to build His Word, His values, His truths into their lives.

God’s people alone have this unique privilege. God can convey through His Word, and by His indwelling Spirit, all that is necessary for all of life’s challenges. The preparation for coping with depression is a progressively transformed life through the regular study of His Word. Jesus said it so simply: “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’” (Matt. 4:4).



David was truly a transformed man through his walk with God. He had come to realize that these experiences of life confirmed God's promised tender care. His relationship with God had grown to the point where he was called a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). In this confidence of his relationship to the Lord, as a man after God's own heart, David took stock of his life. The Psalm expresses David's painful but profitable self-evaluation.

### The Process: SELF-EVALUATION

It is evident throughout Psalm 55 that David's depression brought self-evaluation. Psalm 55 was not like Psalm 51 a Psalm of confession. Through obvious contemplation, David came to understand that his state of depression was not because of his own sin, but clearly resulted from the oppression of his enemies (verse 3). As King, David was burdened by the violence and strife in the city (verse 9). As a man of God, David was burdened by the iniquity within the city (verse 10). These circumstances had undoubtedly been matters of contemplation and evaluation.

Assuredly, with God's help, he was able to determine that the breaking point, the proverbial last straw precipitating his emotional breakdown, began with the betrayal of Ahithophel (verses 12-14). David was confident enough in this fact that he did not hesitate to call upon God to judge his enemies accordingly (verses 9, 15, 19).

The very title of the psalm, given by inspiration, is "A Contemplation of David." The Hebrew term is *mas-keel* from *saw-kal*, meaning, to look upon or have insight, to give attention to, to consider, to ponder to be prudent. The title itself conveys the idea of contemplation and therefore, in the context, self-evaluation.

David's depression called for evaluation. Similarly, when any of God's children encounter hardship including depression, there is a necessity for self-evaluation. Pain always has a purpose with God. Philip Yancey stated: "Pain [physical], then, is not God's great goof. It is a gift- the gift that nobody wants. Without it, our lives would be open to abuse and horrible decay."<sup>366</sup> Depression, defined by David as 'the pain of mind' has unique purpose. That single purpose may be simply to evaluate ones' life.

Self-examination allows the Holy Spirit to guide the believer to the cause of depression and direct the believer to God's will. David's deepening relationship with God and God-led self-evaluation prepared him to approach this depression with determination to pursue God.

### The Path: SUPPLICATION

David's expression of determination to pursue God in his state of depression is seen in his crying out "My heart is sore pained within me." David was determined to go first to God in prayer! This is God's determined point of believer determination. Prayer is the key to coping!

#### *David's Determination before God*

Psalm 55 begins "give ear to my prayer, O God." David was determined in his emotional state to begin with prayer and to carry on with prayer. Within this prayer, his trust in God is genuinely expressed. He refers to God as the certainty of his help. He says "the Lord shall save me." In this state of terrible depression David is saying 'God shall save me,' 'God shall hear my voice,' 'he has delivered my soul in peace.' He then makes this comment cast your burden upon the Lord and He shall sustained you," a text which Peter repeats in his Epistle addressing the persecuted church.

David concludes the Psalm by stating: "I will trust in thee." Notice the choices David makes. He is depressed, just as anyone else might be, but because of his transforming relationship with God and continued maturity in the Lord, the Spirit of God is uniquely working in his life. In this deep depression, while considering suicide, David chooses to turn to God and to declare that God will look after him. David is expressing his faith in the living God.

**The path of determination begins with Step #1: *Acknowledge in prayer the emotional struggle*.** It is to go to God and acknowledge to Him the pain. David conceded the pain. All God's children must follow his example. With David, all must cry, "My heart is sore pained within me." God expects honesty when approached and His own privileged to go before Him. There is a need to, with honesty and humility, acknowledge the emotional state.

When reading the Psalms it is a wonder how the writers speak so boldly to Almighty God?

Asaph prayed “O God, why have you cast us off forever?” Psm. 74:1,

The sons of Korah cried: “Lord, why do you cast off my soul? Why do you hide your face from me?”

David cried: “Awake! Why do You sleep, O Lord? Arise! Do not cast us off forever.” Ps 44:23,

David cried: “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?” Psm. 13:1.

Although the life situations were different, these individuals expressed the privilege of God’s children: to share what is in their hearts to their Father in Heaven. It is legitimate to pray: “Lord, I am really frustrated,” ... “Lord I am angry” ... “Lord, I am so depressed I want to die!”

God’s children tell God about the pain, that’s what a Father wants. He is our father; we come to him as a child.

And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." Mr 14:36.

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." Ro 8:15

When young, I would call my dad “father” when I did something wrong and he disciplined me. But when I fell off my bicycle or when I got knocked down playing, it was “Daddy, Daddy, I’m hurt!” This is the “Abba, Father” privilege His children have. God desires that same relationship with His own.

**The path of determination continues with Step #2: *Plead in faith for the help of God.*** This is exactly what David did: “O God I call upon you. Deliver me. Help me. Strengthen me.” Christians call upon God with belief because this is where the transformed life leads. This is belief, this is faith’s experience with God. By faith, believers are saved for eternity! Pain is just temporary; therefore, faith in God for pain should be an easier thing.

In this psalm, we are given much detail about the actual method of David's prayer. When dealing with emotional struggles, the Lord foreknew the importance of clarity to troubled hearts.

The word here, translated 'prayer,' has the idea of *praying audibly*. This word suggests that when we go to God in prayer under these circumstances, we call out to God audibly. There are two possible reasons for audible prayer that come to mind: one is the very experience that my friend had in the hospital. When he would come out of his depression enough to communicate, I would talk to him and encourage him to pray. He was initially unable to pray. We discovered that he could not comprehend the fact that he was talking to God unless he spoke aloud and could hear himself.

When he heard himself pray, it was an affirmation that he was really doing so. Perhaps that is exactly what God is saying here; in deep mental struggles, one cannot often realize what reality is. The mind is out of tune, in a fog. So praying aloud is a way, by hearing oneself pray, to confirm the reality of praying to God. It is a confirmed expression of faith in God.

Another reason for audible prayer is that it suggests praying with others present. When I was researching resources for this study, I read about 200 secular books on depression as well as many medical journals (See available research document as per page 29). I discovered a unique fact: the approach that most American psychologists and psychiatrists take in treating depression is psycho-pharmacological. They prescribe some form of drug therapy. Yet, in many European countries, the approach is often group therapy. The statistical studies indicated that the percentage of people getting past depression is the same with the European group therapy as in America with drug therapy. Obviously, people support has great potential.

Perhaps this is God's point as well. People make a difference. How much greater potential for help are supporting people who have the ear of God! Praying with others present or having shared prayer support is a means by which God calls his people to deal with depression. God encourages sufferers to pray out loud as an affirmation of the reality of prayer, and with the same word, encourages sufferers to have a prayer support group.

Secondly, the text indicates *praying resolutely* to God. “As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me!” verse 16. We are to pray with a fixed focus and a firm grasp. In other words, it is all about God, not about us. Praying resolutely is to affirm with David: “I’m in God’s hands, and God will be my strength” (see verses 17-18).

Sometimes it is necessary to put ‘deliverance’ in perspective. God’s people are often so worldly-minded that we forget what true deliverance with God is. There was a time when Jesus Christ, claiming to be the Messiah, was taken out of the synagogue to be cast over a cliff. The Bible says, “Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.” The Lord delivered Him. Peter and Paul were each imprisoned, and delivered. God rescued them from their confinement miraculously.

Such incidents often define our understanding of deliverance. However, there was also the time when Stephen was giving a testimony to the grace of God and the angry crowd picked up stones and killed him. Did God fail in this situation? Or, was Stephen delivered? From God’s perspective, I believe death was the greater delivery!

What does the Bible say? Stephen entered into heaven and the Lord was standing, with His arms open, to welcome him. Why would God put that little bit of information in there? Why didn’t God just say “He was stoned and went into the presence of God?” Scripture states that Stephen was stoned, and then personally welcomed into heaven by Jesus. Stephen’s work was finished, his *deliverance* complete. He entered his God’s promised rest! God’s perspective of deliverance focuses on eternity with Him, not temporary reprieve from struggle.

I recall being encouraged by Dr. Tson’s testimony in this regard. He was a Romanian pastor who was mistakenly given a government permit to leave his ‘Iron Curtain’ country. In those days no one was permitted to leave the country, especially for education. However, by an error, he received permission to go to Oxford University where he studied theology. Upon graduation, he promptly returned to Romania to share the gospel and establish churches. He was not satisfied with going undercover in the underground church. He stood on the street corners and preached the gospel. The KGB came along and beat him. They entered his house and trashed it. They told him to stop or suffer the consequences. He would not stop. The KGB became more

intense in their beatings and threats saying “the next time you are a dead man.”

He mentioned studying through Hebrews at this time and coming to Hebrews 4:12-15 where he discovered that Satan has only one stronghold on people -the fear of death. It was here he discovered what he called a Theology of Martyrdom: Why fear death when, to a believer, this is deliverance from present misery and entrance into God’s eternal rest and reward!

The day came when he again was taken before the KGB officer. This time the commander was there and ordered the guards to leave the room. With no one else in the room and the door closed, Dr. Tson thought the end had come. However, instead of taking out his revolver, the officer pulled up a chair, sat down beside him. The officer said, “I have been watching them beat you and threaten you for many months and see you have no fear of death. Tell me what I need to do to have no fear of death.” Dr. Tson had opportunity to share Christ with him. Shortly after Dr. Tson’s release, the government expelled him from the country. To carry on in God’s strength or to be delivered into God’s rest is the Biblical perspective of deliverance!

Fear should be out of the realm of God’s people when they come to understand what true deliverance is. Praying resolutely acknowledges and embraces, with confident hope and joyful expectation, the true perspective of God’s deliverance. David prayed audibly, he prayed resolutely knowing ‘the Lord would deliver him.’

Next, the text indicates *praying habitually*. Verse 17 states that David prayed “evening and morning and at noon.” Prayer was the pattern of David’s life (Psalm 5:3, 119:62). When emotional despondency overtook him, he did not suddenly develop deeper devotion and say, “Oh, from now on I’m going to make sure I pray morning, noon & night.” No, this was a low point in his life, not a high point. However, because prayer was the pattern of his life, he knew by experience, its essentiality. He was another Daniel, determined in difficult times, to carry on the usual pray life even though it could mean being thrown into the lion’s den, or in David’s case, even though it could mean continued emotional struggle. Nothing changed.

David’s usual habit of regular devotion in God’s Word and prayer did not change even when he was depressed. He did not isolate him-

self from God as so often happens when God's people become depressed. I have found that the first thing church members do when depressed is stop going to church, the second thing they do is stop reading the Bible and praying. David's relation with God prior to his emotional struggle did not prevent the trial, but was meaningful enough to prevent abandoning God! A steady devotion life before trials is the best preparation for any trial.

The text continues to define calling out to God as *praying trustingly*. David's determination was not a matter of positive thinking but a matter of faith: "He shall never permit the righteous to be moved," verse 22, "I will trust in Him" verse 23. David did not have faith in faith, the dilemma of so many today that are without true salvation, he had faith in the living God, resulting in the past life changing experiences of walking with God which became his present hope!

Pain of mind, the potentially debilitating struggle with depression, is God's call to prayer. Psalm 55 defines the character of that prayer as audible, resolute, habitual and trusting. All these characteristics of prayer are the outcome of a meaningful walk with God; God's invited privilege and expected pattern of the believer's life:

Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. Ps 62:8.

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. Isa 40:31

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Mt 11:29

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Joh 10:10

**Finally, the path of determination concludes with Step 3: *Surrender in dependency upon God to intercede.*** As mentioned earlier, David's statement "Cast your care upon Him" was an abandonment of his suffering into the care of God. It was to leave the matter in the hands of God, accepting by faith the Lord's decision, whether to remove the pain or to strengthen the weak in the pain. This reflected the surrendered dependence on God expressed throughout the psalm; God

would complete His will for David's wicked opposers (v. 18-19), his betraying enemy (v. 20-21), and his own suffering (v. 16, 18, 22, 24).

This was the nature of Christ's prayer before the cross. "Father, take this cup from me, nevertheless, Thy will be done." This is the model prayer in depression's strong grip, "Lord, I am in a state of depression! Oh God, I cannot stand it, I am in pain, deliver me from this, nevertheless, I trust you. I know that you will be my strength, I know that you will sustain me, strengthen me, deliver me, God your will be done."

This was David's life experience: I love you, O LORD, my strength. "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." Psalm 18:1-2.

When suffering from depression, and desiring escape, often the last thing God's people want to hear is; "Maybe this is God's will for you." However, can the Lord our Shepherd be trusted? That is the challenge. The believer's call is "to live by faith," not emotion, but faith! This is the very essence of what makes Christians so unique.

The suffering believer's determination, according to David's example and Christ's example, is to 'cast your burden with hope.' The burden is the lot that is given. It is our circumstance, our suffering. In Galatians 6:1 we are told, "bear one another's burdens" and so fulfill the law of God" but in the same passage (verse 5), we are told to "bear your own burden." The two words translated 'burden' are different in the original language.

When God tells us to bear our own burdens (*bar'-os*) He speaks of the responsibilities He has given us. We have no right to pass these on anybody else. However, when He says bear one another's burdens (*for-tee'-on*) God is speaking of circumstances, concerns, agonies and all manner of troubles. God's people are to share these with one another, help carry one another. In regard to suffering from depression, prayer support is valuable as noted, however the call is to cast our circumstance on the Lord." It is to 'place our problem in God's hands. This is the believer's great privilege, and ultimate step of faith.

Believers stand in God's righteousness as His children, therefore, God the Father promises to take stewardship of their pain. Can believers put anything they have in better hands than God's? This does not



necessarily mean He will remove the suffering, but He will take stewardship of it. He will provide, He will strengthen, and He will accomplish His purpose, which is to continue the process of sanctification until we enter into His presence (Php. 1:6). This is the promise that keeps His own people pressing on, making the right choices rather than allowing pain to lead to wrong choices. This is the promise that keeps the believer from bowing to the secular acceptance of wrong choices as a symptom of depression rather than a possible consequence of depression.

Each believer has the privilege to ‘cast’ his or her burdens on God with hope, claiming His promise to sustain. In placing problems in God’s hands, He promises to sustain, to support, to nourish by His Spirit and His Word so that His own will be able to cope with or be rescued from them.

That is His promise. Which is better? It depends on what God’s purposes are. Like Christ, the believer’s desire should be, “Lord if you can accomplish Your purposes with me coping with depression rather than escaping or being rescued from depression, then Your will be done.” This is a tough thing to say, but it was David’s desire. He believed that God would take responsibility for his personal care according to His promise, and His will.

#### The Pattern: INSTRUCTION

The previous examination of Old Testament and New Testament believers who suffered from depression indicates three common causes. There were depression sufferers as a result of unconfessed sin exemplified in the unbeliever Cain and believers Jonah and Hezekiah. There were others such as Rachel and Hannah who suffered from depression due to social and family pressures resulting in unrealized expectations. The greater number of sufferers in scripture experienced depression as a result of uncontrollable circumstances.

God’s children who suffer from depression can take comfort and find instruction through these Biblical examples. Paul reminded the church of this very truth: “these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction.” 1 Cor. 10:11

*Depression as a result of Unconfessed Sin*

As with Jonah and Hezekiah, believers today can suffer depression because of unconfessed sin. However, unlike the unbeliever, a child of God indwelt by the Holy Spirit, has a resident helper. It is the business of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin (John 16:8). For a child of God, His *resident* ministry guarantees conviction of sin on a deeper, more intimate level:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you *another Comforter*, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells *with you* and will be *in you*. John 14:16-17

As ‘another comforter’ the Spirit of God takes the place of Jesus’ physical presence as counselor and guide (“with you” - as He was with the first disciples) but now residing in His children (“in you” - as He indwells all believers). His role as indwelling ‘comforter’ is defined by the title itself: *paraklētos*- one who draws alongside as a Helper, Counselor, Encourager, and Mediator.

Because of the Spirit’s *paraklētos* ministry, no believer is unaware of sin. Nevertheless, Scripture does indicate that believers can harden their hearts to the Spirit’s conviction resulting in broken fellowship with God. This state is not one of ‘loss of salvation’ but one of ‘loss of God’s direction and assurance’ (1 John 1). In such situations the Lord can bring circumstances to bear in order to draw His own back to fellowship (Heb. 12:7), or remove His own through death (1 Cor. 11:29-30). God convicts His children of sin. Therefore, there is no such thing as a believer who has sinned and not been made aware of it. When a believer suffers from depression, there is a call to self-evaluation, which first reviews the state of fellowship with God.

Unconfessed sin will bring the discipline of God into a believer’s life: God appointed circumstances to bring His children to repentance. Genuine self-examination will open the door for renewal of conviction. God may use depression to open that door. If there is no conscious awareness of unconfessed, the issue is not sin. However, if God brings conviction of sin and this is ignored, He will bring circumstances that will urge His children to return. These circumstances vary with each individual child of God. It could be sickness, it could be financial loss,

it could be family stress, and it could be depression. The circumstance could initially involve depression or the Lord could bring circumstances, which lead to depression.

God desires the fellowship of His children. God desires His best for His children. Therefore, He will always do something about broken fellowship and straying children. This is not judgment upon sin. Scripture is clear: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. 8:1). God's children will never be judged for sins because each one is judged in Christ on the cross, and acquitted. These God appointed circumstances are His loving discipline intended to draw His family members back into fellowship through repentance. All God's children have to deal with such discipline if they do not get right with their Father!

In the context of a believer suffering from depression, as with David, examination of personal fellowship with God is essential. Biblical counsel, by a spiritual leader or friend could be very helpful and is advised. However, this is not necessarily an imperative, David took private counsel with God.

If, through God's discipline – His appointed circumstances such as depression, unconfessed sin is revealed through self-evaluation, God's will is clear: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). The believer must confess what is revealed! God will forgive and restore fellowship.

While personally counselling believers regarding depression, this point of counsel often brought this question: "Will restored fellowship deliver me from depression?" The answer to the question is "Not necessarily." God's children must distinguish between the consequences of sin and the Lord's discipline to restore fellowship.

To quote Paul, "I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly," I offer the following illustration: Suppose a Christian strays out of fellowship with God through stubborn self-centeredness. The Lord brings conviction. It is ignored. The Lord then removes His blessings of financial success, as discipline. In continued self-centeredness the wayward soul, seeking the world's wealth, robs a bank. In the robbery attempt, the security guard wounds this wayward child of God in

the leg. This is a sorry picture indeed, but not unlike the waywardness of Ananias and Sapphira!

In his fallen state of broken fellowship this soul, seeing his waywardness, genuinely repents calling upon God for forgiveness. He is forgiven, fellowship is restored (1 Jn. 1:9). Nevertheless, the bullet in his leg does not fall out. The wound remains, the consequences of this man's actions are forthcoming. This illustration, as foolish as it sounds, does clarify the difference between consequence and discipline by demonstrating that the wound is not judgment upon sin but consequences of sin. The criminal's conviction and perhaps jail sentence is not discipline for sin because fellowship was restored with repentance. It is the consequences of sin.

Restored fellowship is assured through the promise of forgiveness, yet the consequences of sin remain. Church history indicates and scripture testifies, as in the case of Jonah, that God does extend mercy and sometimes delivers His children from the consequences. Most often however, the Lord provides strength to bear the consequences according to His own purposes, as He did with David.

With sin confessed and fellowship restored, the suffering believer must follow the pattern of scripture to a surrendered heart as concluded earlier:

1. A prayerful admission of emotional weakness
2. A plea to God for help expressed in faith
3. A surrendered dependency upon God to intercede according to

His will.

Nevertheless, in personal pastoral counselling experience, it was evident that often through Spirit-sensitive self-examination, sin was not the believer's issue. There were many situations in which, like Rachel and Hannah, unrealized expectations were the root cause of depression.

### *Depression as a result of Unrealized Expectations*

In reality, emotional upheaval caused by unrealized expectations is actually self-imposed stress. Although in many societies today there is no stigma associated with childless marriages, as was the case in Rachel and Hannah's time, there is much self-imposed stress. I have found this to be particularly true within the Christian home.

Unrealized expectations are a common cause of depression in a believer's life. Whether in any individual situation God would view this as sin is a matter of self-evaluation. Nevertheless, God's people are not immune to the stress of social expectations. The fact remains that we are all under a certain amount of stress by virtue of human relationships, whether it's job expectations, or family expectations, spousal expectations, or one's own personal expectations instilled through youth's experiences and societies misplaced values. This is a major issue within the church today.

Believer's need to be reminded that through new birth a change of ownership has transpired. Paul said it this way: "For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." (Ro 14:8). As much as all humanity faces relationship stress, the believer, by virtue of changed ownership, experiences the additional dilemma of the 'old man' values, crucified (Rom. 6:6) but still programmed within the mind and the 'new man' values being developed through renewal (Rom. 12:2). The renewing of the mind is a process that takes time and effort. The importance of believer 'transformation' has already been dealt with, however the reality of social stress by defaulting to pre-salvation values (mistaken expectations) and added spiritual stress through the desire to live for God in an ungodly world (imagined vulnerability) cannot be dismissed.

The learning curve of a believer, from new birth to full dependence upon the Lord is often too long! Within that delay, self-imposed expectations such as evident in Rachel and Hannah's life will bring stress, stress causes anxiety and anxiety continues to build until it becomes depression. There are still societies today that look upon barrenness as a shameful disgrace. I have seen this while ministering in West Africa where one of my student pastors shared the dilemma of a barren wife. His own family encouraged him to leave her for another woman that could bare children. Those in American society could never imagine the stress incurred. This couple was mature enough in Christ to pray: "Lord God if this is your will, we will accept it, even though our family has cut us off, and our neighbours ridicule and mock us."

Neither Rachel nor Hannah were there in their faith! Today, although circumstances and the point of stress may be different, many

believers, also immature in faith, succumb to such self-imposed expectations. While counselling believers who I sense are in this situation, I used a little exercise that became helpful. I would ask the counselee to write down the things that they would like to see happen in their life. I would encourage them to list everything in their heart that they were anxious about, wanted to see happen.

Inevitably, once the writing began, the list would become extensive. When the list was finished, I would give the counselee another piece of paper with a line down the middle indicating two columns. The heading at the top of the first column was DESIRES, the second column was entitled GOALS. I would then ask them to rewrite their list in the appropriate column.

Under DESIRES they were to list all the statements that included things they wished for *but had no control in achieving*. This column was to contain what they themselves had no control over, things they could not make happen in these wishes. Many times the counselee, having an unsaved spouse would have written down "See my spouse accept Christ." Using this as an example I would ask them if they could make this happen. Inevitably, they would say no. I explained that this wish would fall under DESIRES.

Under GOALS they were to list all the statements that they themselves were truly responsible for or had control in achieving. Many with children would have written, "Spend more time with the kids." Using this as an example, I would ask them if they could make this happen. Inevitably, they would say yes. I asked them to complete re-writing the list, explaining that this wish, and those like it, would fall under GOALS.

When the exercise was completed, (sometime a measure of guidance was required) we would assess the results together. The results were always the same. The DESIRES column would contain 90% or more of the original list and the GOALS COLUMN would have just two or three items. From this assessment, counsel would be presented using the appropriate Biblical examples and applications of this study as a guide.

Time was spent examining the list to determine whether the 'wishes' were God approved desires or improper values. The many areas of life expressed in these wishes are too broad to deal with in-

dividually in this exercise, however a few general life principles for God's people offers a measure of guidance. Under the 'DESIREs' heading the 'wish' statements were Biblically evaluated according to the following principles:

Motive; "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10:31).

Priority; "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matt. 6:33).

Leading; "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Gal. 5:16).

Empowerment; "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Php 4:13).

Responsibility; "For each one shall bear his own load." (Gal.6:5).

Function; "The just shall live by faith" (Hab. 2:4, Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38).

With such principles in view, each wish was evaluated on the basis of appropriateness for a believer. Through counsel, each inappropriate wish was discussed. These were acknowledged as wrong, and in prayer confessed and abandoned with request for God's assistance.

Through this process the counselee, acknowledging that the lists reflected the source of their anxieties, usually recognized that virtually all anxiety was due to things they themselves had no control over. With the remaining legitimate DESIREs list, they were urged to follow Paul's advice:

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Php. 4:6-7).

The counselee was encouraged to address each of these areas of anxiety in the manner indicated by Paul:

1. Acknowledge the point of anxiety.
2. Share the request (wish) with God in prayer.
3. Acknowledge that the wish is solely in His hands to do as He wills
4. In faith, thank God for His promise to hear and His wisdom to do what is best and right.

5. Acknowledge giving this matter over to the Lord and ask for His peace in the matter.

The process of assessing the wishes also enabled the counselees to identify their own God given responsibilities or legitimate GOALS, some of which were also a matter of anxiety. In this list the counselee was reminded of the source of strength to accomplish each task, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Php. 4:13). Further counsel addressed plans for executing the responsibilities, resources to assist, and prayer support to encourage.

Having dealt with the source unrealized expectations, the counselee was urged to follow David’s path in depression to a surrendered heart as concluded earlier:

1. A prayerful admission of emotional weakness
2. A plea to God for help expressed in faith
3. A surrendered dependency upon God to intercede according to His will.

### *Depression as a result of Uncontrollable Circumstances*

As well as unconfessed sin and unrealized expectations, a believer’s pattern of life *before* salvation brings difficult consequences such as depression, even though God has totally forgiven. Out of His mercy and grace, those ‘pre-salvation’ consequences are sometimes removed however, often they are not. God’s people must understand that bad choices, sinful activity, self-destructive actions affect all of life. The consequences of such affect life even after salvation. God’s promise is not to remove consequences, although He sometime does, but to meet the need in consequences.

I know of a man who, before salvation, was a drug addict. After salvation, he became a career missionary for a while. Unfortunately, he had to leave ministry because of drug-induced brain damage causing severe depression. God could have healed his mind, however, for His own purposes, God chose not to. All humankind can potentially suffer from depression caused by the consequences of an unredeemed (pre-salvation) life. Depression can be experienced before and after salvation.

In either situation, genuine self-evaluation with sensitivity to the Spirit’s leading (and perhaps the aid of Biblical counsel) will direct the



believer to the truth. Confession and restored fellowship opens the avenue of renewed faith to accept God's will, whether to deliver out of consequences or to strengthen through consequences.

Drug induced depression because of surgery or other medical needs can also be a cause of a believer's suffering, as in the case of my friend Doug. In each of these scenarios, where the Lord chooses to allow continuance of depression, the believer faces the common challenge of dealing with depression *now* a result of uncontrollable circumstances.

Many of the Bible characters examined in this book suffered from depression by virtue of the stressful circumstances appointed by God. The depression experienced, had nothing to do with sin, or unrealized expectations. Haggai was placed in unfavourable circumstances, Elijah was placed in unavoidable valleys, David was found with unfaithful friends, Paul experienced unbearable trials. All these people encountered circumstances that were God's appointed will for them. They experienced difficult situations because God desired them to.

God can and does place His own people in difficult circumstances to complete His purposes even today. In such situations, the believer can take comfort through God's assurance of direction and instruction, as the Corinthians were exhorted to do, as David and Paul did do. Each has this resource from God: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105).

Paul reminded the churches of the scripture's record of suffering in God's will as examples for instruction: "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:1-4).

When counselees recognize the cause of depression is rooted in uncontrollable circumstances, the chart of Biblical Characters (see appendix A) proves a good tool for Biblical guidance. A preliminary review of the individuals listed, brings a realization that such saints as David and Paul shared the experience of depression. This in itself proves to be an initial encouragement and source of hope. Examinations of each 'charted' uncontrolled circumstance causing depression, helps believers realize the sovereignty of God in life. The chart demon-

strates the distinction of those who accepted the will of God in faith. These particular Biblical sufferers experienced stressful circumstances similar in type to believers today. Further study provides additional insight into coping in specific circumstances.

Hagar, suffering the stress of abandonment by her husband, acknowledged her weakness and demonstrates turning to God in prayer. The evidence of God meeting her immediate physical needs and affirming his promise is great direction and comfort to women in similar circumstances today. Moses and Joshua, both suffering depression from the stress of leadership similar to many men in career positions today, acknowledged his need for help. Each experienced God's strength and assistance in their needs through prayer and obedience.

Naomi facing the dire circumstances of immanent poverty demonstrates the blessings of returning to God in trust and experienced God's supply through others. Many believers in modern society fall into depression through such circumstances. Elijah experienced a physical exhausting and emotionally distressing situation due to 'job' responsibilities. Like many Christian men today, he perceived his situation hopeless and was obsessed with escape. He is a model of recuperation through rest and prayer.

With such examples of uncontrollable circumstances evident in the chart, believers can identify with biblical personalities, recognize the steps of prayerful acknowledgment and dependant trust, and see firsthand, God's provision for coping. Believers have the privilege of God's clear direction through his Word. With the resource of God's authoritative Word, believers can be encouraged to be sensitive to God as they pray 'your will be done,' to allow Him to work in their heart and discover His purpose, His will, and His confirmation of care in their depression. They can be urged to follow these Biblical examples of trusting God and discovering His power to cope whether through deliverance or empowering grace as Paul discovered:

And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (1 Cor. 12:9).

Despite the evident guidance in God's Word for coping with depression due to unconfessed sin, unrealized expectations, or uncontrol-

lable circumstances, there remains the possibility of a depressed state for other reasons. There are those occasions in which depression is so severe that the sufferer cannot assimilate these truths due to complete mental and emotional collapse. Such a state, even among believers, can result from denial of the problem until total debilitation occurs. In such situations, the depression leads to complete debilitation in which even a believer has no avenue for self-evaluation or personal trust. Personal counselling experience revealed that this state can also result from drug therapy used for any medical condition. This was the circumstance with my friend Doug. He pleaded with me to find him a Biblical answer! In such circumstances, God has purposed that His children require the help of the family of God.

## CHAPTER 10

*"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Paul*

### COPING WITH DEPRESSION: GOD'S HELP FROM THE BODY OF CHRIST

In the incomprehensible providence of God, He has chosen to exercise his will and purposes on earth through the body of Jesus Christ known as the church. This amazing expression of Himself on earth, manifested in the local church, is indwelt with his presence and endued with his passion. God's commission to the church evidences the uniqueness of the local body of believers:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matt. 28:19-20).

God's commission embraces three aspects, the first of which is in-semination. This involves making disciples or evangelizing the world. As God's people sow the message of the gospel of Christ-the seed of the word the Spirit of God brings forth new life called salvation. The second aspect of the great commission is integration. This involves the aspect of baptism in which the new believer identifies publicly with Christ in his death burial and resurrection as Pictured by baptism, and identifies with the local church. The last aspect is instruction where the body is nourished by the whole counsel of the word of God.

It was never God's intention that his new believers would remain orphans. Rather God intends them to be embraced by a local church, to be cared for and nourished as a new member of the family of God. One of the God appointed distinctives of the local church is that they share one another's burdens (Gal.6:2). This is a call to minister to the needs of the poor, sick, and the struggling (Ja. 1:27), especially within the body of Christ (Gal. 6:10). Therefore, in case of a believer who has succumbed it to medically induced depression, the body of Christ must take action. This may call for individuals, especially family members, to become caregivers. Corporately, this is a call to prayer.

### Principles for Personal Care-giving

With the example of four instances of people who were caregivers in Scripture basic principles of caregiving can be determined. In Luke 10:30-37 Jesus presents the story of the Good Samaritan. In answer to the question: "Who is my neighbour?" The answer to the question according to the parable is: "Anyone in need." The good Samaritan addresses the needs of the waylaid man.

Here we see that caregiving is the call of a heart moved by compassion. We see that caregiving is a heart willing to take risks in that the Samaritan stopped in a place where he himself was in danger of attack. He risked his own safety to help another. The Samaritan was also willing to interrupt his own plans in order to give care. He took time to look after the injured man and to bring him to the inn. This obviously involved personal inconvenience especially as it likely meant walking himself while the injured man was on the donkey. In caregiving this Samaritan was willing to exercise his own abilities – he poured oil on the wounds, the medication of the day for treating injury. Further, the Samaritan was willing to incur loss as he paid for the care of the injured man promising also to bear any further expenses that were incurred.

With the good Samaritan's example of the sacrifices of caregiving it is evident that caregiving necessitates an examination of the heart. In the body of Christ many believers become caregivers out of a sense of duty rather than a call of the heart. In pastoral counselling it has been my own experience to see a heart moved solely by duty becomes an embittered heart. Caregiving requires a compassionate heart. A friend had his parents and his wife's mother living with them, three seniors. One of the seniors became violent, but they stuck it out, not because of duty but because of a compassionate heart. They became a model of compassionate caregiving to our church.

It is significant that following the Lord's presentation of the good Samaritan the text deals with Mary and Martha hosting Jesus in their own home. Martha viewed this as a responsibility of caregiving while Mary viewed this as an opportunity for developing relationship with Jesus. In Martha's plea for Jesus to encourage Mary to help with host-

ing we see her problem – she was distracted by a call to caregiving. Jesus' reply that Mary had chosen best confirms this.

It is apparent that a heart moved by genuine compassion can also be a heart distracted from what is important. While Martha was in cumbered with the desire of caregiving Mary chose to sit at Jesus feet while he was in her house. The ministry of caregiving does present the danger of neglecting self, especially in the all-important matter of spending personal time with God daily. Martha was guilty of making assumptions about God's priorities, thinking Jesus would agree with her. She worried over self-appointed tasks rather than focusing on God appointed opportunities.

Caregivers must look after their own spiritual life, God commands this as a priority and caregivers depend upon this as a source of provision (Matt. 6:33). Neglecting a relationship with Christ for service for Christ is a common malady within the body of Christ. People in full time Christian service are guilty of this – busy in ministry but not sitting at Jesus feet daily. Personal caregivers in the body of Christ also fall into this danger. Caregiving requires a heart free from any distractions that threaten regular fellowship with God. To neglected this spiritual priority is to operate in one's own strength which never succeeds in God's ministry. Paul reminds us that we "can do all things *through Christ* who strengthens us" (Php. 4:13).

In Mark 2, the story of the crippled man whose four friends took him to Jesus is presented. Jesus stated that it was by their faith that this man was healed. In accomplishing this act of faith they had to persevere through several obstacles: First, the task was a greater burden than one man could bear. It took four men do the job that likely started with one man. Caregiving is a bigger job than first expected.

Secondly, the task involved greater obstacles then they perhaps realized. The people of the town were gathering to listen to Jesus, jammed into the house and spilling out all around the house. Undoubtedly in a town of this size most would have known the man that was crippled. Yet when they approached the home to present the crippled man the crowd would not accommodate their effort. Did the four expected this? It's doubtful. Caregiving often involves greater obstacle than were initially expected. Such obstacles can be very discouraging.

The faith of these men caused them to persevere! However in persevering they faced, thirdly, a labour that they never expected. These four friends had to carry this crippled man up the stairs to the roof and then had to rip the room apart. The roof, made of mud and branches layered to provide strength and resist rain, was a formidable obstacle. The men persisted much to the displeasure of those below who had to cope with falling mud. This labor of faith undoubtedly threatened the good reputation of these men in the community. However the act of caregiving afforded a greater blessing than they would have imagined. Their friend was healed *because of their faith*. In this incident it is evident that caregiving requires faith and teamwork.

The body of Christ is called to bear one another's burdens. Even personal caregiving requires the help of others. Doing laundry, providing transportation, doing grocery shopping, taking turns at the task, all these and many more acts of kindness can help bear the burden of caregiving. A wise caregiver seeks a team to assist. A Spirit led church ensures the teamwork necessary.

The story of Lazarus' death in John 11 demonstrates another principle of caregiving, that of being surrendered to the will of God. Jesus, being a few hours walking distance away, receives information that his friend Lazarus is sick. Rather than immediately going to Lazarus' aide Jesus delays two days. Although Lazarus died during this delay, Jesus made it clear that he would raise him "for the glory of God." Jesus' act of care-giving was bathed in sensitivity to God's purposes whereby the glory of God took precedence over personal care, even to the extent pain and sorrow of the death of a loved one. Caregiving requires a heart moved with sensitivity to the Spirit of God and willing to say "Thy will be done."

God's will must take precedence over pain. Lazarus died. Many people suffered the agent is loss. Even Jesus stood before the tomb and wept, even though he knew what he was going to do. There are times when caregivers must allow the Spirit of God to complete his will rather than just demand our desires. This sensitivity to the Spirit's leading and surrender to his will affirms the necessity for a continuous walk with God. God's purposes must take precedence over human desire and human sorrow. Many wept at the death of Lazarus and Jesus permitted it. There are times when it is the will of God for his people

to suffer. Often God's greatest work in individuals or families is through suffering. Caregiving is a call to bathe every decision and labor in prayer in order to allow God to complete his purposes.

This toughest of principles was graphically demonstrated in our church the fifth year of my pastoral ministry. A dear couple in our church found out that their two year old daughter had terminal cancer. In their deep anxiety they turn to the Lord for strength. With the resources they had they sought every avenue of medical practice to spare their child. Nevertheless the diagnosis remained terminal.

Early one morning while studying in my office the Spirit of God impressed upon me that I should immediately go to the children's hospital. Shortly after my arrival, while joined in hand around the bedside praying with the parents, their child slipped into the presence of God. It amazed me that the parents immediately told me how they wanted the funeral service to have the gospel preached clearly. This couple had surrendered to the will of God and sought his glory. With the church filled by relatives, neighbours and friends of the couple, the Lord richly blessed the word during the funeral service. Over a dozen folks were saved, including the grandmother of the child. What a blessing to the family! Although they sorrowed over their daughter passing, they gained a mother for eternity. This couple's sensitive heart to God's purposes during their caregiving was evident by the entire church.

Caregiving is the call of a heart, moved by compassion and free to sacrifice. Caregiving is the call of a heart free from distractions to pursue a consistent walk with God. Caregiving is the call of a heart moved by faith and recognizing the necessity of teamwork. Finally, caregiving is the call of a heart moved with sensitivity of the Spirit, desiring to glorify God at all cost.

While it is true that not all believers are called individually to the ministry of care-giving, every local church is! One of the distinctives of the church of God is 'one-anotherness' as these sample scriptures state:

Ro 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another

Ro 15:14 ...admonish one another.

Ga 6:2 Bear one another's burdens

Eph 4:32 And be kind to one another

1Th 4:9 ... love one another;



1Th 4:18 Therefore comfort one another

1Th 5:11 ...edify one another,

Heb 3:13...exhort one another daily,

Without doubt, the local 'one-another' church is called to care-giving.

### Corporate Care-Giving: The Church as a Helping Community

The role of the church in offering help to depression sufferers is critical. Christ himself was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). Christ called His church to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). In the context of helping the believer who suffers from depression, barriers must come down before this can take place.

#### *The Barrier of Incorrect Presuppositions and Wrong Perceptions.*

Sadly, the church has not had a good record in dealing with the emotional sufferers. Historically, by equating all depression with such secular terms as *melancholy* or *depression*, the church has viewed such sufferers as either being hopelessly in bondage to sin, overwhelmingly influenced by demons, or simply a weak believer susceptible to emotional flightiness. According to the Biblical data, these presuppositions are not always correct. The result was a stigma attached to these terms. Depression has become the "closet disease" of the church. The consequence is that countless suffering believers, driven by shame and embarrassment, have sought help outside the church.

Another barrier facing the church is the perception that 'help for depression' lies within the area of psychology, and is therefore outside the ministry of the church. This, as reported in the literature review, has led many church leaders to embrace psychological counselling models in order to address emotional needs. "Too many pastors and church leaders have capitulated to such thinking. As a result, over the past forty years or so, counselling has steadily moved out of the church and into the clinics."<sup>367</sup>

Misunderstandings must be corrected! Barriers must be overcome! Problems must be identified. The church has a mandate from Christ to care for its own. Only when these issues are resolved Biblically, will the church be in a position to be a helping community. Only then will Biblical thinking about counselling the suffering believer and Biblical procedures about helping the suffering believer, be restored.

*The Restoration of Biblical Thinking and Christ's Principles*

It has been this researcher's ministry experience to counsel believers suffering from debilitating depression severe enough to render them completely withdrawn and virtually powerless. The literature research of this study indicates that this is a common problem within the church. To become a helpful community by addressing the needs of these sufferers, the church must regain a Biblical perspective. The church must make the Biblical distinction between depression and sinful depression and must refrain from judgment in carrying out its duty to love one another. The church must learn to view depression as pain that everyone is susceptible to by virtue of creative design.

Within the experience of man, who was made in the image of an emotional God, emotional pain is possible without the involvement of sin. This was the case with Christ. As well, the church must view depression as pain that, unlike Christ, everyone potentially can become in bondage to because of man's sinful nature; therefore, anyone can fall into depression. The church must realize that, while Christians have access to that deep, settled joy and contentment that comes from the indwelling Christ, it must not judge others by sight. The church must turn to the records of the family of God and be corrected of its ideal of a "heaven below."<sup>368</sup>

The church must restore its confidence in the Bible as the source for addressing all human need and adopt a Biblical approach to all counselling ministry, including counselling for depression, as Bobgan affirms:

The Biblical way of counselling in changing depends fully on God and is based upon the principles of Scripture. Furthermore, Biblical counselling is love in relationship and true, because the Lord is a counselor, because it follows the precepts and doctrines of the Word of God, and because it relies on the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and enable obedience.<sup>369</sup>

The church must lovingly seek to follow Christ's teaching on "bearing one another's burdens" and take serious steps to create an environment of care and assistance without prejudice. One of the most meaningful ways of accomplishing this "burden bearing" is intercessory prayer.

*The Revival of Intercessory Prayer*

There has been an interesting development in modern medicine. Many spokespersons within the medical profession are now acknowledging the value of prayer. Prayer is considered to be a good therapeutic exercise for troubled minds. Prayer is considered as "bonding" exercise when shared in a group. Prayer is considered to be an avenue for positive thinking.

While all these comments may be true about prayer, they sadly lack the most important factor. The Scripture's refer to prayer as far more than a mental or emotional exercise, the Bible declares that prayer, when entered into in right relation to God and man, moves the very hand of God: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

Throughout scripture the evidence of effectual prayer is found. Tracing the results of prayer as recorded in scripture is an enriching study in itself! Hagar prayed to the Lord for help and God spared her life and her sons (Genesis 21). Moses cried unto the Lord and the Israelites were miraculously delivered from the hand of Egypt (Exodus 14). Hannah cried unto the Lord and God gave her a son to lead His people. Elijah and Elisha prayed and God restored life to the dead. David prayed and was granted victories, Daniel prayed and was given wisdom to interpret dreams, Nehemiah prayed and God provided a means and a way to complete the wall of Jerusalem. The apostles and early Christians prayed and God raised the dead, delivered from jail, gave boldness to witness, and brought provision for the widowed and persecuted.

If Christians should learn anything about prayer from the Bible, it is that it is vital to spiritual life, and dear to the heart of God. Prayer is essential! It is man's avenue of faith to receive God's Gift of salvation (Rom. 10:11-13). Prayer is the believer's avenue for accomplishing the purposes of God and securing the provision of (John 14:12-14). Intercessory prayer is the sufferer's path to God's help when sufferers cannot pray themselves (James 5: 13-16). Is it any wonder that Paul urged believers to: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is the church's greatest labour, especially in bearing the burdens of those suffering from depression!

As the church practices Biblical thinking and Christ's principles, the spillover will result in each individual Christian becoming a discerning believer and being better equipped in dealing with depression.

### Conclusion

It is in these situations that the church must step in as a helping community and assist the emotional sufferer. Doug's family could not bear to visit him because of the pain it brought to their own hearts. Doug's church rose to the occasion. The result was a concerted labor of prayer among Doug's church body as well as dozens of other churches contacted by church members. Two months into this great effort of prayer, I visited Doug only to find him in the state described earlier. He was unresponsive, sitting crossed-legged on his bed, staring at the wall. After several attempts to communicate were unsuccessful, I resolved to pray at the bedside for God to intervene.

After two hours of earnest and laborious prayer, Doug stirred from his stupor, requested a meal, and interacted in conversation with the nurse/guard and myself. This was the turning point in Doug's recovery from deep depression. Although he suffers still from short bouts of mild depression, and must carefully follow a prescribed medication program, Doug found relief from the severely debilitating effects of drug-induced depression.

Intercessory prayer was considered the greatest contributing factor for his recovery, even by the medical staff at the attending hospital. Doug was released from hospital and returned home. Although experiencing some times of 'pain of mind' when he neglects his prescribed medication, Doug has never returned to the deep, debilitating depression he experienced. The Lord has used Doug in the body of Christ to help other believers struggling with emotional trauma.

In these cases, when people have circumstances outside their control and they are so debilitated that they cannot make right decisions, God's people must pray for them. Believers must intervene for them. The church must establish prayer support groups, get believers to surround these sufferers and pray for them. God does great things through prayer! He says, "You have not because you ask not".

## CHAPTER 11

*"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Paul*

### COPING WITH DEPRESSION: THE CHRISTIAN AS A WISE BELIEVER

It has been the pastoral experience of this writer to evidence depression among Christians for all of the reasons cited by Biblical testimony such as jealous anger as with Cain and Ahab, leadership stresses as with Moses and Joshua, unbearable circumstances outside personal control as with Hagar and Job, physical weakness as with Elijah. Every believer in Scripture who by faith called upon the Lord during a time of depression received His help. Church leadership must take the necessary steps to ensure that each member understands the vital importance of a consistent, meaningful, daily walk with God.

The faith that can trust God in difficult times is cultivated in the believer's life especially when expected and encouraged by the local church environment. Such faith is a matter of responsible relationship with God in which a pattern of dependence upon Him is evident and growing. It is in this walk of faith that a believer addresses the total health of body, of soul and of spirit in conformity to God's plan and purposes. Brotherly love in the body of Christ should hold one another accountable for this walk.

#### A Matter of Responsible Relationship

Christians are exhorted to "draw near to God" (James 4:8). This is done through prayer and meditation upon God's Word as believers open their hearts and minds to God's examination and leading through "daily quiet time." The Psalmist expresses this devotion to meditation in the first Psalm: "Blessed [is] the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." (Ps.1:1-2). This word "meditate" is the translation of the Hebrew word *daw-gaw* and suggests the continual plotting of plans within a person's heart with such intensity that quiet murmuring to oneself is the result. Meditation on God's

Word is a discipline that involves the mind and heart in deep interaction with the truth.

This time alone with the Lord was so important to Daniel that he risked his own life to maintain it (Daniel 6), the Bereans were given the distinction by the apostle Paul of being more noble because they searched the scriptures every day (Acts 17), even Jesus who was God incarnate began each day in prayerful communion with his Father in heaven (Mark 1:35).

As the believer "draws close" to the revealed truth regarding God's holiness, purity, righteousness, justice and love, our likeness of Him increases. Christ's attitudes, actions, compassion and love penetrate more of our daily lives.<sup>370</sup> One of the most important questions to ask is this: "Have I grown in my knowledge of God?" This is not a question about regular church attendance, nor is it about faithful giving. It is not a question about listening to a particular minister or benefiting from a particular church. It is not a question regarding religion, but a question of relationship.

Perhaps the question should be asked with a scriptural perspective: Enoch "walked with God" – Do I? David was "a man after God's own heart" – Am I? Ruth cried to Naomi, "Your God shall be My God" - Have I chosen to make the living God My God? While Martha was cumbered with cares, Mary chose the better path and "sat at Jesus' feet" - Have I taken time out from busy schedule to personally sit at Jesus' feet?

If our relationship with the Lord has not grown, then our travels have been in vain; for there is nothing more important in life than knowing the Giver of Life "better every day". This was the apostle Paul's greatest personal desire: "I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8). This was Paul's prayer for the church: "I. cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Ephesians 1:17).

Paul in particular traces this growing relationship with God in term of training and competing for the prize. He states that the follower of Christ must be involved in the regular discipline of spiritual exercise: "For bodily exercise profits [a] little: but godliness is

profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). Paul knew the great value of the daily spiritual exercise of prayer, meditation on Scripture and determination to glorify God in every circumstance.

Added to these basic disciplines, Paul also recognized the need for each believer to practice self-discipline by turning from sin. He compares this to the athlete holding to the rule while in competition:

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

The truth that God wishes all Christians to grasp is clear, although salvation is a gift from God through faith in Christ as sacrifice for sin, the believing "Child of God" is encouraged to live for the Lord each day.<sup>371</sup> Paul explains that the grace that brings salvation also bestows the indwelling Spirit of God. Through the Spirit and the Word, God, by His grace empowers the believer to gain victory over the power of sin. The human element is to believe or reckon this to be true as Paul declares: "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

Paul argues that personal effort to hold to law for sanctification leads to inevitable failure: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:19). He concludes that the grace principle which works sanctification in the believer is not a matter of following law but of the gift of life: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3-4).

Paul affirms this grace principle with the exhortation for believers to "yield" their lives to God in all its entirety: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield

yourselves unto God" (Rom. 6:13). The blessings of grace as a means of sanctification are the very essence of the believer's growing in Christlikeness. By God's grace His life is implanted through His Spirit, in the believer's life. The indwelling Spirit transforms the inner man as the Christian yields. Paul's repeated phrase in chapter six "under grace" captures the essence of new life in dependence upon God and growing in relationship with God. This is the life that will avoid the self-inflicted wounds of depression. This is the life that will evidence the cultivated faith to call upon the Lord in uncontrolled circumstances which lead to depression.

It has been my pastoral experience to evidence depression in Christians solely because of medical procedures such as chemotherapy for cancer treatment and steroid treatment for transplant surgery. This was the case with Doug. It is in these medically related circumstances that medical practitioners view pharmacological approaches as vital. It is here that Christian wisdom is particularly necessary. Good counsel must address the drug issue as well

The recent pharmacological advancements in the field of depressive disorders has opened wide the door of drug therapy. New drugs are introduced at an alarming rate. It is incumbent upon the believer to be wise in the use of drugs. Individual spiritual discernment and cautious research is essential.

### A Matter of Individual Discernment

Each believer must discern individually whether it is in the will of God for one to take drugs. Understanding depression as pain does not license the believer to look solely to drugs as the answer. This is the way of the world. Nevertheless, to acknowledge man's understanding of pain by way of clinical research also has some merit. Most believers would not hesitate to take an aspirin for a headache or medication to control diabetes. In the same way many believers have found a measure of relief from depression or depression through the use of common therapeutic drugs.

There is evidence that the fall of man and consequential curse of death has resulted in weaknesses within the whole framework of mankind. Whether by hereditary circumstances, DNA weaknesses, or ultimately just God's design, certain weaknesses seem prominent among



certain family lines. Research indicates apparent “genetic factors” regarding heart disease, proneness to cancer, and susceptibility to depression. The result is “family trait illnesses,” especially when under stress. For instance, the stress that would cause an ulcer in one person would cause cardiac difficulties in another. The difference is traced to hereditary factors. Therefore, the stress that would cause these physical problems in one person could cause emotional pain in another.

There is therefore some measure of accuracy in clinical studies recognizing multiple causes of depressive disorders. Therefore, the use of various drug therapies is understandable. Nevertheless, it is important for the believer who suffers from depression, not to become confused by the multiple causes and consequent multiple drug therapies for depression. There is a call to discern the all factors including the personal history of family trait illnesses. Having done so, each sufferer, following the Biblical approach to depression, must seek the direction of the Spirit of God’s leading to determine the suitability of using drugs. A great deal of information is available for the patient to research and make wise decisions.

#### A Matter of Cautious Research

The use of drugs is so prevalent in North American society that patients rarely take the time to measure the risks or understand the side effects. This is particularly dangerous when in reference to drug therapy for depression. The cautions regarding drug therapy cannot be ignored!

As reviewed earlier, Michael Lemonick summarized the history and growing use of serotonin drugs in “The Mood Molecule” in Time magazine.<sup>372</sup> Lemonick traces the multiple uses of these drugs for everything from obesity to depression and elaborates on their lethal side effects; heart problems, cardiac failure, muscle contractions, intestinal difficulties and irregular blood pressure. He suggests that the drugs used for manipulating brain chemistry are “more like pharmacological machetes than they are like scalpels—crudely effective but capable of plenty of collateral damage.”

The believer suffering from depression must approach any recommended use of drugs with extreme caution. Diligent research is essential. With the availability of Internet websites, established for this

particular purpose, and the large volume of carefully catalogued Medical Journals (many of these also available by Internet), there is every opportunity to complete thorough research on the various drugs recommended.

### Summary

Historical testimony, Puritan and modern pastoral emphasis, documented pastoral counselling demands, and twenty-five years of personal pastoral experience all indicate the high occurrence of depression in society. Unfortunately, the diversity of terminology and treatment procedures facing believers diagnosed with depression is confusing and often conflicting. The Christian community needs clear answers and God has provided it in His Word.

By its symptoms, modern day depression parallels the Scripture's evident emotional struggles termed in this study as "depression." David defines this emotional state as "pain of mind." However, unlike the modern diagnosis of depression the Bible distinguishes the symptoms and holds individuals responsible for succumbing to the despairing feelings involved. Therefore Scripture has identified modern day depression as a soul-led response to pain of mind. Nevertheless, there is a meaningful Biblical approach leading to victory over depression.

For Christians suffering with depression, and potentially "soul-led" depression, comfort in knowing that God addresses their struggle can be found. As well, in identifying this struggle among Biblical characters, they can find immediate emotional support by being reassured that they are not alone among God's people. To know that God acknowledges this struggle by defining a term and revealing identifiable symptoms that relate to today's diagnosis can be a comfort by the certainty found in God's infallible Truth. To realize that the Bible gives evidence of how gain victory over depression in God's way can be a meaningful resource for personal guidance and courage.

For the Christian counselor, by understanding depression's symptoms and the approach to it from a Biblical perspective, Bible-based counsel with the comfort of defined Biblical authority is available. By providing clear Biblical direction for suffering believers, the apparent confusion of terms and approaches can be addressed. Christians such

as Doug are looking for Bible answers as a means to dispel the confusion of human wisdom. Scripture satisfies that search.

In situations of uncontrolled circumstances, where Christians are emotionally debilitated outside their power of influence and responsibility (as in the case of Doug) God calls the church to take up the labor of prayer and responsibility of care. This too is evident in Scripture and part of the true meaning of Christianity. The church cannot turn its back on its emotional sufferers. With the love and power of Christ, the church must abandon its prejudices and pre-conceived ideas regarding the emotional sufferers in its ranks and follow the Scriptural mandate to “bear one another’s burdens.”

Scriptures have the answers for life regarding depression, whether as a path for individual sufferers or a plan for corporate believers. This study attests to one of the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16). By relating appropriate Bible truths regarding depression and thus providing Biblical tools, this study has attempted to promote the ministry of the body of Christ in addressing the emotional needs of its members, to the glory of God.

APPENDIX A

CHART OF BIBLICAL DATA SUMMARIZING  
DEPRESSION

Bible Character	Causes	Symptoms	Response/ Approach	End Result
Cain	pride, jealousy anger, guilt, fear,	hopelessness trembling aim- lessness diffidence	regret and fear	no deliver- ance
Hagar	stress of cir- cumstances separation and abandonment	hopelessness fear withdrawal escapism weeping	Prayer: admission of weakness trust in prom- ises	Deliverance: God met her immediate physical needs and affirmed His promise
Rachel	stress of cir- cumstances barrenness jealousy	hopelessness escapism	Prayer: no specifics	Deliverance: She had a son & praised God
Jacob	stress of cir- cumstances grief broken heart- edness	hopelessness weeping escapism	continued sorrow	no deliver- ance until son restored
Moses	stress of lead- ership pain of injus- tice	hopelessness emotional pain escapism	Prayer: admission of need call for God's intercession	Deliverance, help, and strength to continue

*Pain of Mind: A Biblical Perspective of Depression*

Bible Character	Causes	Symptoms	Response/ Approach	End Result
Joshua	stress of leadership grief fear	hopelessness escapism diffidence dejection	Prayer: admission of weakness	Deliverance: strength to continue
Naomi	stress of circumstances want of means	hopelessness emotional pain distraught	Returned to God, trust	Deliverance: God provided through Ruth
Hannah	stress of circumstances barrenness	trembling weeping loss of appetite distraught	Prayer: admission of need perseverance in prayer humility and trust	Delivered by assurance of answered prayer
Elijah	stress of leadership physical exhaustion	hopelessness withdrawal escapism diffidence escapism- obsessed	Prayer: admission of weakness, surrender Sleep and nourishment	Deliverance: God supplied physical need Strength to continue
Ahab	greed jealousy pride anger	withdrawal escapism loss of appetite sullenness diffidence	selfish sorrow	No deliverance
Hezekiah	stress of circumstances severe illness physical weakness	withdrawal unsettledness weeping	Prayer: admission of weakness trust in God's promise	Deliverance: Physical healing & Strength to continue

*Pain of Mind: A Biblical Perspective of Depression*

Bible Character	Causes	Symptoms	Response/ Approach	End Result
Job	stress of circumstances personal loss forlornness	hopelessness withdrawal escapism anxiety & moaning loss of appetite	Prayer: admission of weakness Trust in God	Delivered: Affirmed in integrity and relationship and blessed
David	stress of circumstances betrayal oppression persecution	hopelessness weeping dehydration & loss of appetite audible- groaning emotional pain, degrees of escapism	Prayer: admission of weakness Plea for inter- cession Trust in God	Deliverance: strength to continue
Jeremiah	stress of circumstances imprisonment oppression physical weakness	hopelessness escapism	Prayer: admission of weakness Trust in God	Deliverance: strength to continue
Jonah	rebellion self-pity stubbornness	escapism distraught	complaint	no deliverance
Judas	greed betrayal guilt	remorse escapism suicide	self-effort to escape guilt	no deliverance, death
Jesus	stress of circumstance impending cross	physical trauma anguish emotional trauma	Prayer Surrender to God's will Trust	Deliverance: strength to continue to the cross glory of resurrection

*Pain of Mind: A Biblical Perspective of Depression*

Bible Character	Causes	Symptoms	Response/ Approach	End Result
Paul	stress of circumstances cares and confrontation physical illness persecution	hopelessness physical-trembling weariness emotional pain	Prayer Admission of weakness Request for intercession Trust in God	Deliverance: strength to continue

## APPENDIX B

### A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CARE GIVERS “BEARING ONE ANOTHER’S BURDENS”

1. Luke 10:25-37 – Care Giving: Is a heart moved by compassion
  - a) willingness to take risks
  - b) willingness to interrupt plans
  - c) willingness to exercise ability
  - d) willingness to incur loss
  - e) willingness to suffer inconvenience
  - f) willingness to bear responsibilities

Therefore – EXAMINE THE HEART

2. Luke 10:38-42 – Care Giving: Is a life tempted by distraction
  - a) letting the urgent take precedent over the important
  - b) ministering to others and neglecting self
  - c) making assumptions about God’s priorities
  - d) worrying over self-appointed tasks rather than focusing on God appointed opportunities
  - e) neglecting relationship with Christ for service for Christ

Therefore: SIT AT JESUS FEET

3. Mark 2:1-12 – Care Giving: Is a place for team work
  - a) care giving may be a greater burden than you realize (they carried him)
  - b) may involve greater obstacles that you realize (the crowds prevented)



- c) care giving may involve greater labour than you realize (they tore up the roof)
- d) care giving may afford a greater blessing than you realize (Jesus saw their faith) – God blesses corporate faith

Therefore: DON'T BEAR IT ALONE

- 4. John 11: 1ff – Care Giving: Is a sensitivity to divine purpose
  - a) God's glory must take precedence over personal care (Jesus waited)
  - b) God's will must take precedence over pain (Lazarus died)
  - c) God's purpose must take precedence over sorrow (All wept)

Therefore:

LEARN TO SAY NO  
BATHE EVERY CALL IN PRAYER,  
ALLOW GOD TO WORK THROUGH SUFFERING

## APPENDIX C

### WHAT IT MEANS TO POSSESS PERSONAL SALVATION

The terms saved and salvation occur 268 times in Scripture. The Hebrew word *yaw-shah*' translated "saved" in the Old Testament, and its New Testament Greek synonym *sode*'-zo can best be defined by the word deliverance. It cannot be ignored nor cast aside that man stands separated from Holy God because of sin, that sin holds man in bondage in this life, and that all mankind stands condemned as a result. Although it may go against the grain of man's pride and self-sufficiency, scripture presents a clear and logical answer for our helplessness. God's answer is personal salvation and is foundational upon several truths of Scripture:

The *first* of these truths is that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23 NIV). Adam's fallen state of spiritual death earlier examined is the inheritance of all mankind and results in the bondage of every person to sin - wrong thinking, wrong decisions, wrong actions and to emotional disorder. Sin is falling short of God's perfection. Every person is in need of deliverance.

The *second* of these truths is that "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23 NIV). Whereas every person earns the penalty of sin (spiritual separation from God in the present life and eternal separation from God after this life), *salvation is a gift*. A gift is something unearned, granted out of love and received out of gratitude.

The *third* of these truths is that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NIV). The gift of salvation was provided out of the unconditional love of God for every person. This gift of love was provided by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God's own

Son on the cross of Calvary, proved sufficient to transform man from the state of death to spiritual life in Christ by the resurrection of Jesus.

The *fourth* of these truths is that "it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no-one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV). *Salvation is by grace*. Grace is something that is undeserved. When a person is caught wilfully breaking the law that person knows some penalty or punishment is due. If the prosecuting authority in some way states that he or she will be *gracious* in judgment, the guilty person immediately recognizes the hope of escaping the deserved punishment. Nevertheless, no true justice will excuse severe and wilful wrongdoing no matter what efforts are made by the guilty party to compensate. For example; saving a child from drowning can never compensate for premeditatedly taking the life of an adult. However, if the debt (penalty or punishment) has been paid then grace can rule and the undeserved can be acquitted. Salvation is the graciousness of God accepting the paid debt of sin by the sacrifice of God's Son and justly pardoning the guilty.

After hearing the gospel explained, people often say, "You mean there's nothing I can do to deserve it? That's too easy." It seems natural for people to object to the idea that God's unmerited favour can be given so freely to unworthy sinners. Many find it difficult to trust a God who offers salvation as a free gift.

Salvation is free to man, but cost God much. His own Son actually became man's substitute. Where man is unable to change his standing before God through any self-effort, Christ died in his place: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"(Rom. 5:6). It is man's responsibility to believe and receive the free gift of life: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10).

The language of Scriptures knows nothing about a "cross of example", or a "cross of martyrdom for the cause". Although Calvary was a cross of grace, a cross of goodness, a cross of courage, a cross of suffering and a cross of perseverance, it was foremost a cross of

substitution: "For he (God) has made him (Jesus) to be sin for (in the place of) us, who (Jesus) knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Salvation is free, but not cheap, and it is anyone's for the asking 'in faith': "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). Charles Spurgeon, known as "the prince of preachers" once wrote "It will not save me to know that Christ is a Saviour; but it will save me to trust him to be my Saviour. I shall not be delivered from the wrath to come, by believing that his atonement is sufficient; but I shall be saved by making that atonement my trust, my refuge and my all."

Believers must be reminded of these Bible verses: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. 10:9-10). It has been said of this verse that people can miss heaven by eighteen inches, the distance between the mind which hears that safety lies in Christ and the heart which refuses to reach out in faith and accept Him.

The Bible clearly states that faith in Christ alone secures salvation: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). This is a faith that turns the heart in sorrow from sin (repentance) to acceptance of Christ's substitutional death (belief). Therefore the securing of salvation is not dependent upon any works of man such as being baptized or joining a church, but upon a point of decision. The epistle of John emphasises this point of decision: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the children of God, [even] to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12). This decision to "receive" Christ as *personal saviour* restores the relationship of each individual (in the fallen state of spiritual death) to spiritual life in Christ. At the moment of this decision by faith the Spirit of God enters into the individual, quickening (or making alive) the spirit of man (Ephesians 2:5). This new state or "new birth" (John 3:3) allows the believing individual to be spiritually led by God and empowered by God and to be delivered not only from eternal punishment (John 3:16) but also from present bondage (Galatians 5).

For each individual who has heard (or read) of God's free offer of salvation by faith through the sacrificial death and glorious resurrection of Jesus, there is a window of opportunity. This is not an opportunity to prove oneself before God, sin prevents this (Romans 3), but an opportunity to accept the gift of life from God. God has secured the means of spiritual rescue from present bondage and eternal loss by dealing with the penalty and the power of sin on the Cross of Calvary. It is now up to each individual to reach out by faith and receive that gift. It is this gift of life that is the foundation for deliverance not only from the eternal penalty of sin, but also from the present bondage of sin and weakness. The beauty of that expression of faith is that no one will ever be disappointed, Jesus' promise is always kept: " For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 5:6, 10:13).<sup>1</sup>

NOTES

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