

Practical Theology: Depression, part two

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you..." (Psa 42:5-6)

How does the Gospel relate to my depression?

"All progress in the Christian life depends upon a recapitulation of the original terms of one's acceptance with God"
-John Stott

It looks at the broadest spectrum of reality

- In our sin we deserve even worse than the deepest depths of our depression.
- But God took the initiative to rescue us from what we deserved
- And because we are in Christ we will receive far better than we can even imagine

"Start at the easiest place for those in darkness. Start with despair. Despair of finding any answer in yourself. I pray that you will cease from all efforts to look inside yourself for the rescue you need. I pray that you will do what only desperate people can do, namely, cast yourself on Christ. May you say to him, "You are my only hope. I have no righteousness in myself. I am overwhelmed with sin and guilt. I am under the wrath of God. My own conscience condemns me, and makes me miserable. I am perishing. Darkness is all about me. Have mercy upon me. I trust you." - John Piper

If you are outside of Christ this life is as good as it gets for you. If you are in Christ this life is the worst that it will get for you.

Know that you belong to Christ

Question 1. What is thy only comfort in life and death?

Answer: That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ; who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth, to live unto him.

Depression is light and momentary

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."
(2 Cor 4:16-18)

Look to Christ

"I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to, but I always get back again by this—I know I trust Christ. I have no reliance but in him, and if he falls I shall fall with him, but if he does not, I shall not. Because he lives, I shall live also, and I spring to my legs again and fight with my depressions of spirit and my downcastings, and get the victory through it; and so may you do, and so you must, for there is no other way of escaping from it. In your most depressed seasons you are to get joy and peace through believing...Do stick to this, dear friends, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'" – CH Spurgeon

Practical helps

If you're suffering...

Understand your unhealthy thought patterns

Do not isolate yourself

Set a regular sleep schedule and get exercise

Do not rule out medication

Find a healthy expression of sadness/depression from media, other people

Explore the world/ Get outside of yourself

Read about the life of William Cowper

If you know someone who is suffering...

Expect to walk with the person for the long haul

Live life with them

Discern between listening to them and validating unhealthy thought patterns

Share your own struggles

Don't quote Romans 8:28 or Jeremiah 29:11

Hear this

Read Psalm 30

"But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned to a new strength. Sam's plain hobbit-face grew stern, almost grim, as the will hardened in him, and he felt through all his limbs a thrill, as if he was turning into some creature of stone and steel that neither despair nor weariness nor endless barren miles could subdue." – JRRT, Return of the King

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing, everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away! ~ Isaiah 51:11