

The Gospel & Mental Health: Depression, part 2

"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..." (Psalm 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.

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
Don't quote Romans 8:28 or Jeremiah 29:11
Live life with them
Discern between listening to them and validating unhealthy thought patterns
Share your own struggles

Depression is not the end of the story

"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

Psalm 30

- ¹ I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.
- ² O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
- ³ O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.
- ⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.
- ⁵ For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
- ⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity,
"I shall never be moved."
- ⁷ By your favor, O LORD,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face; I was dismayed.
- ⁸ To you, O LORD, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
- ⁹ "What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?"
- ¹⁰ Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!"
- ¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,
- ¹² that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!