

Self-Talk and Depression

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“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty

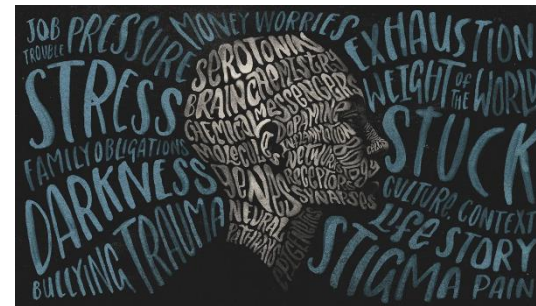


One with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng. Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope

in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore, I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me—a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, “Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?” My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all

day long, “Where is your God?” Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.”

While we don’t know the precise circumstances that led the psalmist to write these words, many of us can relate to the depths of despair he describes, where waves of helplessness seem to wash away every trace of joy. His anguish echoes our own struggles, especially when sorrow feels overwhelming, threatening to extinguish any sense of happiness or peace. In fact, one in five adults is currently experiencing mental illness,



and by the age of 40, nearly half of Canadian adults will have faced such challenges. The multibillion-dollar industry of antidepressants like Prozac, Paxil, and

Zoloft speaks to the widespread nature of these struggles. While brain chemistry can certainly play a role, our mindset and self-talk also contribute significantly to feelings of depression. In times of adversity—whether perceived or real—we often adopt a negative view of our lives, seeing them as void of meaning or hope. The prophet Jeremiah captures this feeling when he recalls his afflictions with “bitterness and gall” (Lamentations 3:19), as does David, who laments, “My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes” (Psalm 38:10). Yet, as followers of Christ, should we allow ourselves to sink into

such hopelessness when we serve a Savior who reigns sovereign over all things, both visible and invisible (Colossians 1:16)? In this sermon, we will explore the sources of depression and uncover biblical principles to break free from this stronghold, making every thought captive to Christ.

Depression in the Bible

You may feel like you're one of the few Christians who experiences depression, but many key figures in the Bible, including prophets, kings, and disciples, faced deep emotional and mental struggles. King David, in a time of despair, lamented, "I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. I am feeble and utterly crushed; I groan in anguish of heart" (Psalm 38:6, 8).



Job, after enduring severe suffering, questioned, "Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?" (Job 3:11).

Similarly, Jeremiah, after delivering God's message of judgment to a largely rejecting audience, fell into depression, saying, "Why did I ever come out of the womb to see trouble and sorrow and to end my days in shame?" (Jeremiah 20:18). Moses, overwhelmed by leadership and the complaints of the Israelites, pleaded with God, "I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat

me, please go ahead and kill me" (Numbers 11:14-15). Jonah, frustrated with God's mercy toward Nineveh, expressed his depression with the words, "Now, Lord, take my life, for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jonah 4:3). Even the Apostle Paul, amid persecution and imprisonment, confessed, "We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself" (2 Corinthians 1:8). These examples show that even God's faithful servants struggled with deep sorrow, yet they ultimately found hope in Him.

Patterns of Distorted Self-Talk

We are no more immune to depression than the great figures in the Bible. Living in a fallen world that is in bondage



to decay (Romans 8:21), both the righteous and the unrighteous experience both good and bad circumstances (Matthew 5:45). When adversity strikes, Dr. Aaron Beck notes that we often engage in distorted, negative self-talk, drawing bleak conclusions about our present or future based on little

evidence. For instance, despite God's sovereignty, Elijah feared that Jezebel would succeed in her threat to kill him (1 Kings 19:2). At other times, we fixate on isolated details, as Elijah did when he believed that being alone in his confrontation with the

prophets of Baal meant he was the last of God's prophets (1 Kings 19:10). We also tend to interpret isolated incidents as evidence of a general pattern, such as those who grew up in abusive homes associating raised voices with impending physical abuse. Additionally, we may blow a wide range of evidence out of proportion or misinterpret external events as personal failures, like Jeremiah, who felt abandoned by God when Judah fell. One of the most damaging forms of self-talk is perfectionism, where we divide the world into "perfect" or "worthless," allowing our imperfections to fuel self-condemnation.

Tips on how to Break the Stronghold of Depression

Let's examine key Bible verses that offer four steps to breaking the stronghold of depression. While some depression is

My Grace is
sufficient
for you, for
my power is
made perfect
in weakness
2 Corinthians 12:9

caused by chemical imbalances or traumatic life events, we must also recognize that many feelings of hopelessness and despair can be traced to spiritual attacks from Satan. Thoughts like 'everything is my fault,' 'I'm not good enough,' or 'nothing will ever improve' often have their roots in the enemy's schemes. As

the Apostle Paul explains, 'we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities, and the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Ephesians 6:12). Although life's challenges may leave us feeling hard-pressed and struck down, we are not crushed by despair (2 Corinthians 4:8-9) because greater is He who is within us than the one who sends these attacks (1 John 4:4). In this broken world where we live as sheep among wolves (Matthew 10:16), God works all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). While He may not immediately remove our trials, His power is made perfect in our weakness, and His grace is sufficient to help us see His purpose beyond the storm. Once we recognize that spiritual forces are a significant source of our depression, we can confidently call upon the same God who empowered David to slay Goliath to tear down the walls of our negative self-talk.

While depression can be a result of spiritual attacks, it's important to recognize that professional help is often necessary



as well. Some cases of depression are rooted in chemical imbalances, trauma, or other physiological factors that require medical treatment or counseling. Just as God works through doctors to heal physical illnesses, He also equips mental health professionals to assist in the healing of emotional and psychological wounds. Unfortunately, there can

be a stigma in Christian communities surrounding mental health struggles, where seeking help is sometimes viewed as a lack of faith. However, seeking therapy or medication is not a sign of weakness or doubt, but can be part of God's plan for healing. The Bible reminds us that 'every good and perfect gift is from above' (James 1:17), and this includes the wisdom and skills of mental health professionals. Combining spiritual support with professional help allows us to address both the physical and spiritual dimensions of our well-being, bringing us closer to the wholeness God desires for us.

The second step in breaking the stronghold of depression is to exchange your heavy yoke for the light burden offered by Christ. After King David feigned madness before Abimelek, king of Gath, to escape, he wrote Psalm 34, declaring, "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed



in spirit" (v.18). Similarly, in Psalm 42, the Sons of Korah confronted their own despair, asking, "Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God,

for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God" (v.5). Later, in Psalm 46, they remind us that "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." The Apostle Peter exhorts us to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand so that He may lift us up in due time, casting all our anxieties on Him, for He cares

for us (1 Peter 5:6-7). In times of affliction, when the dark clouds of depression overwhelm us, we must cling to God's promise: "Come near to God and He will come near to you" (James 4:8). Jesus, the Good Shepherd, invites all who are weary and burdened to come to Him, where He offers rest and a yoke that is easy and light, taking upon Himself the burdens that crush our souls (Matthew 11:28-30).

The third step in breaking the stronghold of depression is to embrace the truth that God's plan for your life is truly extraordinary! Despite the Israelites enduring 70 years of exile due to their disobedience, God still gave them a message of hope: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). Similarly, the Apostle Paul

**YOU ARE HERE
FOR A REASON**
**TRUST
IN THE
GOD'S PLANS**



reminds us that "we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). God does not desire for us to be

paralyzed by negative self-talk or consumed by our circumstances; rather, He calls us to "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6). When we place our trust in Him, King David assures us that God will "instruct you in the way you should go; He will counsel you with His loving eye on you" (Psalm 32:8).

As we surrender control to God and serve Him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, we experience inexpressible joy, knowing that while the journey may not always be easy, it is filled with hope. Ultimately, we are guaranteed the reward of “the salvation of our souls” (1 Peter 1:9) and the promise of eternity with the Lord, our portion and inheritance (Lamentations 3:24).

The family of God is a universal body, bound and sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14), and the local church is where we gather to celebrate the diversity of our gifts, united under one Lord, Savior, and King (Ephesians 4:4-6). Just as



Christ comforts us in our trials, we are called to comfort others. His command to love one another is fulfilled when we carry each other’s burdens

(Galatians 6:2), encourage one another, and build each other up in faith (1 Thessalonians 5:11). So when we see someone drowning in the sea of depression, let us not pass them by, but stop, pray, and remind them that we, too, have walked through valleys devoid of hope. Yet, in Christ, we found a Good Shepherd who trades His yoke for ours, offers shelter under His wings, and reveals His glorious plan to love and not harm His own.