

Depression

1 Kings 18-19; Psalms 42

Depression is perhaps the most common emotional problem that we face today. Experts suggest as many as one out of five Americans experience severe depression some time during their lives, and depression seems to be the most common health problem for women. Symptoms of depression include apathy, insomnia, difficulty in concentrating, and a general loss of interest in life. Severely depressed people may become suicidal, violent, or completely withdrawn. Depression has always been a problem for mankind. Today we are going to consider two great men of the Bible – Elijah and David.

slide) Joseph Grimaldi (1778–1837) is remembered as history’s greatest clown. He played for the king of England and many others. He made the world laugh. He is known as the “Father of Modern Clowning.” So great was his reputation that a doctor once gave a depressed patient the simple prescription: “You must go to the music hall and see Grimaldi.” The patient bowed and said, “I’m sorry, doctor, but with me, that will not work. You see, I am Grimaldi.”

This story reminds us that even great men get depressed. Do you remember that the great prophet Elijah. In 1 Kings 18 we have one of the Lord’s prophets, Elijah confronting Ahab, the wicked king of Israel, and 450 followers of the idol Baal. All of Israel gathered on Mt Carmel where Elijah said, ***(1 Kings 18:21) ... How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.*** Then he challenged them to build an altar to Baal and he would build one to the God of heaven and the God that sends fire to consume the altar will be the true God worthy of following and serving. They agreed to his conditions. V26 tells us that they place a sacrifice on the altar and called upon Baal for morning until noon but nothing happened.

(1 Ki 18:27) And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. They cried all the louder and cut themselves with knives and lancets until they were bleeding profusely. Finally their allotted time was over and nothing happened.

Now it was Elijah’s turn. He dug a trench around his altar and then put a sacrifice on his altar and soaked it with four barrels of water. He repeated this soaking three times which meant that he soaked the altar with a total of twelve barrels of water. This was so much water that the trench was overflowing. Elijah prayed to God and ***(1 Kings 18:38) Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. (39) And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God.***

This was a great victory for the man of God. The people returned back to the Lord and 450 prophets of Baal were killed. No doubt he was feeling good for he defended the Lord and had led many back to serving the Lord. When King Ahab’s wife, Jezebel heard of what had taken place, she put a contract out on Elijah. In essence she said, tomorrow you will join the prophets that were slain.

Jezebel's was a Phoenician princess. Her father was the king of Tyre. Jezebel married King Ahab of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Jezebel required facilities for carrying on her form of worship, so Ahab made an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. Jezebel went so far as to require that her religion should be the national religion of Israel. She organized and maintained groups of prophets, 450 of Baal, and 400 of Asherah-his female counterpart. When God prophets spoke out against their idol worship, she had

them destroyed. Now she was after Elijah and almost immediately we see Elijah going from an emotional high to a deep depression wanting to die.

(1 King 19:4) But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. Here we see a different man. Earlier there was a man poking fun at the Israelites and seemingly was on an emotional high when the God ignited that altar. Now just a few hours later we see him so low that he was asking to die.

Today this would fit the profile of a bi-polar person. High one moment and low the next. God provided Elijah with food, water, shelter, protection etc. Yet we find him feeling sorry for himself with a “woe is me” attitude. ***(1 Kings 19:14) And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*** Lord, I might as well die since I'm the only one left that has not bowed down to Baal. The Lord said, Elijah, get up from there and get busy. I want you to go out in the wilderness of Damascus and anoint Hazael to be king of Syria. ***(1 Kings 19:15) And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:*** Besides, you don't know what you are talking about, (v18) I have 7000 in Israel that have not bowed down unto Baal. Elijah got up and went on his way to being an effective prophet of God once again.

Elijah was depressed. I want you to notice that God's provisions did not cure Elijah's problem. Even awareness of God's presence didn't help. He was down and ready to give up and die. What changed him was activity. While he was feeling sorry for himself and thought he was all alone in his circumstance, the Lord said “*Get up and go.*” **THAT'S THE KEY.** When a person is depressed, he has to work himself out of it. It may take some time. I heard a man say one time that “*You can't feel yourself in to a better way of acting; you have to act yourself into a better way of feeling.*”

As some of you are well aware, depression is absolutely the worst feeling that exists. You feel as though you are falling into a black hole which has no bottom and no way out. That's the way Elijah felt. One of the most disturbing things about depression is its unpredictability. It can happen to anybody at any time, and you find yourself in this state of agony. This is exactly what happened to Elijah. As was in his case, sometimes it comes on the hill of some great success of emotional high.

Depression is a widespread condition affecting Christians and non-Christians alike. It is often triggered by life circumstances, such as rejection by peers, a broken relationship, loss of a job, health, grief, etc. However, it can be remedied through God's plan. Certainly prayer is an element in the formula. But other things can help like support groups, fellowship among believers, counseling, etc. But the real key is what the Lord did with Elijah. We must make the conscious effort to not be absorbed in ourselves, but rather turn our efforts outward. **Feelings of depression can often be solved when those suffering with depression move the focus from themselves to someone/something else.**

Staying in God's word is always good advice for someone who is depressed. They need to make sure they stay close to God even when they do not feel like it. Emotions can lead us astray, but God's Word stands firm and unchanging. We see this illustrated in another Biblical example.

We see depression found in Psalms 42 with David. Look at ***(Psalms 42:5) Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*** We see a man whose soul is beaten down. His soul is “disquieted.” That word carries the idea of *rage, mourning, clamor.* We'd say depressed.

QUESTION LIFE. V2 leads us to believe that David is searching and seeking to no avail and wonders why he can't die and be with God. *(Psalms 42:2) My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

QUESTION GOD. He felt alone and forgotten by God. *(Psalms 42:9) I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?* The reason for depression was the oppression of his enemies and the feeling of being alone. Yours may be something altogether different, but the symptoms are the same; the feeling of loneliness and rejection. *One man in a busy metropolitan setting once said that he was surrounded by thousands of people but was all alone.* Do you know people like that; maybe you've been there.

QUESTION OTHERS. While in that state, David cried continually. As others take pleasure in eating and drinking, he was given to weeping. *(Psalms 42:3) My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? It's not fair! (4) When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.* He had lingering memories of what he had done and it may seem unfair; after all, look at all he had done for the Lord and how he served him. Why is this happening to me (v5)? This is where David found himself and this is where many find themselves today. They feel as though God has forgotten them in time of need. I certainly don't have all the answers but I have three suggestions to offer.

No. 1 Look inward. Look within and analyze your heart. In all his concern about where was God, David never lost his loyalty to God. *(Psalms 42:5) Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.* Notice he said, *"for I shall yet praise him."* *(Psalms 42:6) O my God ...* Not the God of the Israelites; Not the God of A/I/J; but his God. He maintained a personal attachment to God.

No. 2. He looked upward and recognized his help. *(Psalms 42:8) Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. (9) I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?* While David did not understand why he was where he was, he continued to have a relationship with God. He addresses his prayers to *"the God of my life"* and recognized this God as his source of help. V9 describes God as *"my rock."*

No. 3. He looked outward and realized there was hope. Hope is necessary to life; without hope, we give up. Without hope we do not care what happens to us, we withdraw from others, we no longer feel pleasure, we have no interest in going about our daily lives, and we may wish to die. When depression becomes intense, it is difficult for us to remember that life once seemed meaningful or to imagine that life could ever again feel worthwhile. This waiting for hope is one of the most difficult parts of recovery from depression. *(Psalms 42:11) Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

David never gave up on God and had hope for his delivery. He put that hope into action. He got up and offered praises to God. Here we see the primary antidote to depression – action. That's what Elijah did, this is what David did; and this is what you need to do if you are depressed. **Take the focus off of yourself and put it somewhere else.** You act your way into a better way of feeling and with the help of God you can overcome.

In 2 Corinthians 1:8 we learn that the apostle Paul had times of despair. Notice the advice he gives *(9) But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: (10) Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;*

INVITATION Have you been delivered from spiritual death? That delivery is in Christ.