

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION “The Captain of the Distressed”

The Bible is very frank about the human condition. The Lord knows that we are but dust (Ps. 103:14) and is realistic about what we face in our day to day lives (Heb. 4:15). Knowing this, He has lovingly provided for us “all things that pertain to life and godliness.” (2 Pet. 1:3)

Ps 102:1-11

- 1 A prayer of an afflicted man. When he is faint and pours out his lament before the LORD. Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry for help come to you.
- 2 Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.
- 3 For my days vanish like smoke; my bones burn like glowing embers.
- 4 My heart is blighted and withered like grass; I forget to eat my food.
- 5 Because of my loud groaning I am reduced to skin and bones.
- 6 I am like a desert owl, like an owl among the ruins.
- 7 I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof.
- 8 All day long my enemies taunt me; those who rail against me use my name as a curse.
- 9 For I eat ashes as my food and mingle my drink with tears
- 10 because of your great wrath, for you have taken me up and thrown me aside.
- 11 My days are like the evening shadow; I wither away like grass. NIV

Have you ever felt like that, or known someone who has? Has life ever become so distressful that you forget to eat? Unfortunately, depression is common to the human experience. Some suffer it mildly, some severely. But most feel its touch at one time or another.

God, in His graciousness, has shown us the lives of many people in Scripture. In examining their stories and how they dealt with depression, we may discover some of the causes and some of the ways of overcoming this common malady.

1 Sam 30:1-6

- 1 David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it,
- 2 and had taken captive the women and all who were in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.
- 3 When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive.
- 4 So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep.
- 5 David's two wives had been captured-Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel.
- 6a David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. NIV

If someone had wept until they had no strength left to cry, would you classify that person as depressed and upset? I should say so. How is it that David found himself in this situation. This wasn't his demeanor when his carrier began.

1 Sam 17:10-11

10 Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other."

11 On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. NIV

The words of the Philistine dismayed and terrified Saul and all the Israelites. But these same words had a different effect on David.

1 Sam 17:22-26

22 David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers.

23 As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it.

24 When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear.

25 Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his father's family from taxes in Israel."

26 David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? **Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?**" NIV

David's reaction was surprise that the Philistine was still alive! Who was he that he should defy the armies of the living God?

1 Sam 17:43-49

43 He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.

44 "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

46 This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

47 All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

48 As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.

49 Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. NIV

In the face of the Philistine's taunts, David boldly and prophetically declares to the giant the judgment of God (John 16:8). He doesn't run away from him in fear, but charges toward him in holy boldness and kills the giant!

With this great victory (and freedom from taxes), we know that David wins the day, gets the girl, has the treasure and his troubles are over, right? Wrong!

1 Sam 18:6-11 NIV

6 When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

7 As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

8 Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"

9 And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

10 The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand

11 and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

His very success against the king's enemy caused the king to be his enemy! And you thought you had problems with your in-laws!

Eventually, the family tension was too much and David had to run away from the court to avoid Saul's murderous attempts.

1 Sam 21:10-15

10 That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath.

11 But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances: "'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands'?"

12 David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath.

13 So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.

14 Achish said to his servants, "Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me?"

15 Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?" NIV

Fear of Saul drove David to run to the Philistines, this time not to kill them but to seek safety from them. Fear of one danger had clouded his judgment regarding another. When he escaped, tradition claims that he wrote the 34th Psalm commemorating the event.

Ps 34

1 Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.

I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

2 My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.

3 Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.

4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.

5 Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.

6 This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.
8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.
9 Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing.
10 The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
11 Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 **Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,**
13 **keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.**
14 **Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.**
15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;
16 the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
17 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.
18 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all;
20 he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.
21 Evil will slay the wicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned.
22 The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him. NIV

This Psalm is a song of trust, an encouragement to run to the Lord and His safety in times of trouble. Note particularly verses 12 through 14. These are given as instruction in the fear of the Lord for those who love life and would live long: keep tongue from evil and lips from speaking lies, turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it.

1 Sam 22:1-2

1 David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him.
2 And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them. And there were about four hundred men with him. NKJV

David takes refuge in the cave of Adullam and becomes the captain of the distressed. He was a leader of all those who were pressed down, in debt and bitter!

1 Sam 23:14

David stayed in the desert strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. **Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.** NIV

As Saul searched for David, God kept him out of Saul's hands.

1 Sam 27:1-4

1 But David thought to himself, "One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul. The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand."
2 So David and the six hundred men with him left and went over to Achish son of Maach king of Gath.

3 David and his men settled in Gath with Achish. Each man had his family with him, and David had his two wives: Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail of Carmel, the widow of Nabal.
4 When Saul was told that David had fled to Gath, he no longer searched for him. NIV

The ends do not justify the means. Even though Saul left David alone, his motive for going there was wrong. He convinced himself that Saul was going to destroy him. His move was not one of faith.

Rom 14:23

But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **everything that does not come from faith is sin.** NIV

David had every reason to believe that God would continue to deliver him from the hand of Saul. While hiding in one of the caves, he had been able to cut off a portion of the king's robe. Just before deciding to leave the country, he had stolen into Saul's camp and taken his spear and water bottle. Saul was unable to capture him, yet the Lord left Saul vulnerable to David time and again. Yet David decides that his safety can't last. He decides to trust Israel's enemies and geography to offer him the protection he no longer had faith in God for.

1 Sam 27:5-12

5 Then David said to Achish, "If I have found favor in your eyes, let a place be assigned to me in one of the country towns, that I may live there. Why should your servant live in the royal city with you?"
6 So on that day Achish gave him Ziklag, and it has belonged to the kings of Judah ever since.
7 David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months.
8 Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites and the Amalekites. (From ancient times these peoples had lived in the land extending to Shur and Egypt.)
9 Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish.
10 When Achish asked, "Where did you go raiding today?" David would say, "Against the Negev of Judah" or "Against the Negev of Jerahmeel" or "Against the Negev of the Kenites."
11 He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, "They might inform on us and say, 'This is what David did.'" And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory.
12 Achish trusted David and said to himself, "He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever." NIV

David was a man of war and after God's own heart. But his motivation for completely wiping out these peoples was so that they wouldn't tell Achish! Fear and deception are still apparent in the basis for his actions.

This fear and deception was the hole in David's hedge. While away from home, David and his men lost everything.

1 Sam 30:1-4

- 1 David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it,
- 2 and had taken captive the women and all who were in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way.
- 3 When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive.
- 4 So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. NIV

We've all suffered bad times. But I don't know any of us here today who have come home to find our city in flames and our wives and children gone. The point is not to minimize any suffering that we have felt or may be feeling by means of comparison. The point is to see that if David could find a way out of his depression, so can we.

1 Sam 30:6

And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David **encouraged**¹ himself in the LORD his God. KJV

Strong's definition-

OT:2388 – **chazaq**¹ (khaw-zak'); a primitive root; **to fasten upon; hence, to seize, be strong** (figuratively, courageous, causatively strengthen, cure, help, repair, fortify), obstinate; to bind, restrain, conquer:

*Another way of stating what David did, based on the Hebrew, is that he **fastened himself and took a hold of the Lord his God**. This is how he found courage in a hopeless situation. This wasn't just a perception shift. He also took positive action.*

He sought the Lord-

1 Sam 30:7

Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him, NIV

The start of this particular problem began when David "said to himself." In this situation, he refuses to be his own counsel and sought the Lord.

He avoided presumption-

1 Sam 30:8 NIV

and David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?" "Pursue them," he answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue."

David didn't assume that he had any right to recover his family or that he would be successful in the endeavor. He asked the Lord if he should pursue and would he be successful. The Lord answered in the affirmative.

He obeyed the word of the Lord (in spite of setbacks)-

Loss of men (resources)-

1 Sam 30:9-10

9 David and the six hundred men with him came to the Besor Ravine, where some stayed behind, 10 for two hundred men were too exhausted to cross the ravine. But David and four hundred men continued the pursuit. NIV

Overwhelming odds and exhaustion-

1 Sam 30:16-19

16 He led David down, and there they were, scattered over the countryside, eating, drinking and reveling because of the great amount of plunder they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from Judah.

17 **David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day**, and none of them got away, except four hundred young men who rode off on camels and fled.

18 David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives.

19 Nothing was missing: young or old, boy or girl, plunder or anything else they had taken. David brought everything back. NIV

The intent of evil men-

1 Sam 30:22-24

22 But all the evil men and troublemakers among David's followers said, "Because they did not go out with us, we will not share with them the plunder we recovered. However, each man may take his wife and children and go."

23 David replied, "No, my brothers, you must not do that with what the LORD has given us. He has protected us and handed over to us the forces that came against us.

24 Who will listen to what you say? The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All will share alike." NIV

In the face of horrible anguish, David latched on to God and pushed forward. Once he had the word of the Lord, he did not let circumstance alter his course but "fought . . . from dusk to evening . . . and recovered everything." One could say that he stood in the evil day and overcame his depression.

Epilog-

2 Sam 1:1-2

1 After the death of Saul, David returned from defeating the Amalekites and stayed in Ziklag two days.

2 On the third day a man arrived from Saul's camp, with his clothes torn and with dust on his head. When he came to David, he fell to the ground to pay him honor. NIV

When David wept in Ziklag until he had no strength left, he had no idea that the man he had fled from would be dead inside a week's time. To put it another way, his deliverance was closer than he believed.

2 Sam 2:1-4

- 1 In the course of time, David inquired of the LORD. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked. The LORD said, "Go up." David asked, "Where shall I go?" "To Hebron," the LORD answered.
- 2 So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel.
- 3 David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and they settled in Hebron and its towns.
- 4 Then the men of Judah came to Hebron and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. NIV

In inquiring of the Lord, David began to see the fulfillment of the prophecies spoken over him when he was a young man "in the course of time."