

# OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

## “To Hell and Back”

### Introduction-

*By the popular use of the term and most of Christianity’s reaction to it, one would think “hell” to be a bad word. But hell isn’t a bad word. It’s a bad place.*

Ps 88:3-7

3 For my soul is full of trouble and my life draws near the grave.

4 I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like a man without strength.

5 I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.

6 You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.

7 Your wrath lies heavily upon me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. Selah NIV

*Have you ever felt like that, your soul so full of trouble that you lack strength and believe that God has forgotten you?*

Ps 116:3

The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. KJV

*Have you ever felt that in your trouble and sorrow, the pains of hell had gotten a hold of you? Well, we have good news. We are going to look at a man who went to hell and back. Now the fact that he came back from hell should be encouraging in itself. But I trust that in examining his journey, we may pick up some lessons on overcoming depression or maybe even avoiding certain types of it all together!*

### The Road Down

Jonah 1:1-3

1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

2 **Arise**, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and **went down to Joppa**; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and **went down into it**, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. KJV

*The word of the Lord to Jonah was “Arise, go to Nineveh.” Sometimes when we are depressed we say that we are feeling down. Look where Jonah goes.*

- ❑ Down to Joppa
- ❑ Down into [the ship]

*Note that Jonah’s journey down is a journey away from the presence of the Lord. The Lord had sent him to Nineveh, the eastern edge of his known world. Jonah decides to go to Tarshish,*

*known today as Spain, the western edge of his known world. In other words, he is trying to go as far away from where God wants him to be as he possibly can. And to do so, he has to go down.*

Jonah 1:4-17

- 4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.
- 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But **Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship**; and he lay, and was fast asleep.
- 6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.
- 7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah.
- 8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou?
- 9 And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land.
- 10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.
- 11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.
- 12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.
- 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them.
- 14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee.
- 15 So they took up Jonah, **and cast him forth into the sea**: and the sea ceased from her raging.
- 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.
- 17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah **was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights**. KJV

*He had gone down to Joppa and then down into the ship. As we continue to read, we discover further depths he is driven to.*

- ❑ Down into the sides of the ship
- ❑ Down into the sea
- ❑ Down into the belly of the whale.

*As if that weren't far enough, it gets even worse.*

Jonah 2:1-6

- 1 Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,

- 2 And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; **out of the belly of hell** cried I, and thou heardest my voice.
- 3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.
- 4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.
- 5 The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.
- 6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. KJV

*And now we see the depths to which Jonah has fallen:*

- ❑ Into the deep
- ❑ Down to the bottoms of the mountains
- ❑ Enclosed in the bars of the earth
- ❑ In the belly of Hell

*Note the language Jonah uses in describing the location of sheol or hell. He speaks of the bottoms of the mountains and the earth with her bars.*

Deut 32:21-22

- 21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
- 22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto **the lowest hell**, and shall consume the earth with her increase, **and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.** KJV

Job 17:13-16

- 13 If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.
- 14 I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.
- 15 And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?
- 16 **They shall go down to the bars of the pit**, when our rest together is in the dust. KJV

Job 26:1-6

- 1 Then Job replied:
- 2 "How you have helped the powerless! How you have saved the arm that is feeble!
- 3 What advice you have offered to one without wisdom! And what great insight you have displayed!
- 4 Who has helped you utter these words? And whose spirit spoke from your mouth?
- 5 "The dead are in deep anguish, those beneath the waters and all that live in them.
- 6 Death [*sheol* – hell in KJV] is naked before God; Destruction lies uncovered. NIV

Isa 14:9-15

- 9 Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

- 10 All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?
- 11 Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.
- 12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!
- 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
- 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.
- 15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. KJV

*As stated before, hell is a real place and it is where Jonah found himself at the end of his road down.*

*Who was Jonah and why did he run?*

### **A Matter of Perspectives**

2 Kings 14:23-27

- 23 In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years.
- 24 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit.
- 25 He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, **in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.**
- 26 The LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them.
- 27 And since the LORD had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash. NIV

*As a side note, Gath Hepher was a town in Zebulun in lower Galilee – in other words, he was a Galilean prophet!*

*A little history:*

- ❑ Assyria defeated the Arameans and Damascus. Jeroboam II took the opportunity offered by Aramean weakness to extend Israel's northern borders.
- ❑ During this time of peace, the people were complacent and not seeking God. They had not been delivered because of revival or repentance, but because God was merciful.
- ❑ Two prophets, Amos and Hosea, began to prophesy about Israel's impending doom.

Amos 5:27

Therefore I will send you into exile **beyond Damascus,**" says the LORD, whose name is God Almighty. NIV

Amos 7:7-9

- 7 This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand.
- 8 And the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" "A plumb line," I replied. Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.
- 9 "The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam." NIV

*Amos spoke of the exile "beyond Damascus" and Hosea identified where this would be.*

Hos 10:5-6

- 5 The people who live in Samaria fear for the calf-idol of Beth Aven. Its people will mourn over it, and so will its idolatrous priests, those who had rejoiced over its splendor, because it is taken from them into exile.
- 6 **It will be carried to Assyria** as tribute for the great king. Ephraim will be disgraced; Israel will be ashamed of its wooden idols. NIV

*Amos and Hosea prophesied during the time the Lord sent Jonah to Nineveh. Nineveh was the capitol of the Assyrian Empire. The prophet the Lord use to tell Israel that her borders would expand was the same prophet he sent to save Israel's enemy. So Jonah ran.*

*Why did Jonah "go down?"*

- ❑ Lack of true perspective. He thought he knew better than God how to handle history. When has God's plans contradicted your own "better judgment"? Have you repented for trying to be God?

## **The Road Up**

Jonah 2:7-3:6

- 7 "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.
- 8 "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.
- 9 But I, with a song of thanksgiving, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. Salvation comes from the LORD."
- 10 And the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land.
- 1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time:
- 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you."
- 3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days.
- 4 On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned."
- 5 The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.
- 6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. NIV

*Jonah may well have traveled over three months to get to Nineveh after being thrown up by the fish. His deliverance was based on repentance. In his obedience, the Lord delivered the Ninevites.*

Jonah 3:10

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. NIV

*This is often referred to as one of the greatest revivals in the Bible. You would think Jonah would be happy and blessed, right?*

Jonah 4:1-3

1 But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry.

2 He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

3 Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live." NIV

*Jonah is suicidal. Why? What is the root of his despondency?*

Jonah 4:4-11 NIV

4 But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?"

5 Jonah went out and sat down at a place east of the city. There he made himself a shelter, sat in its shade and waited to see what would happen to the city.

6 Then the LORD God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine.

7 But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered.

8 When the sun rose, God provided a scorching east wind, and the sun blazed on Jonah's head so that he grew faint. He wanted to die, and said, "It would be better for me to die than to live."

9 But God said to Jonah, "Do you have a right to be angry about the vine?" "I do," he said. "I am angry enough to die."

10 But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this vine, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight.

11 But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

**PROBLEM:**

Forgetting God's mercy on us, we become displeased and upset with God when we think He should execute judgment on those we think more wicked than ourselves.

*Anger is a major root of depression.*

Col 3:21 "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." KJV

**The Solution**

Matt 12:39-41

39 He answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights **in the heart of the earth.**

41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here. NIV

Rom 10:6-7

6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)

7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). NIV

Eph 4:7-10

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

9 (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?

10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) NIV

Ps 116:1-13

1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of **hell**<sup>1</sup> gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

4 **Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.**

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:

11 I said in my haste, All men are liars.

12 What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

13 **I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.** KJV

*This was part of the hymn sung by the Lord and His disciples before they went to the Garden after the Last Supper. Because He went to hell, we don't have to. In Communion, we can take up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord and be deliverer; our souls from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling!!*

*We have believed, therefore we must speak of the Lord's salvation.*

2 Cor 4

1 Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.

2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing.

- 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
- 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.
- 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
- 7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.
- 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;
- 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.
- 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.
- 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.
- 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.
- 13 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,
- 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.
- 15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.
- 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.
- 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.
- 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. NIV

*We know that life is our end, so that in the face of death, we with faith can say, "He shall yet deliver me!"*

Ps 30

- 1 I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.
- 2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.
- 3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the **grave**<sup>1</sup>: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.
- 4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.
- 5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.
- 6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.
- 7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.
- 8 I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.
- 9 **What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit<sup>a</sup>?** Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?

10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever. KJV

*The above is not a platitude, but a reality. When we cry out to the Lord, He does deliver us from hell. When we praise and thank Him, truly He turns our mourning into dancing. Amen!*