

Spiritual Depression!

“The same personality qualities which normally make for a great servant of God also makes one vulnerable to the assault of depression.” Martyn Lloyd Jones

Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. 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 my life, for I am not better than my fathers.” He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, “Arise, eat.” Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you.” So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”

(I Kings 19:1-10)

What Is depression? “embodied emotional suffering.” (David Jeremiah)

“Spiritual depression generally refers to a loss of spiritual vitality and joy. In terms of Christianity, experiencing a spiritual depression might involve: losing touch with your faith. “forgetting” God, or struggling to find time for spiritual study. Depression is not just a state of mind, or a negative view of life. It is not just having a bad day. Depression Is far more than that.”

“1 in 5 high schoolers have even made a plan to take their own life.” (Channel 5 news this Tuesday)

Four Spiritual FLAWS:

1. Because I am a Christian all my problems are automatically and immediately solved.
2. All my problems in minute detail are addressed in the Bible.
3. If as a believer I am having problems, and struggling with depression, I must not be spiritual. After all, only failures become depressed.
4. Bring orthodox and sound in doctrine it guarantees I AM IMMUNE TO SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION..

Scripture is full of godly men and women who dealt with spiritual depression:

1. **Jonah prayed to die:** *He prayed to the Lord and said, "Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life." The Lord said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"*
(Jonah 4:1-4)
2. **Jeremiah:** *Cursed be the day when I was born; Let the day not be blessed when my mother bore me! Cursed be the man who brought the news To my father, saying, "A baby boy has been born to you!" And made him very happy. But let that man be like the cities Which the Lord overthrew without relenting, And let him hear an outcry in the morning And a shout of alarm at noon; Because he did not kill me before birth, So that my mother would have been my grave, And her womb ever pregnant. Why did I ever come forth from the womb To look on trouble and sorrow, So that my days have been spent in shame?* (Jer. 20:14-18)
3. **Elijah prayed to die:** *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 my life, for I am not better than my fathers." (I Kings 19:4)*
4. **Naomi:** *So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?" (Ruth.1.21)*

Church History is filled with examples of godly men and women who dealt with spiritual depression:

1. Martin Luther leader of the Reformation
2. Charles Haddon Spurgeon greatest preacher of 19th century
3. William Cowper who wrote "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath this flood lose all their guilty strains."

4. **Ronn Dunn my favorite Bible teacher**
5. **Winston Churchill, perhaps greatest political leader of 20th century fought a battle with depression.**

Do spiritual leaders get depressed? The answer is “Yes.” John W. Stott, a great biblical expositor said that a Christian leader has two chief occupational hazards: depression and discouragement.

I. The Sources of Elijah’s Spiritual Depression:

a. Forgetfulness:

1. **Elijah had just seen God manifest His Presence and Power on Mt. Carmel as 450 false prophets of Baal were defeated.**
2. **The most dangerous time for a believer is immediately after a victory. When we have seen God come through on the mountaintop, then a crisis comes along, a Jezebel threatens you and you run like Elijah.**

b. Fear: *And he ¹was afraid (first time we hear of Elijah being afraid. He had stood against all he prophets of Baal) and arose and ran for his ²life and came to ^aBeersheba...*

1. **Why did Elijah run? Fear! Only hours before he had virtually sneered in Jezebel’s face, now he runs from her for like a scarred rabbit.**
2. **His fear arose out of what he “saw.” *And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets (of Baal) with the sword. And when he SAW that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. In other words, He took his eyes off God and was looking at what man could do to him.***
3. **Listen to the David in PS 31: *For I have heard the slander of many, **Terror** is on every side; While they took counsel together against me, They schemed to take away my life. But as for me, I trust in You, O Lord, I say, “You are my God.” My times are in Your hand; Deliver me***

from the hand of my enemies and from those who persecute me. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant; Save me in Your lovingkindness.

4. Fear causes us to lose our perspective.” We know that God is greater than the source of our fear, but we lose perspective.
 1. Consider Peter walking on water. When he looked at the waves, and took his eyes off Jesus, he lost perspective.
 2. *‘Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ (Isa. 41:10)*
 3. *For God has not given us a spirit of fear...*” (II Tim. 1:7)
 4. *The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe. (Prov.29:25)*
- c. Fatigue: Imagine all that Elijah had gone through on Mt. Carmel. This was an all day affair of spiritual warfare against the false prophets of Baal. Then he had to travel 17 miles to Jezreel, then over 80 miles by foot to Beersheba. He then leaves his servant and travels another day.
- d. Failure:
 1. The context assumes that Elijah had some expectations that didn’t pan out. Elijah assumed that once the confrontation of Mt. Carmel was done, once the prophets of Baal had been eliminated, once the hearts of the people were turned back to God, everything in Israel would fall into place the way God wanted it. Ahab would repent and then deal with Jezebel, and Elijah would have nothing left to do but deliver the Word of God to a listening and obedient people. But that is not what happened!
 2. *Elijah was at the pinnacle of popularity. He was the mouthpiece of the true and living God. He prayed a 67 word prayer and the fire of God fell. But now Elijah felt he was a total failure. He was filled with suicidal thoughts. (O.S. Hawkins)*
 3. *There are clues here that can help today to guard against depression or burnout. The story of Elijah alerts to subtle temptations for both individuals and groups: to believe that because I am doing things ‘God’s way’ to ‘bring God glory’, the result will be success (‘as I see it’); and to think that ‘my way’ is the only or ‘the best’ God-honouring way. The danger is compounded when accompanied with a belief that ‘no one*

else is with me' or 'I alone can do it). The Message of Kings: God is Present (A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; p. 183). Inter-Varsity Press.

4. Why did God not answer the prayer to die?

- He knew what was behind him.
- He knew what was in him.
- He knew what was ahead of him.

e. **Famine:** *So, he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. (1 Kings 17:5-7 NKJV)*

II. The Solution God provided for Elijah's Spiritual Depression:

a. **God Recommissioned him:** God said, *"What are you doing here Elijah... Then the Lord said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. ¹⁶Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. (vv. 15, 16).*

1. Depressed persons cannot usually be talked out of their gloom. What does sometimes help is a sense of purpose, and that is exactly what God provides with a new commission. The Message of Kings: God is Present (A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; p. 178). Inter-Varsity Press.
2. Our Lord did the same to Peter. *So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, "Simon, of John, do you love Me more than these?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Tend My lambs." He *said to him again a second time, "Simon, of John, do you love Me?" He *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He *said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." He *said to him the third time, "Simon, of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus *said to him, "Tend My sheep.(John.21:15-17) "*

b. **God Refreshed him:** "Come apart and rest awhile, or you will come apart." Vance Havner.

- c. God Reminded him that he was not alone. Swindoll says that “*Juniper trees have single beds under them.*” Depressed people are lonely people.

1. “...almost as a gentle afterthought God adds: *Elijah you are not alone, there are seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.*” (v. 18). *The Message of Kings: God is Present* (A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; p. 180). Inter-Varsity Press.
2. Paul had to be reminded he was not alone. “*Make every effort to come to me, for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*” (2Tim.4.10-18)

Not until the loom is silent, and the shuttles cease to fly

will God unroll the pattern and explain the reason why

the dark threads areas needful in the weaver's skillful hand

as the threads of gold and silver in the life He has planned.