

Depression in the life of a King

The rich and famous are not excluded from discouragement and depression. In fact, their privileges and responsibilities can increase their chance of facing depression. For example, the first two kings of Israel displayed clear signs of depression during their reigns. Let us take a close look at King Saul and King David to see what caused their depression, what their symptoms were, how they attempted to deal with the problem, and what the final outcome was.

First let us consider the record of King Saul found I Samuel 15-16. In I Samuel 15:1-5 God gave a very specific command to Saul. In I Samuel 15:6-9 we find that Saul only obedient in part. Because of this God sent the prophet Samuel to Saul to say, “When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? ... Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?” (15:17-19). Sadly, Saul’s response to these convicting words of the Lord was to shift the blame to the people of Israel. He declared that he was not in sin, that because he was following the will of the people he was prevented from completing God’s to the letter. Following the excuses of Saul, Samuel stated, “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king” (15:22-23). Saul’s response was that of verbal repentance, but God, knowing the heart of King Saul, had already rejected Saul as king. Samuel told Saul, “for thou

hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel” (15:26). We learn that Saul’s depression began when “the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul” (16:14). As Saul’s servants noticed his change in behavior and spirit, they proposed a worldly solution. Their proposal was, “Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well” (16:16). These servants attempted to deal with the symptoms of depression rather than the source. The source of the depression was Saul’s rebellion against God, but instead of suggesting true repentance, they turned to some relaxing music to distract his mind from his guilty conscience. David was called in to play his harp, and, for a time, the symptoms of Saul’s depression subsided. But because the sin problem was not resolved, it continued to grow in Saul’s heart until, while “David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice” (19:9-10). Saul never found true freedom from his depression, and his hatred for David continued to consume him.

Just as Saul faced depression, so did David. David himself revealed his personal testimony and battle with depression in Psalm 32. This Psalm was written after his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite (II Samuel 11:1-12:19). Psalm 32 begins with, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” David is reporting his own personal battle with sin, the lack of confession, and the final breaking of his heart to

true repentance. Before David experienced this great joy of forgiveness from God, he felt the pain of covering his sin and refusing to repent. David said, “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (32:3-4). David experienced three particular symptoms of depression. First, he felt the loss of strength all the way to his bones. This included the feeling of growing old at a young age. Second, he carried a weight upon himself because the pressure of God’s convicting hand pressed down upon him. And third, he felt dry, as in the heat of a hot summer day. Perhaps he was speaking of the natural reaction of the body, such as dry mouth, or perhaps he was speaking of the lack satisfaction in anything offered to him. David had some choices to make. He could have chosen to look for a solution in his own music, which he used to provide temporary relief to Saul in his state of depression, or he could have looked to other sources of worldly counsel. David did not choose either of these options, but rather said, “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found” (32:5-6) David found the solution to his depression in renewing his relationship with God. It was David’s sin which brought him to the point of depression, and it would only be by true repentance and confession of that sin that he would be able to rejoice again.

King Saul and King David faced the same problem of depression. They had both sinned against God, and for that sin they lost the fellowship they had once enjoyed with Him. King Saul chose to look to the world’s advice to cover his sin and find short-term relief from the

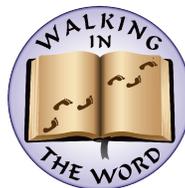
symptoms. In the end, he died still in his state of depression. King David looked to God's promise that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). In the end, David said that he was blessed of God because he had received God's forgiveness.

As a loving father guides his children, so God says "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (32:8). God desires your fellowship again. He desires that you have freedom from the symptoms of your sin. The choice is yours. Will you confess your sin and forsake it? Will you follow the loving and experienced advice of David? "Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (32:9-11). Don't put it off. **The joy of the Lord is awaiting your confession and the forsaking of whatever sin was or is in your life.**

Do not permit the loving correction of your Heavenly Father to produce a broken, depressed spirit. Hebrews 12:5-7 says, "... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? The passage continues to explain the necessity for God's correction in order to assure you of your personal relationship with Him as your Father. In the concluding remarks we find this counsel, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the

peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (12:11-13). Following the correction of God in your life, He does not want you to be depressed, but rather to have the fruit of righteousness. He does not want you to live with a broken spirit, with your hands hanging down and your legs without strength, but rather He calls you to be assured of His love and to live in such a way that you will not need future correction.

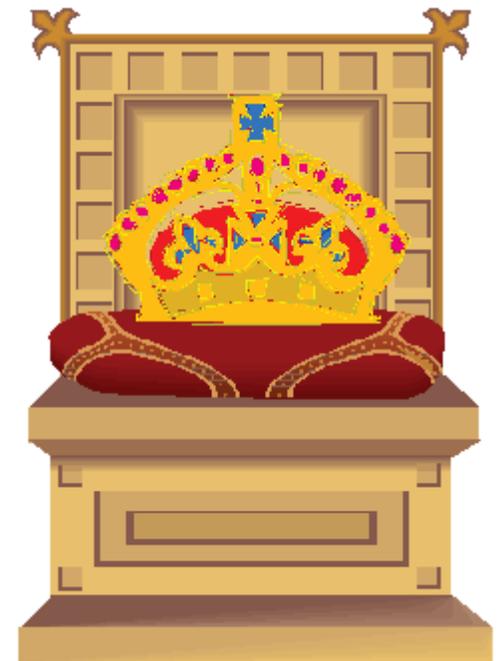
Are you ready to gain the victory over depression? Will you take the steps of confession and rejection of your sin? Will you remember God's love for you and His desire to be your perfect, loving and all-wise Heavenly Father? Why not start right this minute? Follow David's prayer of confession. **GOD IS AWAITING YOUR PRAYER** so that you can once again experience a personal walk with Him.



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DEPRESSION

In the Life of a King



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