

Depression

In the Life of God's Servant

Because the Bible contains “all things pertaining to life and godliness” (II Peter 1:2-4), it must also contain practical information about one of the greatest difficulties of our day: depression. It is evident that the world, and even Christians, are affected by this great burden. But is this God's desire for His children? Jesus Christ said, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). If Jesus came to provide an abundant life, why are there so many individuals suffering from personal depression or from the depression of loved ones?

Let us look at the life Elijah, one of the greatest prophets, who experienced his own time of depression. Through his example we can find some substantial reasons for depression as well as some practical ways to resolve the problem.

In I Kings 18-19 the prophet Elijah confronted the children of Israel with their sin and rebellion against God. In his address to them he boldly said, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (18:21). Clearly Elijah had great stability of mind and spirit as he condemned Israel with her sin of idolatry. Elijah's continued boldness and zeal was evident as he challenged the false prophets of Baal to prove themselves on Mount Carmel (18:19-20). He challengingly said, “And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God” (18:24). As the day progressed, the prophets of Baal worshiped Baal. “They leaped upon the altar which was made ... And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with

knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them” (18:26-28). Yet no answer of fire was provided by Baal. So Elijah built his altar and requested 12 barrels of water to be poured over top of the offering, wood and the altar (18:30-35). He prayed saying, “Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again” (18:36-37). The Bible then reports that “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” (18:38). What a victory for God and for Elijah!

Following the victory over the false prophets of Baal, the Bible says that Elijah prayed to God seven times to send rain because there had been a drought for 3 years (18:41-45). “And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not” (18:44). We find Elijah with more strength and speed than a horse as “he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel” (18:46). **Elijah not only had boldness to preach righteousness and the courage to challenge false prophets, he also had the faith to pray for rain in the midst of a drought, and the physical ability to run in front of a chariot before the rain arrived.**

What a hero! What a man of God!

But sadly, the story does not end with these great victories. The evil queen Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah, and the great prophet of God was broken and displayed clear signs of depression (19:1-3). Elijah's responses were simple. He “went for his life ... and left his servant ... he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down ... and he

requested for himself that he might die” (vrs. 19:3-4). **The symptoms of seeking solitude, of a lack of a desire to work, and even the desire to die were all part of this great prophet's depression.** Even though Elijah had just gained one of the greatest victories in history, **he was depressed and had lost hope.** But God had not forgotten His child. **God tenderly and caringly addressed Elijah's physical needs** “as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat” (19:5-8). Elijah was in need of sleep and food. He had depleted himself of these physical necessities, and his poor health was affecting his outlook on life and adding to his state of depression. Also, **God lovingly cared for Elijah's spiritual needs** when He asked, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” (19:9). In Elijah's response he displayed his feelings of loneliness and rejection of others. “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away” (19:10). **God provided Elijah with an opportunity to renew his focus through renewing his knowledge of God.** The Bible says “behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice” (19:11-13). Elijah had seen the great power of God in the spiritual victories of his life, but **he had lost his focus upon the ever-present, calming and empowering voice of God. He had done great things for God, but now those very things had distracted him from his personal relationship with God.**

Following this opportunity to renew his knowledge of God, **God gave Elijah a renewed**

purpose when he said “Go” (19:15-17). Go and serve Me in your renewed physical strength and renewed vision of Me.

After God renewed Elijah’s purpose, **God provided him with the assurance that he was not alone.** God had preserved 7,000 other individuals who were just like him in his commitment to obey the only true God (19:18).

Does your profile fit that of Elijah’s? Have you been serving God, but now you find yourself seeking refuge in solitude, or with the desire to quit or even die? **Perhaps your physical health has begun to fail,** and you are in need of good rest, food, and even medical attention. These physical concerns are serious, and at times need to be addressed by good medical care. Will you accept the physical care God wishes to provide you so that your body and mind are ready to serve Him once again? **Perhaps, just like Elijah, you need to readjust your focus** of life. You need to remember Who God is and forget about your personal problems because of the rejection of others (Matthew 10:28-33). You need to take some private time to listen to God’s still small voice speaking to you through His Word. God wants you to rise up confident and ready to serve Him. He also wants you to know that you are not alone. God is faithful, and there are others who are faithful to Him as they fight the spiritual battles of our day.

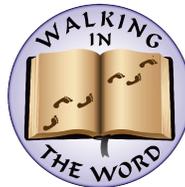
Remember the words of the Apostle Peter: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (I Peter 5:7). God’s care for you is personal and ready to assist you personally in your needs. God does not wish His children to waste their lives in depression through the “spirit of fear,” but rather He wants His children to walk in “power, and of [in] love, and of [in] a sound mind” (II Timothy 1:7).

The Apostle Paul encourages us to be “strong

in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10) so that we might say with him, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:12-13).

Will you begin to depend upon your almighty, all-wise heavenly Father to help you through the difficulties of your life? He wants you to have “life, and that they [you] might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10) by walking hand-in-hand with Him.

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DEPRESSION

In the Life of God's SERVANT



The search for the causes and practical solutions to the problems of our day, based upon the Bible.