

DEPRESSION

Is there a cure?

RAY EWART

First published in Australia March 1993
Copyright – R J Ewart, 1993
Typeset by Cathy Toal
Design and Layout by Greg Carrick

Published by R J Ewart, Mooroolbark, Vic, Australia
ISBN 0 646 09746 6
Second Edition 1996
Typeset, Design and Layout by Meijer Print Services

This book has not been written to make profit for the Author. It has been written to help people who suffer from depression, and in the higher hopes that it will bring praise to God and lead souls to Him.

DEPRESSION

Is there a cure?

RAY EWART

PREAMBLE

Before making this book available for download I thought it wise to write this brief preamble.

There are two things I need to comment upon, namely:

1. My use of the word **DEPRESSION**. I use the word in a very broad sense. I would even say I use it loosely to refer to the experience of sadness, disappointment, discouragement or distress that can come our way from time to time. I do not use the word in any clinical, psychological or medical sense.

Depressive disorders are serious problems, be they minor or major, mild, moderate or severe: melancholic or psychotic. In many cases those afflicted by them need help from people qualified to provide it. I have no qualifications in this area. Nothing I have written in this book should lead anyone to ignore counselling or alter any treatment or cease taking any medication they are receiving from qualified practitioners.

2. My use of the word **CURE**. I do not suggest that there is a permanent, once for all, cure for any form of depression. Depression is often a recurring or ongoing problem. What I do contend is that, for certain forms of what I refer to as depression, there is help for the Christian believer who is willing to take note of, and follow the path of recovery that I believe is discernible in the Word of God.

For those who read this book, with these things in mind, I believe there is help. Help that I, personally, have found, and help which others who have read this book have told me they have found.

RAY EWART

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

It is not at all surprising in our fast moving world that one of the most serious problems we face is depression. It should not surprise us, though, that the God who made us has much to say on this subject. Ray Ewart, in this booklet, seeks to unfold to us something of God's thoughts on the matter. In a number of different places where he has spoken on "Depression", the response and feedback have been most encouraging. This, together with a request from ourselves at The Way of Life Inc. that he write an article for us for our magazine, were at least two of the factors in Ray's decision to write this booklet.

Ray takes up a number of different aspects on depression running right through the Bible, bringing them together into a single picture that helps us understand the problem much better. In a very practical way, he outlines a cure for depression and then describes how to make it work, basing everything on God's Word to us. He writes not as an onlooker but as one who has had mild encounters with depression himself. This is not a scientific or medical investigation of the subject, nor is any suggestion made that medical or psychological treatment that a reader may be receiving should be abandoned unless it is above doubt that a permanent cure has taken place.

I heartily commend this booklet to all for their careful and prayerful consideration and feel sure that the Lord will use it for healing and blessing in many lives.

Gary C Parsons

Ministries Manager
The Way of Life Inc
Youth Camps, Yellingbo, Vic, 3139

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

If you suffer from depression as most people, including Bible characters, have done at times, and you want to avoid doing so, you should read "Depression – is there a cure?" You will not find the book difficult to read, nor its message hard to understand.

Basing his thoughts on the Word of God, Ray Ewart discusses causes of depression and leads the reader along a definite pathway to recovery.

This book may be just what you've been looking for. It is one of the best I have read on the subject. I thoroughly recommend it!

Marcia Bennetts

President
Victorian Women's Christian Conventions, 1996

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, whilst fulfilling a preaching engagement in Northern Victoria, I felt led to give an address on the subject of Depression.

I did not have a great deal to say but I was impressed by the response from the congregation. One person after another came to tell me how they were affected by depression. A doctor with a general medical practice in the locality said that half of his patients suffered from nothing more and nothing less than depression.

The response of that congregation prompted me to study the subject in more detail. Subsequently I have spoken on the subject in more meetings that I can readily recall. In some instances I have chosen the subject but in many others I have been specifically requested to deal with it.

As I have gathered information about depression three things in particular have impressed me. First, that Scripture says so much about it, second, that so many genuine followers of God have suffered from it and third, that Scripture repeatedly outlines a basis for dealing with it.

It is my sincere and prayerful hope that the thoughts contained in this booklet will enlighten some who, like myself, have had mild encounters with depression and will bring a measure of encouragement and relief to those who have suffered more deeply from its effects.

Ray Ewart

CONTENTS

Chapter 1	The Beginnings of Enlightenment	9 – 13
Chapter 2	So Many People	14 - 17
Chapter 3	Mainly About Causes	18 – 22
Chapter 4	Mainly About a Cure	23 – 30
Chapter 5	Making it Work	31 – 34
Chapter 6	In Conclusion	35 – 36

CHAPTER 1

THE BEGINNINGS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

My personal encounters with depression have been numerous but I would not describe any such encounter as being severe.

I have, I suppose, suffered from depression in much the same way as countless other people. Overwork for a prolonged period may make me feel gloomy; disappointments may make me feel down; a bout of influenza may bring on a few days of depression as recovery occurs; and, from time to time, a feeling of heaviness may persist for no apparent reason.

Had I been asked, a few years ago, what a person might do to avoid or overcome depression I would probably have replied, "There is nothing much you can do about it. It is just one of life's little problems you have to accept". This would certainly not be the answer I would give to that question now. There most certainly is something we can do!

As with so many of life's problems the committed Christian is miles ahead of anyone else in finding a solution and putting it into effect.

The beginning of my enlightenment as regards depression, and a means of coping with it, occurred when I was reading Psalm 42. Twice the writer of this psalm asks himself the question, "Why are you cast down, O my soul?" Obviously at the time of writing the psalm, he was suffering from some form of depression.

As I studied the psalm I discovered that he had a great deal to say on the subject, for example ...

A TRUE FOLLOWER OF GOD CAN BECOME DEPRESSED

Some people, perhaps a little thoughtlessly, will say to you, "You are a Christian, you should not get depressed". However, there can be no doubt that the writer of this psalm was a true follower of God, and he became depressed.

The opening verses of the psalm tell us that the writer sought diligently, enthusiastically and longingly after God like a deer searching for water. He thirsted for God, and only God could satisfy his thirst.

In verse 4 he tells us that he had rejoiced in God and had enjoyed the fellowship of God's people. He was a true child of God and yet now, he tells us in verse 5, he is depressed.

I have known many Christians who have suffered from depression and many have told me of how it has affected their lives.

DEPRESSION IS NOT AN ILLUSION

If you have suffered from depression perhaps you have encountered someone who has said to you, "Snap out of it! Give yourself a shake! It is only your imagination! There is nothing wrong with you".

But remarks like this are singularly unhelpful. There is something wrong if you suffer from depression and simply giving yourself a shake will not solve the problem.

The psalmist says in verse 6, "My soul **IS** cast down". It was a **FACT!** It was **REAL!** It was no illusion.

DEPRESSION CAUSES INWARD TURMOIL

It seems clear from Psalm 42 that the writer was suffering in the depths of his being. Something painful was going on inside the psalmist. He says in verse 4, "I pour out my soul within me". In verse 5 he says, "my soul is disquieted within me".

The Authorised Version says, in verse 10, "as with a sword in my bones". These words indicate the degree of inward pain he was experiencing.

DEPRESSION CAN BE A PUZZLE

Here is a strange truth. A person can be depressed without knowing why.

Often I have found this to be the case. As I have talked to people who suffer from depression, one after another has been at a loss to explain why they come into its grasp.

Some people are depressed when circumstances might suggest that they should be on top of the world.

Twice in the psalm (verses 5 and 11) the psalmist asks the question, "**WHY** are you cast down, O my soul!"

The points highlighted thus far have been general issues relating to depression, but the psalm goes much further. In dealing with the subject the psalmist reveals the three most common groups of causes for depression. They are:

1. Attitude-Related Problems
2. Experience-Related Problems
3. Person-Related Problems

Consider what he says about each group of causes:

1. ATTITUDE-RELATED PROBLEMS

In verse 9, he expresses his determination to ask God, "Why have you forgotten me?" It was his perception that God had lost interest in him. To the psalmist, God seemed distant.

How often have you felt like that? How often have you heard someone say, "God used to be so close, but now He seems so far away. He used to be so real, but now it's as though He does not exist".

Such feelings are common, but they are not founded on fact. God "is not far from any one of us" (Acts 17.27).

The psalmist thought God had forgotten him but God cannot forget anyone or anything. To forget is a failing and God has no failings. He had not forgotten the psalmist; He has not forgotten you and He has not forgotten me.

A striking example of God's quality of never forgetting is found in the matter of our sins. Under conditions, which God makes clear in Scripture, He will forgive our sins. Jesus Christ became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5.21). Jesus bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Peter 2.24). If we, as individuals, acknowledge our condition as sinners, repent of our sins, confess them, turn from them and accept by faith the work of Jesus Christ, taking Him as our Saviour and Lord, then God forgives our sins and guarantees us a place in heaven. **IN FORGIVING OUR SINS, GOD DOES NOT FORGET THEM.** It is much better and stronger than that! By positive action He remembers our sins no more (Hebrews 8.12). He will not raise the subject with us again. They have been dealt with forever – and so it is for every confessed sin after our conversion (1 John 1.9).

However, to return to our theme, the psalmist had an attitude-related problem. He misunderstood how things really were. I have discovered that many people become depressed because of how they think things are. If only they knew how things really are they may not be depressed!

2. EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEMS

What a common cause of depression this is! The psalmist had been through a series of difficult experiences. He said in verse 7, "All your waves and billows have gone over me". He had suffered more than he could take. Apparently he felt that everything that could go wrong, had gone wrong. There was not a disturbance, a wave or a billow, that had not come his way. Have you ever felt like that?

This is often the case with leaders. They carry all the burdens of leadership; then, when things go wrong, they are blamed by the very people they have been trying to help.

Elders, pastors and missionaries can very easily end up with experience-related problems.

3. PERSON-RELATED PROBLEMS

The psalmist had reason to be depressed. Not only had he an attitude-related problem and experience-related problem but he had a person-related problem.

In verse 9 he refers to "the enemy". From his statement in verse 3 it would appear that he was under verbal attack from more than one person ("**THEY** continually say to me ...") and verse 9 confirms that he felt oppressed by it all.

Often, when depressed people tell you about their trouble they will identify some individual or individuals as being the cause of it. This is to be expected, given the social tendencies of human beings. People often feel let down by others. One will say, "I did

not think he would say that about me". Another will say, "I did not expect her to do that to me".

DEPRESSION CAN BE CONQUERED

Having gleaned this information about depression from my study of the psalm, I began to dig deeper.

It became clear to me that the psalmist did not expect to stay in a depressed condition. He could see a way out.

He said in verse 5, "I shall yet praise God". He repeated it, for good measure, in verse 11. He could see the day coming when he would no longer be depressed. He had assurance of the fact that depression can be conquered. He knew that God was not affected by depression (verse 5) and one day, by God's help, his face would smile again (verse 11).

Three things would make his recovery possible, namely:

- Prayer – in verse 8 he refers to "a prayer to the God of my life". In verse 9 he reveals his determination to talk the matter out with God, saying, "I will say to God ...".
- Trust – in verses 5 and 11 he shows this to be part of his plan as he says, "Hope in God". To learn how to pray and then follow that prayer by placing your trust in God is to learn how to progress effectively along the road to recovery.
- A Positive Attitude – his statement in verse 5, repeated in verse 11, "I shall yet praise Him", adds the third essential ingredient – a positive attitude. At this point the direction of depression has been reversed and recovery is on the way.

LEARNING MORE

With very little more than the information gained from a study of Psalm 42, I gave an address one Sunday morning several years ago in a service in the Church of Christ in Bright, in northern Victoria. The response of the congregation was such that I was encouraged to carry out further study to discover more of what Scripture has to teach us on the subject of depression. The chapters that follow set out the essence of my conclusions.

Before you read them, however, I believe it is important for me to let you know where I am starting from and what I am hoping to do in relation to this subject.

I have no medical qualifications nor have I any training in psychology or psychiatry. As a matter of fact, I am a project manager in the Building Industry – an industry that suffers from time to time from entirely different kinds of depression.

I recognise that depression is a very complex phenomenon. As a disease, many forms of it have fairly specific definitions with widely acknowledged systems of treatment. I know that different forms of it have psychical, physical or spiritual associations.

When I speak of depression I am not limiting it to any particular definition. I am using the word to apply to all sorts of discouragement, deep disappointment and distress from whatever cause. In so doing I would include many conditions which would not pass any

clinical definition of depression, but I believe that following the advice given in the Word of God will help any believer facing these conditions.

As a Christian with faith in the value of the Word of God I am keenly interested in what the Scriptures have to say about depression and I am keen to pass on to others what the Word of God appears to me to teach about its prevention and cure.

I would not advise anyone to forsake medication they are receiving for their form of the problem, nor would I advise anyone to give up counselling sessions they are having with trained professionals. What I do, however, is to strongly advise anyone who suffers from depression to consider what God teaches about it. Put into action, in your life, the instructions contained in the Word of God and it is more than probable that the quality of your living will improve immeasurably.

The Word of God has much to say about many things. It can teach builders things they do not know about building, doctors things they do not know about diseases and dieticians things they do not know about food. It has wisdom for the farmer, the economist and the legal practitioner. I have no doubt that if you suffer from depression the Word of God can help you by advising you of action you can take to lessen its effect upon you.

CHAPTER 2

SO MANY PEOPLE

Recently I read an article in an issue of Reader's Digest that said one person in eight, in Australia, suffers from depression.

A couple of years ago I gave a series of addresses, on the subject of depression, in Belgrave South Baptist Church. A pharmacist, an active member of the church, jokingly said to me that he hoped my addresses would not be successful in enabling people to avoid depression, otherwise he would lose half of his business. The sad truth behind the humorous remark is that many people spend considerable sums of money on drugs in the hope that they will help them cope with depression.

It has become increasingly clear to me that depression is rife in our community.

I was surprised, however, when I got to know more of the teachings of the Scriptures on the subject, that many people, whose lives are touched upon in the Scriptures, suffered from depression. People whom I did not expect to be on the list were there.

It is very interesting to look at some examples and to discover the nature of their depression, in terms of the most common groups of causes. For example -

DAVID

King David suffered from depression. Several Scriptures confirm it but Psalm 142 is exceptionally clear. Consider a few thoughts from it:

David had an **EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEM**. He had no refuge (v4). He had been brought very low (v5). It is believed he wrote this psalm when wandering in the wilderness to avoid Saul. Saul sought to kill him, and David, as a fugitive, made his headquarters in the cave of Adullam.

Without doubt, David had a **PERSON-RELATED PROBLEM** (v3 – “**THEY** have secretly set a snare for me”). (v6 – “Deliver me from **MY PERSECUTORS**, for **THEY** are stronger than I”). He had more enemies than he could count.

In addition he had an **ATTITUDE-RELATED PROBLEM** (v4 – he said, “No-one cares for my soul”). If you are depressed it is easy to feel like that. Yet it is untrue. It is a wrong conclusion. It is a false perception. It was not true in David's case, for Jonathan “loved David as his own soul” (1 Samuel 18.1).

We can readily believe that David was depressed. He said of himself (v3), “my spirit was overwhelmed within me”. He felt his soul was in prison (v7). We can sympathize with him.

Then there is the case of –

ELIJAH

This mighty prophet suffered from depression! Elijah has always been a hero to me, so I was more than a little surprised when I realised he was a sufferer. Then, the more I thought about it, the more relieved I was that a person could suffer from depression and yet be mighty for God.

Really, I should not have been surprised, for God has specifically reminded us that Elijah “was a man with a nature like ours” (James 5.17). He was subject to the same weaknesses as us. He was just a man. He could become discouraged.

When we read 1 Kings 19 we understand something of the depth of his discouragement and the cause of his depression.

He was so discouraged that he wanted to die. Have you ever felt like that? He “prayed that he might die” (v4) and he asked the Lord to take away his life.

He had an **EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEM**. He tells us in v10 that he had been “very zealous for the Lord God of hosts”. In fact when we read the preceding chapter (1 Kings 18) we discover that he had done far too much in a short space of time. He had totally exhausted himself. His reserves of energy had been depleted and when more trouble came, he did not have the strength to meet it.

He also had a **PERSON-RELATED PROBLEM**. Jezebel was pursuing him to kill him (vs 1-2). Ahab was no friend either (1 Kings 18.17). And having slain four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah (1 Kings 18.19 and 40), Elijah, like David, would have had more enemies than he could count.

On top of all this, Elijah, also like David, had an **ATTITUDE-RELATED PROBLEM**. He believed he was the only person left who was serving God (1 Kings 19.10). This was his perception, but he was wrong. God had thousands of people, in the nation, serving Him (v18).

However, we can also sympathise with Elijah.

Depression is not the peculiar reserve of men. Many women suffer from depression. An example brought before us in Scripture is -

NAOMI

Anyone who reads Naomi’s story in the opening chapter of the book of Ruth would agree that Naomi came through a series of extremely difficult experiences. The famine in their own country (v1), emigration (v1), the death of her husband (v3), the death of both her sons (v5) and a sorrowful return to her homeland (vs 7-14). These things left Naomi with an **EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEM**. In her own words she “went out full” and came “home again empty” (v21).

It is heart-rending to hear her explain her plight to the women of her home town. Her name (Naomi) means “pleasant” but she is no longer a pleasant person. She wants to be called Mara (meaning “bitter”). The experiences of life had caused her to become embittered.

She finds it difficult to accept all that has happened and, like many people, she blames God for her plight. She says, “The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me” (v20). She says, “the Lord has testified against me, and the Almighty has afflicted me” (v21).

In doing this Naomi showed that she had developed an **ATTITUDE-RELATED PROBLEM** for God is our chief benefactor and friend. The remainder of the little book of Ruth shows how graciously the Lord provided for her needs.

Then we have the remarkable case of -

JOB

Very often, when a person is talking about exceptional problems they are facing, they will say, "You would need the patience of Job to deal with these things". James certainly assumed that the many people to whom he wrote his general letter were acquainted with the patience of Job. In James 5.11 he says, "You have heard of the patience of Job".

It would be difficult to imagine a more devastating succession of events than those which befell Job. In the opening verses of the book of Job we discover that this godly man had a marvellous family, seven sons and three daughters. He had so much material wealth that he was "the greatest of all the men of the east" (Job 1.3); but best of all, his manner of life was such that God's opinion of him was that there was "none like him" (Job 1.8).

It seemed that for Job there were no clouds in the sky. He was basking in the sunshine of the blessing of God, yet, in a single day he lost every one of his ten children and all of his material wealth. As if this was not enough, on another day he lost his health (Job 2.1-8). He certainly had an **EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEM**.

It is not surprising that Job fell into the depths of depression. He wished to die (Job 3.20-22), and regretted that he had ever been born (Job 3.1-13).

Initially his friends sympathized with him (Job 2.11-13), but imagine his disappointment as they turned against him (Job 8.1-6 and 11.1-16). To add to his trouble he then had a **PERSON-RELATED PROBLEM** (read Job 19.1-24).

Job was a godly, patient man but he had normal human weaknesses. In his depression he developed an **ATTITUDE-RELATED PROBLEM**. He believed that God was working against him (Job 19.6-13). He thought God counted him as an enemy (Job 19.11). This was not true, of course, but it reveals how Job felt. Far from being his enemy, God had protected him (Job 1.9-10) and limited what Satan could do (Job 1.12 and 2.6). Eventually God blessed him with more than he had before (Job 42.12-17).

Let me finish this chapter with a brief reference to –

JEREMIAH

He was a remarkable man with a remarkable ministry. His ministry reached many nations (Jeremiah 1.10), and six centuries after his death his characteristics were still well enough known for Jesus Christ to be likened to him (Matthew 16.13-14).

Jeremiah lived in the years of spiritual decline prior to and during Judah's captivity in Babylon. He faced opposition, false accusations, beatings and imprisonment. Most people know him as the weeping prophet, and it is not surprising that he suffered from depression. At one stage he became so discouraged that he decided he would not preach

any more (Jeremiah 20.9), but it was a testimony to the presence of God with him that he was unable to refrain from ministering.

As Jeremiah pours out his heart in the book of Lamentations it is obvious that he has an **EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEM** (Lamentations 3.2). He had no doubt that God had led him. He expected that God would have led him into light, but his perception was that he had been led into darkness. So often we expect the will of God to be an easy path, only to discover that it is strewn with difficulties. The Lord had warned Jeremiah about the difficulties but had assured him of support and deliverance (Jeremiah 1.19).

With so many people opposed to Jeremiah's message he developed a **PERSON-RELATED PROBLEM** (Lamentations 3.14), and the depth and duration of his sufferings left him with an **ATTITUDE-RELATED PROBLEM** (Lamentations 3.3-13).

In his despair he became convinced that God was against him. He felt that God was attacking him and refusing to listen to his prayers.

If a chapter had been written in Scripture concerning followers of God who have suffered from depression, it would most likely have borne a resemblance to that great chapter in Hebrews that deals with followers of God who demonstrated faith. After recording details of several it would have been necessary to say (as Hebrews 11.32 says), "And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of" ... Jonah and Habakkuk and Baruch and ...

If you have suffered from depression do not think that you are alone. Many others have been through similar experiences. Nor should you feel that you are a second class citizen, or a failed Christian. Some of God's choicest saints have trodden the same path.

Perhaps, in reading the record of Scripture concerning others who have known the depths of despair, you will be able to understand something of the causes of your own experiences. It may be that you will discover how to cope with the problems and even conquer them.

CHAPTER 3

MAINLY ABOUT CAUSES

Being a committed Christian I am particularly interested in how depression affects Christians. One friend suggested to me that Christians can be more liable to suffer a nervous breakdown than people who take no particular stand on religious or moral issues. There is probably a measure of truth in his assertion. Taking a stand creates tension and, most likely, produces opposition. Christians are involved in spiritual warfare and wars usually produce casualties.

Christians often take risks and risks often produce accidents. Accidents normally cause damage so Christians are candidates for damage. This all sounds very negative until we view it in light of the Lord's care for His people and the provisions He makes for their protection and well-being. However, if the Christian does not put on the armour provided for the battles of life (Ephesians 6.10-19), if he or she does not seek God's help in time of need (Hebrews 4.16), neglects fellowshiping with other believers (Hebrews 10.23-25), does not take advantage of the ministries God has provided through other believers (Ephesians 4.11-16), or fails to mature (2 Peter 1.5-11) then trouble will not be far away.

It is not unusual for a Christian to sink into a state of depression because of –

DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE LORD'S WORK

Baruch the scribe, the friend of Jeremiah, was an example of this. It is interesting to note that his name means "blessed", and he had many blessing for which to be thankful. In a day when trustworthy friends were hard to find he had Jeremiah as his friend.

Jeremiah placed a lot of faith in Baruch. When Jeremiah purchased a field (under God's instructions) he trusted Baruch with the deeds (Jeremiah 32.9-15). Again, when Jeremiah was instructed to commit his prophecies and experiences to writing it was Baruch he chose to dictate them to (Jeremiah 36.4). He also trusted Baruch to make a public proclamation of God's words. No doubt Baruch counted it a blessing to be a friend of Jeremiah and to be so deeply involved in the Lord's work, but when it came to suffering for the Lord, Baruch was not so happy. We might react the same way despite the fact that Jesus tells us that suffering for Him should be a source of gladness and a cause for rejoicing (Matthew 5.10-12).

When we read the message Jeremiah was given specifically for his friend Baruch (Jeremiah 45) we discover that Baruch did not feel very "blessed". Baruch said, "Woe is me now! For the Lord has added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest". Baruch was in the depths of despair because of the experiences he had in the Lord's work. Obviously Baruch had expected that doing the Lord's work would be enjoyable. It was probably a surprise to him that the Lord asked him, "Do you seek great things for yourself?" and then told him, "Do not seek them". Surely many people have fallen into the same trap as Baruch, in expecting the Lord's work to be a succession of thrills, exhilarating challenges, and blessings.

Difficult experiences had discouraged Baruch but God did a remarkable thing as He encouraged, strengthened and instructed him. God quotes from **HIS OWN** experience (Jeremiah 45.4). God had put so much time and effort into establishing the nation of Israel and yet He was now in the process of dismantling His work and sending them into captivity. Baruch's experience was only the faintest of shadows of God's experience – just as our experience, even at its worst, is only a shadow of our Saviour's experience.

We are exhorted to reflect on Jesus Christ's experiences, and compare them with our own, when we are tending to wilt under pressure or give up in our race for God (Hebrews 12.1-4).

God's message to Baruch prepared him for even more difficult times. The year after God had given him this exhortation (compare Jeremiah 45.1 - "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim", with Jeremiah 36.9 – "in the fifth year of Jehoiakim"), Baruch faced a massive discouragement. Baruch had written what Jeremiah dictated (Jeremiah 36.4 and 45.1), but when the king heard what had been written he cut the scroll up and burnt it (Jeremiah 36.21-23). As a result Baruch had to write it all again – with additions (Jeremiah 36.27-28 and 32).

Later Baruch faced more problems, as he was taken captive into Egypt (Jeremiah 43.5-7), but he was sustained by the promise of God's protection (Jeremiah 45.5).

Another cause of depression in the Christian's experience is –

BACKSLIDING

Baruch's friend, Jeremiah, was guilty on this score. Like Baruch, he found service for the Lord difficult. As he writes his Lamentations he tells us that he has no doubt that the Lord has been leading him but his experience has not been what he expected. He says, God "has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light" (Lamentations 3.2).

Is it not remarkable that the person God used to speak to Baruch when he was discouraged was the very person we can use as an example of suffering depression through backsliding. We all stand in danger of failing one way or another (1 Corinthians 10.12 says, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall").

Jeremiah had a desperately hard time. He suffered physically with beatings and imprisonments. He suffered mentally as he was rejected and scorned. He suffered spiritually, finding at times that prayer was difficult and that God seemed to be against him. He bemoaned the fact that he had to face so much strife and contention (Jeremiah 15.10); but as he debates the issues with God, the Lord tells him that he has strayed, he has backslidden, he needs to return (Jeremiah 15.19-21). The Amplified Version renders verse 19 as follows ... "Therefore thus says the Lord to Jeremiah, if you return (give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair), then I will give you again a settled place of quiet and safety, and you shall be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile (cleansing your own heart from unworthy suspicions concerning God's faithfulness), you shall be as My mouthpiece ..."

It should come as no surprise to anyone that another cause of depression in Christians is –

FAMILY PROBLEMS

These can be just as much a source of difficulty for a child as for a parent.

It would appear that there is no end to family problems, no limit to the number of things that can go wrong. The natural family is under threat in these days. All sorts of alternative arrangements are being followed.

We noted in chapter two that King David suffered deep bouts of depression. It is not unlikely that some of the bouts were caused by family problems. There can be no doubt but that David suffered anguish because of things that happened within his own family. He must have suffered greatly when Amnon committed incest with his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13.1-21). How he must have suffered again when Absalom murdered his own brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13.22-36).

As if incest and murder were not enough, with all of the hatreds and divisions that would have attended them, David's own son Absalom tried to kill him. Absalom wanted to be king in his father's place. The whole story of the conspiracy, the rebellion, the subsequent battle, the death of Absalom and the grief of David, makes sad reading (2 Samuel chapters 15-18) but perhaps what cut most deeply into David's heart may have been the knowledge that this tragic series of events was a judgement from God, brought about by David's own actions in his adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 12.1-15).

David's was an exceptional case. Departures from the Lord's will were gross in many areas in those days, and brought the harvest that was due. However, any serious parents, who have come to the conclusion that their own actions have led to sin and error in the life of a son or daughter, would tend to resort to self-criticism with remorse.

Yet another cause of depression in the life of a Christian is –

OVER-INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE

What a trap this is, in these days of materialism. How easy it is to be so caught up in the legitimate round of purchasing and furnishing a house, buying and maintaining a car, educating the children and meeting the endless flow of bills, that we spend more time earning money than is good for our spiritual welfare.

Need, or perceived need, for increased income can drive you to take on more work or higher levels of responsibility, either of which can put you under unreasonable pressure and lead to a state of exhaustion, discouragement, and ultimately, depression.

Scripture warns us about the "cares of this world" and the devastating effect they can have on a life. As Jesus told the parable of the sower He said that the seed which "fell among thorns" was "choked" (Luke 8.7). When His disciples asked Him what the parable meant, He explained that the seed which fell among the thorns spoke of people who in their growth as Christians, "are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life". Tragically they "bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8.14).

This parable identifies three things the Christian may become involved in to his or her peril, namely the "cares", "riches" and "pleasures" of this life.

We should avoid becoming overly involved with the affairs of this life. Each person needs to decide what his or her level of involvement should be.

Sometimes it is not merely apparent necessity that leads a person to become over-involved in the pursuits of this life. Sometimes it is ambition, or even greed, that leads a person beyond a wise level of involvement.

Paul warned young Timothy that “they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all evils: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”. He goes on to exhort him to “flee these things” (1 Timothy 6.9-11).

In the sermon on the mount the Lord instructed us not to lay up treasures upon earth, where they can decay or be stolen, but rather to lay up treasures in heaven, where they will endure (Matthew 6.19-21). As the Lord continued that sermon He clearly taught us that we should not work ourselves into a state of anxiety over material things but rather we should give top priority to spiritual issues (Matthew 6.25-34). How little attention we pay to his prudent instruction.

Of necessity we live in the world and deal with worldly things from day to day, but our hearts should not be set on the temporary rewards the world offers (1 John 2.15-17). It could lead us to desert valuable friends and leave the path of service to God, as happened to Demas (2 Timothy 4.10).

Oddly enough, another cause of depression in Christians is –

FEAR OF THE FUTURE

This was the case with Habakkuk the prophet. In the opening chapter of his brief prophecy we find him talking to God about the condition of the nation he was living in. His feelings were running deep. He did not pass it off with the expression we hear so often ... “What’s the world coming to?” He was deeply disturbed and he sought enlightenment from God.

Habakkuk asked the Lord why He was not answering his prayers and doing something about the violence, evil and injustice in the kingdom of Judah (Habakkuk 1.2-4). The Lord responded by telling him that worse was to come. In God’s purposes He was going to raise up the Chaldeans to attack Judah and conquer it (Habakkuk 1.5-9).

Habakkuk could hardly believe God’s answer. It is worth reading this brief prophecy to see how the Lord gives Habakkuk a job to do and explains to him some of His ultimate purposes. It is good to know that even though we may have trouble and tribulation for a while, here on earth, God has ultimate purposes and we have a wonderful future ahead of us as God’s people. Paul said that he reckoned “that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8.18). He had the assurance that, ultimately, “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8.28).

Nevertheless, Habakkuk was afraid of what was about to happen (Habakkuk 3.2 – “O Lord, I heard Thy speech, and was afraid”). That was an understandable reaction. The Amplified Version of Scripture expresses Habakkuk’s reaction very vividly (Habakkuk 3.16 – “I heard, and my whole inner self trembled, my lips quivered at the sound. Rottenness enters into my bones and under me, down to my feet, I tremble ...”). However, having unburdened himself to God and having placed his trust firmly in God he is able to go on to say ... “I will wait quietly for the day of trouble and distress, when there shall come up against my people him who is about to invade and oppress them. Though the fig tree does not blossom, and there be no fruit on the vines; though the product of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no cattle in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will exult in the victorious God of my salvation! The Lord God is my strength, my personal bravery and my invincible army; He makes my feet like hinds’ feet, and will make me to walk, not to

stand still in terror, but to walk and make spiritual progress upon my high places of trouble, suffering or responsibility" (Habakkuk 3.16-19).

Surely this is a good note on which to end this chapter. There are many things that can cause a Christian to become depressed – but there is an answer, in God, to each of them.

We too may be like Habakkuk – concerned about the state of the country we live in, distressed because of violence, iniquity and injustice. When we realise that there may well be worse coming, we may tremble like Habakkuk. We may fear for the future of our children and our childrens' children, but we need to remember that God is working out His purposes and His purposes are good for all of His followers. We too can place our faith in God in such a way that He becomes our strength and bravery and everything He was to Habakkuk.

Jesus said to His disciples, "You shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: **SEE THAT YE BE NOT TROUBLED**" (Matthew 24.6). Again He said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16.33).

CHAPTER 4

MAINLY ABOUT A CURE

People are being treated in various ways to help them cope with depression. The complexity of the problem, the multitude of causes, and the endless variety of personalities among those who suffer from it, argue against the possibility of finding a single cure.

Nevertheless I was impressed when I discovered that there was a common theme in the cure of every case I found in Scripture. This led me to conclude that there is a definite pathway to cure for the Christian. I would emphasize again, however, that if you are receiving medication for depression, or if you are under the guidance of a trained counsellor because of your particular condition, and you wish to attempt to arrive at a cure for your depression by following the pathway I believe to be indicated in God's Word, do not forsake your medicine or the advice of your counsellor. If the remedy I am advocating works, it will work regardless of the medicine or the counsellor's advice. Set aside the medication only if and when your doctor confirms that you no longer require it, and only terminate the counselling sessions when it is confirmed that you no longer require them.

Speaking from personal experience I tend to believe that a person who is susceptible to bouts of depression will always be inclined that way. When I speak of a cure, therefore, I am not speaking of something you do once and it cures you forever. I am referring more to a line of action that can be taken when you detect the onset of depression or a line of action to follow to shake depression off when it overtakes you unawares.

It seems to me that there are two main components or constituent parts to the cure. First there is **ATTITUDE** and second there is **ACTION**.

As in all things our chief example is Jesus Christ. If we consider one of the categories of causes of depression, **EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEMS**, then we would surely agree that if anyone has reason to be depressed because of adverse experiences, Jesus Christ had. Jesus talked to His disciples about His impending sufferings and said, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (John 12.23). He went on to say, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12.27). He knew the trouble that lay ahead of Him but his **ATTITUDE** was perfect. Rather than seek to be saved from His experiences He recognised that there was a glorious purpose for them. His desire was to glorify God by facing the circumstances. He went on to say, "Father, glorify thy name" (John 12.28) and proceeded to submit Himself to the Father's will and show His attitude by His **ACTIONS**.

Often, when we are in difficult circumstances, we ask, "Why has this happened to me?" When we pray we usually ask God to change our circumstances and take away the difficulties. It would be so much better if we asked God how we could glorify His name by going through the difficulties. We pay lip service to believing that God controls circumstances, and choose to believe that when our circumstances are favourable God has sent them, but when they are unfavourable they are against His will.

We are exhorted, as followers of Jesus Christ, to adopt His **ATTITUDE**, "Let this same attitude ... be in you which was in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2.5) and to follow His

actions, ... "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2.21).

If we followed His example more closely, we would be saved from the grip of discouragement and depression. Isaiah prophesied of Christ that He would "not fail nor be discouraged" (Isaiah 42.4) "till He has established justice on the earth". Jesus completed the work of redemption, and will carry God's plans through to completion, without failing and without collapsing under a burden of discouragement.

In tracing the basis of a cure for depression for the Christian we will do three things. First we will look at a case, in Scripture, of the Lord dealing with a depressed person; second we will look at a case, in Scripture, of a man dealing with his own depression; and third we will note a pattern for cure emerging from both cases and compare it with several other examples in Scripture.

First, then ...

THE LORD DEALING WITH A DEPRESSED PERSON

The individual in question is Elijah. I referred briefly to him in chapter 2.

When you read 1 Kings 18 you find Elijah on a "high". The very next chapter, however, has him in a "low" and I suspect that Elijah might have been subject to quick changes of this sort. Some people, like the tide, are seldom still, but are usually on the way up or on the way down.

Whatever the truth was about Elijah's natural tendencies, of one thing we can be sure. When he ran for his life, because of Jezebel's threat, he was depressed. He was so depressed that he wanted to die. In despair and discouragement he said to God, "O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19.4).

Reading chapters 18 and 19 of 1 Kings we discover that Elijah had ...

AN EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEM

He had over-reached himself. The succession of demanding experiences packed into a short space of time is mind-boggling. Referring to 1 Kings 18:

- Elijah faced King Ahab (v1 and 17-20). This would not have been an enjoyable meeting. Ahab held Elijah responsible for the drought that troubled the land (v17) and he had searched everywhere to find him (v10). Ahab might well have wanted to kill Elijah. Elijah might have had as much reason to fear Ahab as the other servant of God mentioned in the chapter did (Obadiah – see vs 7-14).
- Elijah had faced the people (v21). They gathered in their thousands and Elijah fearlessly challenged them.
- Elijah had faced the false prophets – eight hundred and fifty of them (v19) and all of them enemies of Elijah.
- Elijah had worked hard preparing the sacrifice, repairing the altar, digging the trench (vs 31-33).
- Elijah prayed. He offered a prayer publicly (vs 36-37) and he laboured in prayer privately (vs 42-44).

- And to top it off, he ran more than twenty miles from Carmel to Jezreel (v46).

Whilst he had the blessing of seeing his prayers answered (1 Kings 18.37-38 and 42-45) and the joy of seeing the people turning back to God (1 Kings 18.39) it can hardly be doubted that Elijah would have been exhausted. At the critical time when he was feeling the effects of colossal exertion, a messenger came to tell him that Jezebel had vowed to have him killed within twenty-four hours (1 Kings 19.1-2).

It was all too much! He had taken more than he could bear. On the one hand he ran to save his life from Jezebel and, on the other hand, he asked God to take his life away.

It is interesting to note how the Lord deals with his condition. God lets him sleep for a while (1 Kings 19.5). If exhaustion has caused our depression it is logical to conclude that we need rest. Never underestimate the physical aspect of things. Christians have a tendency to make this mistake. We are a complex mixture of the physical and spiritual. Body, soul and spirit combine to make us what we are, and when one part is hurting, the whole person suffers.

Continuing to deal with the physical needs God sends him a meal (v5), then permits him to sleep again (v6) and then sends him another meal (v7) to make sure he is physically fortified.

God's treatment did not end there, however, for Elijah had deeper needs. Elijah had ...

AN ATTITUDE-RELATED PROBLEM

His attitude to himself appears to have been wrong. The stresses created within him by recent events led him to say, "I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19.4). This suggests to me that up to this time he thought he was better than his fathers. He imagined he was something special.

Many people get into difficulties by having inflated views of their own importance and abilities.

We are warned not to overestimate our importance. Paul writes to the Romans, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly ..." (Romans 12.3). Elijah was a great man of God, but not because he was great in and of himself. Scripture makes it clear that he was just like any other man. James says, "Elijah was a human being with a nature such as we have" (James 5.17 – Amplified Version).

It seems it came as a shock to him when he discovered he could run in fear like anyone else. He realised he was, of himself, no better than those who had gone before him.

His attitude to God appears to have been wrong as well. He had his own impression of how God would work. As God deals with Elijah He tells him to stand on the mountain. You can imagine Elijah's emotions rising as the wind raged, tearing rocks in pieces before his eyes, and as the earthquake shook the mountain and as the fire devoured. He probably felt that these were the mighty ways in which the Lord would work. They suited Elijah's fiery nature but the Lord was not in any of these things. The Lord was in the "still small voice" that followed them. It was this that made Elijah hide his face (1 Kings 19.11-13).

Often, we have an impression of **HOW** God will work, or **WHEN** He will act, or even **WHY** He will do something in particular. Many times we are wrong!

It appears that Elijah's attitude to his situation was wrong too. He was convinced that he was the only person left serving God (1 Kings 19.9-10 and 13-14). As it turned out, he was far from being right. We can be just as wrong when we get the impression that we are the only people taking a stand on issues today.

God took time to deal with Elijah's mental condition. He showed him that he need not and ought not depend on his own ability. Certainly Elijah was no better than his fathers, but God's power knows no limitations. God does not need our abilities nor does He even need to use the impressive wind, earthquake and fire to accomplish His purposes.

God showed Elijah that He knew what He was doing. God had a plan and He started to reveal it to Elijah (1 Kings 19.15-17). God also showed Elijah that he was not alone but that seven thousand people in the nation had remained faithful (v18). Elijah never imagined it to be so.

God therefore dealt with Elijah's attitude-related problems by illuminating his mind.

God's treatment did not end at this point either, for Elijah had ...

A PERSON-RELATED PROBLEM

There was more than one person holding a grudge against Elijah. As we have seen, Ahab considered him to be a source of trouble (1 Kings 18.17). The false prophets would have had no love for him (and he had just faced 850 of them – 1 Kings 18.19).

Without any shadow of doubt, however, his most bitter and formidable foe was that wicked woman Jezebel. Her vow to kill him sent him running for cover. He **FELT** alone and he travelled until he **WAS** alone (1 Kings 19.1-4). When God then took him further away from people and started questioning him, he told God how lonely and threatened he felt (1 Kings 19.7-10).

God dealt with his person-related problem in a beautiful way. He gave him a friend (1 Kings 19.15-16). A wise rabbi is quoted as saying that a person's two chief needs in life are – *a teacher and a friend*.

Companionship is a wonderful thing. It is good to have supporters but it is better to have friends.

Many people draw immeasurable comfort and strength from having a special friend, one who is exceptionally close and dependable.

When the Lord created man and put him in the Garden of Eden He said, "It is not satisfactory that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2.18 – Amplified Version). How marvellous it is when your special friend is your wife or husband.

A friend was telling me of a series of difficulties he had experienced over a period of years. As he unfolded the story he explained that those difficulties had made him, at times, hard to live with, yet his wife had supported him without fail. At one point in the conversation he said to me, "You know, I am just beginning to appreciate how good a friend my wife has been. She is the best friend I have ever had". I thought that was lovely – and I believe it is the way it ought to be.

As Elijah made his way back to where God wanted him to be, God gave him Elisha as a helper and a successor. From that time, until Elijah left this earthly scene, they were firm friends (1 Kings 19.19-21).

Second, let us see the case of ...

A MAN DEALING WITH HIS OWN DEPRESSION

In this case, the person involved is David. Before he became King of Israel David went through some very difficult experiences. Few periods of his life would have been as difficult as the years in exile when he was avoiding Saul.

David had decided that his best way of escaping death at Saul's hands was to live among the Philistines.

With six hundred men he left Israel and formed a friendship with Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath. As the friendship blossomed, David was given the city of Ziklag to live in.

During his stay in Ziklag there was war between Israel and the Philistines and David and his men set off with Achish declaring their intention to fight on the side of the Philistines. Achish believed David would fight against Israel but the other princes of the Philistines refused to trust David and his men and, after debate, sent them back to Ziklag.

In all, David and his men had been away from Ziklag for three days, and during their absence the Amalekites had attacked Ziklag and destroyed it. They had set it on fire and taken the women and children captive. David and his men were devastated. They were hardened soldiers, but they were so deeply affected that they wept aloud. 1 Samuel 30.4 records that they, "lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep".

In these circumstances David had ...

AN EXPERIENCE-RELATED PROBLEM

For all he knew at that moment, none of them would see their wives or children again.

David's troubles did not end there, for in their grief his followers blamed him for the trouble and started to talk of stoning him to death (1 Samuel 30.6).

At this stage he had ...

A PERSON-RELATED PROBLEM

Fortunately the problems were not compounded by a wrong attitude, as they so often can be when things go so desperately wrong.

On this occasion David did not have an attitude-related problem. His attitude was exactly right. He went to the right source for help, for "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1 Samuel 30.6). It is possible in life's deepest problems, to **ENCOURAGE YOURSELF** in the Lord your God.

It is a vital truth that, as a believer you are never alone. God is always with you. It is another aspect of truth, however, that from a human stand-point, you must face many of life's problems **ALONE**. You may be surrounded by many people, as David was on this occasion, but, as far as fighting your way out of discouragement is concerned, you may

have to take all of the initiative yourself. It is good to know that you can encourage yourself by turning to God.

As we read the story of David's experience on this occasion (1 Samuel 30.1-19) we discover that the things that played a major part in resolving the situation were –

A. PRAYER

We read that "David inquired of the Lord" (1 Samuel 30.8). He asked God what he should do. This is a marvellous starting point in any problem. Without going into detail regarding the significance of the ephod (1 Samuel 30.7) and David's method of seeking an answer and understanding what instructions the Lord was giving him, let me simply say that God answered him, making it clear what he should do.

B. TRUST

Having received instructions from God, David obeyed. His obedience is proof that he trusted God. He acknowledged that God knows best and His ways produce the best results.

C. A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

He got moving! (1 Samuel 30.9). It is wonderful how things start to come together when you start doing what you know the Lord wishes you to do. It was no coincidence that he met an Egyptian who was able to lead them right to the Amalekites they were seeking (1 Samuel 30.11-15). It was also no coincidence that when they found them, the Amalekites were in a condition that made it easy for David and his men to defeat them and recover their wives and children.

What a magnificent outcome to the entire incident! David and his men recovered every person who had been taken captive. Mercifully, none of them had been harmed (1 Samuel 30.18-19).

Third, let us note ...

THE PATTERN FOR CURE

We have already identified the pattern for cure emerging from the circumstances David passed through (Prayer, Trust and A Positive Attitude). It is not merely interesting but surely significant that exactly the same pattern emerges from the Lord's treatment of Elijah.

When Elijah ran away in fear of Jezebel he went as far away as he could and prayed (1 Kings 19.4). It was a prayer prompted by a negative attitude but it was **PRAYER** nevertheless, and it heralded the start of a recovery. Communication continued between Elijah and the Lord until the Lord brought him to a place where Elijah would once again trust Him sufficiently to return to his place of witness (1 Kings 19.9-18). So, as in the case of David, when prayer had brought Elijah to a place of **TRUST**, God gave him instructions (1 Kings 19.15-16) and Elijah showed his trust in God the same way as David – he obeyed (1 Kings 19.19).

Again, as was the case with David, trust was followed by a **POSITIVE ATTITUDE**. Elijah started moving! (1 Kings 19.19-21). It was no coincidence that Elisha was available as Elijah passed by. God was working out His plans.

This same pattern of **PRAYER, TRUST** and a positive **ATTITUDE** is so obviously present in one example after another in Scripture that I am convinced that it forms the basis of a cure for depression for believers. **Consider these examples:-**

- Psalm 142 – **David** when he was forced to flee from Saul and shelter in a cave.
 - Verses 1-2: He **prayed** ... “I cried unto the Lord with my voice ... I make my supplication ... I poured out my complaint ... I showed before Him my trouble”.
 - Verse 5: He **trusted** God ... “Thou art my refuge”.
 - Verse 7: He adopted a **positive attitude** ... “Thou shalt deal bountifully with me”.
- **Job** – in the midst of his great loss, affliction and persecution.
 - Job 1.20-22: He **prayed**. Job was a man who communed with God constantly (1.5 – he made intercession for his children; 42.7-10 – he prayed for his friends. A large portion of the book is devoted to a record of communication between Job and God – 38.1 to 42.6; and many of Job’s words, whilst they are spoken to his friends, are a heart-felt cry to God).
 - Job 13.15: He **trusted** God. “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”. Some of his statements reveal the depth of his faith and trust. Chapter 19.25-27 is a remarkable statement for one who lived as long ago as Job.
 - Job 42.10: He adopted a **positive attitude**. Even though his friends had spoken so harshly against him, hitting him when he was down, he responded positively to God’s instructions by praying for them. This must surely have involved him in adopting a forgiving attitude. Recovery and blessing followed quickly.
- **Jeremiah** – when Pashur, the chief governor in the temple had him beaten and put in the stocks. Referring to Jeremiah 20:
 - Verse 12: He **prayed**. “... unto Thee have I opened my cause”.
 - Verse 11: He **trusted** God. “... the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail ...”
 - Verse 9: He adopted a **positive attitude**. He starts the verse by revealing a negative attitude in saying that he would not bring the Lord’s message any more, but before he is finished he declares that he has an inner driving force that compels him to get on with his life’s work in a positive way.
 - Whilst he is by no means finished with trouble, and he still carries regrets, he is quite positive when he says, “Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord: for He has delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evil-doers”(Jeremiah 20.13).

- **Habakkuk** – in the midst of his frustration at lack of justice and equity; in his distress over violence and iniquity; and in his struggle to come to terms with the impending greater evil God had told him would come.
 - Habakkuk 1.2-4: He **prayed**. “O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear ...” Almost the whole book is a record of his communion with God.
 - Habakkuk 3.19: He **trusted** God. “The Lord God is my strength ...”
 - Habakkuk 3.17-19: He adopted a **positive attitude**. Even though circumstances would be as bad as they possibly could. “... Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation ...”
- **Jacob** – as he returned home after twenty years absence, to meet his brother Esau whom he had wronged so much; as he returned, knowing that his brother had sworn to kill him and knowing that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men.
 - Genesis 32.9-12: He **prayed**. “... Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him ...”
 - Genesis 32.26: He **trusted** God. He held on to God seeking help and blessings from the only source he knew could be fully trusted. “... I will not let you go, except you bless me”.
 - Genesis 33.1-4: He adopted a **positive attitude**. He assembled his family and household and “passed over before them”. Taking the position of leadership and taking the ultimate risk he “bowed himself ... until he came near to his brother”. And what a glorious result there was, what a wonderful reunion as “Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept”.

I cannot resist the conclusion that the Lord has definite and clear instructions for us in the similarities of these and other cases in Scripture. The same elements occur in one case after another as individuals move from a state of discouragement, despair, fear and depression to a path of recovery. **Prayer, trust** in God and adopting a **positive attitude** all play their part in defeating depression.

It seems totally reasonable to me that this should be true.

As you **PRAY** you declare and define your problems and open the door for them to be dealt with.

As you **TRUST GOD** you transfer your burden to Him, and He willingly receives it.

As you **ADOPT A POSITIVE ATTITUDE** you work with God in solving your problems.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING IT WORK

If it seems reasonable that the pattern emerging from so many cases in Scripture presents a real basis for curing or avoiding many causes of depression, then it is sensible to ask the question, "How can I make it work for me?"

It is one thing to be able to recite the elements of a cure. It is entirely something else to be able to put them into action in such a way that they produce a cure. Many people can read a recipe but not every one of them is a good cook.

TRY THIS

Let's assume that you are depressed or that you regularly suffer from depression and you can feel a bout of depression coming on. Let's also assume that you wish to do something about it. You wish to fight your way out of depression or you wish to avoid having the period of depression you dread.

The first thing to do is to ...

PRAY

You might say at this point, "But I have often prayed and it has not helped". This might be true but there may be valid reasons why it has not worked. You may have thought that all you had to do was pray and your troubles would be finished. This, however, is not the case. I have discovered that prayer is just the first step. Other actions must follow. It may also be that your prayer has not been deep enough or persistent enough.

Pray then, telling God as much as you know about what is causing your depression and acknowledge that this is just the first step in the cure.

To help you pray effectively let me emphasize that your prayer should have depth. You should go into detail as you tell God all about it. Your prayer should be like David's prayer for forgiveness as he describes in Psalm 32. Verse 5 is particularly well rendered in the Amplified Version. It reads, "I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I did not hide. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord – ***continually unfolding the past till all is told***; then you instantly forgave me the guilt and iniquity of my sin".

Of course I am not in any way suggesting that depression is necessarily caused by sin or that you need to confess sin because you are depressed. People who say that a depressed person is sick solely because he or she has sinned only add insult to the injury for the sufferer. I am merely referring to the manner of praying. It needs to be detailed. David continually unfolded the past till all was told. He did not leave anything out. He searched his mind to make sure he had told everything he knew. This is the best way to talk to God about your problems when you are seeking help.

David says in Psalm 34.4, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears". No doubt he went into detail. How else could he have been delivered from

ALL his fears. In verse 6 he says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles".

Sometimes we have fears. Sometimes we have troubles. Sometimes we have both. Ours is a God who can dispel our fears and bring us out of our troubles.

When Jesus Christ spoke about prayer He made it clear that there should be a strong element of persistence in our praying. The Amplified Version renders Matthew 7.7-8 as follows ... "Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking reverently, and the door will be opened to you. For every one who keeps on asking receives, and he who keeps on seeking finds; and to him who keeps on knocking it will be opened". We should need no greater encouragement than this to repeat our pleas to God.

The Amplified Version again gives a good rendering of Hebrews 4.16 ... "Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace, the throne of God's unmerited favour to us sinners; that we may receive mercy for our failures and find grace to help in good time for every need – appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it".

The first step, then, is to pray, but it must be followed or accompanied by ...

TRUST

We must trust God. "Of course!", you may say, "I do trust God. I have trusted Him for years but I have often suffered from depression". This might be true, but just as with our praying, our trusting may fall short of what it needs to be.

Do we know the peace that comes from really leaning upon God? In Isaiah 26.3 it says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You". Something of the depth of meaning in this verse comes out in the Amplified Version as it says, "You will guard him and keep him in perfect and constant peace whose mind, both its inclination and its character, is stayed on You, because he commits himself to You, leans on You and hopes confidently in You".

Trusting God, in the sense in which I mean it, is leaning on Him until all of your fears, your concerns, worries and cares are transmitted to Him. To quote again from the Amplified Version of the Scriptures, Peter, in his first epistle, exhorts us to adopt a humble attitude, "Casting the whole of your care – all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all – on Him; for He cares for you affectionately, and cares about you watchfully" (1 Peter 5.7).

It is a comforting thought that God cares for each of His children to such an extent that He wishes to take all of our cares and carry them for us. We should certainly take Him up on such a marvellous offer. How much easier life would be if we did!

Paul had a great message, in this regard, for the believers at Philippi. He said, "Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything by prayer and petition (definite requests) with thanksgiving continue to make your wants known to God. And God's peace be yours, that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is, that peace which transcends all understanding, shall garrison and mount guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4.6-7 – Amplified Version).

Trust is an interesting mixture of several things. It involves confidence in the person you trust. It involves committing yourself to the person you trust. It involves leaning on and relying on the person you trust. But whatever it involves, God is worthy of our trust. I have never heard of Him letting anyone down, nor do I expect to ever hear of such a case.

David had an ability to trust God. When he faced Goliath he said, "You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts" (1 Samuel 17.45). Regardless of Goliath's height and his ability as a man of war, David said confidently, "... This day will the Lord deliver you into my hand and I will smite you" (1 Samuel 17.46). He was sure that God was going to give him the victory. He went on to say that ... "the battle is the Lord's" (1 Samuel 17.47).

We need to be more like David. We need to learn to rely on God in the midst of dangers and difficulties. We need to remind ourselves that God is with us in life's battles, and because He has promised to be with us and to give us the victory, the battle is indeed the Lord's.

Time after time David's trust in God shone through, for example:

- Psalm 23.1 – "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want".
- Psalm 32.7 – "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble".
- Psalm 142.7 – "Thou shalt deal bountifully with me".

We need to learn to trust God like David.

So, having taken the first step of praying to God, and the second step of trusting God, we need to complete the process by taking the third step. We need to ...

ADOPT A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Adopting a positive attitude means getting on with life. It means to get moving.

It has been said that in facing life's problems we should "do what we can and trust God to do what we cannot".

Notice how trust and positive actions are linked together in Psalm 37. Verse 3 says, "**TRUST** in the Lord and **DO GOOD**". Now notice how the next verse, by implication, brings prayer into the equation. Verse 4 says ... "Delight yourself also in the Lord" (that shows a positive attitude) ... "And He shall give you the desires of your heart". For the Christian the desires of your heart are the things you pray to God about. If you do not pray audibly for them you will no doubt be praying for them in your thoughts.

Psalm 73 is the testimony of a child of God who became disturbed, discouraged and downcast when he started to envy the wicked. He says in verse 2 ... "my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped". In verse 21 he says ... "my heart was grieved and I was vexed in my mind". He saw the prosperity of the wicked and the apparently easy time they had, and he compared it with the problems he faced as a child of God. He came to the conclusion that the wicked were better off, and it was not worth the effort of following righteousness. He says in verses 13-14, "Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning". But his doubts and his depression soon disappeared when he followed the path I am advocating here.

He wanted to understand (v16) so he went to the Lord about it ... "I went into the sanctuary of God" (v17). By his **prayer** and God's enlightenment of his mind he was able to testify, "Then I understood their end" (v17). Then he understood how the ungodly finish up.

Upon reflection he recognised how wrong he had been, admitting, "I was so foolish and ignorant" (v22).

The revelation leads him to new levels of **trust**. He says in verses 23-24, "Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with your counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory".

He can testify of God ... "there is none upon earth that I desire besides You" (v25) and say, "God is the strength of my heart" (v26). This in itself demonstrates a **positive attitude**, but he goes further to refer to his opportunity and intention to ... "declare all God's works" (v28).

The three elements of the cure for depression are seen in essence in the last verse of this Psalm ... "It is good for me to draw near to God" (we do this when we **pray**), "I have put my trust in the Lord God" (a clear testimony of **trust**), "That I may declare all Your works" (the outcome of a **positive attitude**).

This pattern is seen in the cases referred to in this booklet. I can add to them my own testimony that, when I see the cloud of depression appearing on the horizon, or when I have been overshadowed by such a cloud without having seen it coming, I resort to **PRAYER**, then positively **TRUST** God to answer my prayers about the matter in hand, then adopt a **POSITIVE ATTITUDE** by getting on with life as I believe it is meant to be lived. Faced with this line of action, depression cannot survive for long.

CHAPTER 6

IN CONCLUSION

There are a few things I would like to say in conclusion.

First, depression is seldom something that disappears for ever just because you have defeated it once. With most sufferers it is an affliction that returns time and time again. This being the case, we need to take the line of action that defeats it each and every time it appears.

When you think about it, many troublesome things are like this. The common cold comes frequently. Influenza shows its face every year or so. Headaches come often to some people. Each time any common ailment comes, you need to apply the remedy. So it is with depression.

Second, depression does not always disappear immediately you apply the remedy. It is often stubborn and reluctant to move. In this characteristic, it is again not really so unlike other ailments. I do not suffer from headaches, but I have noticed with those who do, that one headache might be defeated with one tablet, whereas another attack requires the dose to be doubled or repeated, perhaps even several times.

With depression we must often persist with the remedy before relief comes.

Third, and lastly, I have made it clear that my remarks have, in the main, been directed to Christians. Perhaps you suffer from depression, and you have read this booklet, and you are not a Christian. Is there nothing that can be done for you? I am pleased to say indeed there is!

The first step towards a cure for the Christian is **PRAYER**, but this can also be the first step for the non-Christian. It is a different prayer but it is a prayer nevertheless. It is the prayer of the seeking soul, the prayer of the repentant person, the prayer of the one who realises he or she is cut off from God but realises his or her need for God's help.

Jesus told the story of a man who prayed simply, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18.13) and God heard him. Simple as that prayer was, it came from a man who recognised himself to be a sinner and sought God's mercy. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3.23), and "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6.23). But "Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3.18).

If we continue in our sin, without the intervention of God, we will die, both physically and eternally but ... "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6.23).

The glorious truth is that ... "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5.17).

If you pray the prayer of a repentant sinner, asking God to forgive you, to save you from the penalty of your sin and take you, by the rebirth of the Spirit of God, into His family, then you become a child of God and you stand on the same ground as the people for whom I have written this booklet.

If you do pray such a prayer, seek out other Christians and a good church, that you might have fellowship and instruction to help you grow in faith.

May these words be of help to you.