

Psalm 42:1-11

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?" When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.

O my God, my soul is cast down within me; Therefore I will remember You from the land of the Jordan, And from the heights of Hermon, From the Hill Mizar. Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; All Your waves and billows have gone over me. The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, And in the night His song shall be with me—A prayer to the God of my life. I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" As with a breaking of my bones, My enemies reproach me, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

LOOSENING THE GRIP OF DEPRESSION

In 1973, Newsweek Magazine reported that depression was a leading medical illness that had reached epidemic proportions. The Physicians Handbook on Depression states that one American in twenty is medically diagnosed as suffering from depression. It is no surprise that the search for a Bible passage relating to depression is found in the Books of the Psalms. Here the inspired writers express the emotions of the heart to a degree found nowhere else in the Bible.

In Psalm 55:4 there is a phrase that expresses the experience of those suffering from modern day clinical depression. The statement was made by David, as God led him to express the anxiety and pain that consumed his very being to the point of inability to continue to function. David cried, "My heart is sore pained within me." The term translated heart refers to "the centre of conscious thought" and would relate to the English term "mind". David is struggling from great mental stress. The Hebrew term for pain, denotes travail and anguish, and is used in the Old Testament to define mental anguish particularly.

Six common symptoms of clinical depression can be identified. First, David expresses overwhelming fear: "the terrors of death are fallen upon me." Secondly, David is overcome with physical trembling: "fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me". The third symptom of depression evident in this text is the sense of descending darkness conveyed in the phrase "horrors hath overwhelmed." Fourthly, this mental and emotional trauma caused David to desire to flee the circumstances rather than face the pain: "And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." In this overpowering state of cowardice, David was consumed with escapism: "for then would I fly away, and be at rest. Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness." David's final expression is one of contemplated suicide: "I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

In the context of David's mental anguish a Biblical approach to overcoming depression is discovered. David's path to recovery began with his admission in prayer before God of the condition of his heart followed by a fixed faith. He believed God alone could and would save him. This confident trust he expressed in his prayer. David is simply turning from his pain and consequent suicidal thoughts to faith in the living God. He is turning from his own weakness to depend upon the strength of God.

David's deliverance came through a surrender of his anguish to the will and purpose of God. David's resolve was clear: "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalms 55:22). Depression, like the pain of cancer or the pain of grief, is to be committed in faith to a loving God who is "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). Even depression can be beaten. (For an in-depth Biblical study on depression see www.DiscipleshipMinistries.ca under Outreach/Publications).

What is my response:
