

Dealing with Discouragement, Depression & Suicide

Common to Man

It is inevitable that we will experience periods of discouragement in our lives. This world is fallen and cursed due to Adam's sin and our further transgressions. Troubles and tribulations that can lead to discouragement are inevitable in our lives. In this world, we "*shall have tribulation*", but in spite of that, we can still "*be of good cheer*" because Christ has "*overcome the world*" (John 16:33). Prolonged periods of discouragement can lead to depression. As the word implies, "depression" means a state of being "pressed down". We feel the heavy weight of fears, doubts, our own sins, this world, and many other things. The heavy weight of this world's burdens can press us down to remain in a low, depressed emotional and spiritual state. If prolonged depression is not addressed and corrected, we could even begin to have suicidal thoughts. We can feel that our life is not even worth living anymore. This natural progression from normal discouragement to prolonged depression to suicidal thoughts is not uncommon. Being so overwhelmed with the pressures of this world and desiring a permanent relief from that pressure is a common response for God's children. There were times that Moses (Num. 11:15-23), Elijah (1 Kg. 19:4), Job (Job 3:11-22), and Jonah (Jonah 4:3-9) all requested for God to take their life. These men were all good, godly, righteous men, and bold in the faith at different times in their life. However, they reached a point where the weight of their trial was so great that they desired to die. These thoughts are truly common to man. Thankfully, the scriptures give us the remedy to rise from our depressed state to "*renew our strength and mount up with wings as eagles*" to soar over the trials of this world (Isaiah 40:28-31).

As we see many examples in scripture of the progression from discouragement, to depression, to suicidal thoughts, we are reminded that this world's temptations are "common to man". These are not isolated events, but a common struggle for God's children under the heavy burdens of this world. There is no temptation or trial we might face that God's children have not faced before from which God has powerfully delivered his people in the past. Satan's temptation playbook is as old as the garden of Eden. He uses the same tactics, just with new facts and circumstances today. Our temptation is not new. In the midst of our trial, we need to be reminded there is no temptation that our Faithful God will not provide a way of escape for us to bear that trial. "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*" (1 Cor. 10:13) God is not having to "figure out" how to help us with this "new problem" that we have encountered. No, the Lord has been delivering his children out of the same temptations for six thousand years. God is faithful and will give us the grace to bear and maybe even escape the heavy weight of our temptation.

We should not be surprised when temptation and trials come into our lives to test our faith. We should not think it "strange" when hot, intense, "fiery" trials come in our lives. No, these fiery trials are "common to man". "*12) Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13) But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.*" (1 Pet. 4:12-13) The word "strange" here means "to be a host, to receive one as a guest". We should not be surprised that trials are our "guest" in this world. Trials are not an "occasional visitor or guest". Rather, we must accept the reality that trials are our natural companion in our lives, not an unexpected guest. Fiery trials are permanent residents in our lives, not an occasional, unexpected visitor. We are disciples of Jesus Christ, and as the Son of man, Christ endured the same temptations and fiery trials in his life as we do. Christ was "*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15). Christ was tempted by Satan the same way that we are (Matt. 4:1-11). It is because Christ endured the "common to man" temptations and trials that he now "*ever liveth to make intercession for us*" (Heb. 7:25). It is because Christ endured our same temptations that we can have

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boldness to come to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace from Christ to help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

In his earthly life, Christ was a *“man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”* (Isaiah 53:3). Christ’s life was identified by heavy burdens, sorrows, and grief. Yet, despite the sorrow he bore, Jesus Christ was still the perfect embodiment of JOY. Christ shows we can have great joy in this life, despite the inevitable sorrow and grief and pain that will come in a fallen world. How can we have joy in the midst of this grief and sorrow? One reason is that the grief and sorrow of this world is no longer our burden to bear. Jesus Christ has *“borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”* on the cross (Isaiah 53:4). Christ has carried our griefs and sorrows for us and put them away on the cross. Those are no longer our burdens to bear. Therefore, we need to give up our griefs and sorrows to the proper place. We need to give them up to Jesus Christ who has and will bear them for us. *“28) Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* (Matt. 11:28-30) When we are “pressed down” and “heavy laden” with the grief and sorrows of this world, we need to give them up to the proper Burden Bearer. Give them up to Jesus Christ because he has already paid for those griefs and sorrows on the tree of the cross.

Medical Intervention

We will attempt to consider the spiritual challenges that are often present when dealing with discouragement, depression, and suicidal thoughts. However, our first consideration should always be that medically we are healthy and stable to be able to evaluate the spiritual challenges with a clear mind. It is common for people with these challenges to need medication for regulating a chemical imbalance or deficiency in their brain that may be accelerating their problems. It will be very difficult to properly deal with the spiritual challenges if our body and mind are not functioning correctly. We will see the first remedy for Elijah when he requested to die was to get some good sleep and some good food. We have to take care of our body and mind. There is nothing wrong with seeking professional help and taking prescribed medication to help our mind think clearly through these problems. I have used a low dose anti-anxiety medication in the past when I was having intestinal issues that were severely exacerbated by stress. It was beneficial for me to get through that season of my life, and I no longer need that medication to help me. Also, we will see it is crucial to talk through our challenges with others and not bottle them up. First, I would encourage you to talk to your loved ones, confidants, and your local church pastor about these challenges. If you feel you need more counsel in addition to those trusted people, you might seek Christian counseling. I would caution if you do seek counseling, ensure it is Christian, Bible-based counseling. Using a secular counselor without a Biblical perspective and worldview will do much more harm than good. There is nothing wrong with seeking medication and Christian counseling, and in many cases, I believe it is an effective aid to have a clear mind to address these issues.

Prayer

We will consider multiple specific remedies in scripture for discouragement, depression, and suicidal thoughts. However, the first and most basic remedy during these discouraging states is prayer. In the midst of our trials, our first and default response must be to cry out to God. *“2) The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. 3) I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved*

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from mine enemies. 4) *The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.* 5) *The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.* 6) *In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.*” (Ps. 18:2-6) In our great distress, when we call upon the Lord in prayer, he has promised to hear our voice on high. We have confidence that God will hear our prayers in trials. *“I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.”* (Ps. 3:4) *“For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.”* (Ps. 31:22) God has promised that if we call on him in the day of trouble that he will hear us, and he will deliver us. *“And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”* (Ps. 50:15)

Jesus Christ, as the Son of man, was tempted in all points as we were, so now he is our sympathetic Great High Priest during our time of need. We should have confidence in boldly coming unto God in prayer knowing that Jesus is intimately acquainted with the grief and sorrow of this world to be able to succor us in that time of trial. *“14) Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Heb. 4:14-16) Jesus knows us intimately and knows all our needs. Jesus knows the number of the very hairs of our head. Jesus knows when just one single sparrow falls to the ground, and we know we are of much more value to the Lord than many sparrows (Matt. 10:29-31). If Jesus Christ is that intimately acquainted with perfect knowledge of the trivial matters of our life such as the hairs of our head, how much more so is Christ intimately acquainted with the burdens and fears of our heart. We need to boldly express our burdens to Christ in prayer as he knows intimately our every need.

Jesus Christ now resides upon the right hand of God, living and resurrected to make intercession for God’s children according to the Father’s will. *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”* (Heb. 7:25) Let us never forsake our first remedy of praying unto God for help. Also, we don’t need to neglect asking others to pray for us as well because the *“effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man (and woman) availeth much.”* (James 5:16) As our hymn says, I need the prayers of those I love while traveling over life’s rugged way. Let us ask others to fervently pray for us in our time of need as well.

Discouragement

In the midst of all the severe trials of this world, it is very easy and common to become “discouraged” in our walk of discipleship. To “discourage” means “to extinguish courage, dishearten, deject, depress the spirit, deprive of confidence” (Webster’s 1828). Courage gives us boldness to increase our confidence and embolden us in God’s power and provision. However, “discouragement” will “extinguish” our courage. Our courage can be totally extinguished much easier than you might think. God blessed the Israelites countless times in the wilderness. They had no reason to ever doubt the Lord. However, at the very least inconvenience, the courage of God’s people was “extinguished”. They got a little hungry and tired and then became unthankful and promptly turned on the Lord. As we are prone to do as well, they blamed God for their current suffering. *“And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.”* (Num. 21:5) Ultimately, because of this rebellion, God sent fiery serpents among the people which led to the brazen serpent being made for their salvation (Num. 21:6-9). What was the cause of this rebellion, turning against and blaming God that cost many people their natural lives? Because

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“the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way” (Num. 21:4). Look what happened when God’s people got “much discouraged” because of the difficulty of the way in the wilderness. When our “courage is extinguished”, then we are prone to turn against and blame God. As we can see, there is much peril for God’s people when we become discouraged.

Discouragement is certainly a temptation that is “common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13). We all go through periods of discouragement. None of God’s people are immune from this. If we thought anyone would be immune from discouragement, we might think it would be John the Baptist. Even as a babe, John leapt for joy in the womb of his mother at the salutation of Jesus’ mother, Mary. Later, as the prophesied forerunner of Christ, John identified Jesus Christ as the Messiah, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) John heard with his own two ears the voice of God the Father affirming Jesus as *“my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matt. 3:17) Surely the man who heard God’s voice from heaven confirming the divinity of Jesus Christ would never doubt or be discouraged right? Wrong. John the Baptist was sent to prison for calling out Herod’s inappropriate relationship and most likely knowing he is about to be killed. When John gets down in prison, he gets discouraged, and he sends his disciples to ask Jesus, *“Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?”* (Matt. 11:3) John the Baptist became discouraged, and doubt grew in his mind to such a degree that he even questioned if Jesus Christ was the true Messiah; if he really was the true Son of God.

Jesus did not harshly rebuke John when he was discouraged. No, he gently and lovingly told his disciples to go tell John “again” the things he already knows. *“4) Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: 5) The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”* (Matt. 11:4-5) That is what we need the most when we get discouraged. We need to be reminded of what we already know. We need faithful men to tell us “again” of God’s power, providence, and grace. That is why it is so vitally important to not isolate yourself from the church assembly and from faithful preaching. We need to hear good preaching and have our *“pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance.”* (2 Pet. 3:1) Paul affirmed that to be a “good minister” of Jesus Christ you need to *“put the brethren in remembrance of these things.”* (1 Tim. 4:6) We all need to be reminded of the truths we have previously believed and boldly proclaimed, just like John. We need others to tell us again and again and again the good news of Jesus Christ to “reignite” our extinguished courage in Jesus Christ.

Fear will many times be the seed that can quickly grow into discouragement. We are told to *“fear not, neither be discouraged”* (Deut. 1:21). One remedy for fear is more perfect love of Jesus Christ. If we are afraid, that could be a symptom we are not walking as closely with the Lord in love as we ought. *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”* (1 John 4:18) God is Love (1 John 4:8), so if we are abiding in Jesus Christ, then we should be abiding in his love to extinguish our fear. Love will bless you to “extinguish fear” instead of fear being allowed to grow and “extinguish your courage”. A term that is even more prevalent in scripture than “discouraged” is to be “dismayed”. I encourage you to study this and verify yourself, but I found at least 14 times in the Old Testament that we receive an admonition in various forms to “fear not and do not be dismayed”. To “dismay” means “to be shattered, to be broken by fear or confusion”. We are prone to be broken by fear and confusion if we do not quench and conquer our fear.

Faith in God’s promise to will never leave or forsake us is the remedy for fear that can grow into discouragement and dismay. *“And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.”* (Deut. 31:8) We do not need to be afraid and dismayed because God will strengthen us, help us, and uphold us with his mighty hand in all the trials of this life. *“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea,*

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I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isaiah 41:10) It does not matter what trial or temptation we are facing; we do not need to be afraid because God will be there to sustain and bless us in the midst of any watery or fiery trial. *“1) But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. 2) When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”* (Isaiah 43:1-2) Do not let fear quench your courage, but *“be strong and of a good courage”* (Josh. 1:8). There are many verses that call upon God’s people to *“be strong and of a good courage”*. I encourage you to search out those verses in your personal Bible study because you will be blessed by it.

It is vitally important when we are discouraged to share that struggle with others and not to isolate ourselves alone from others. The Psalmist in Ps. 42 bemoaned the fact he was alone and unable to attend public worship anymore with the multitude that kept the holy day. When Moses, Elijah, and Jonah got to a suicidal state, one contributing factor was that they were alone. We need to be around others when we are discouraged and depressed, not alone. We need to not forsake public worship and the assembly of the saints so that we may be encouraged (Heb. 10:25). One of the primary ways God uses to encourage us is through the church and through fellowship with other believers. Moses was called upon multiple times to encourage and strengthen Joshua (Deut. 1:38, 3:28) who would be the one leading the people of Israel into the promised land. Moses would not go into Canaan due to his sin, but instead of just moping over that, he encouraged the next leader in Joshua. We need to be sure to fellowship with and encourage other believers because we will all get discouraged from time to time. There will inevitably be a time in the future when you need encouragement from them in return.

Ultimately, our encouragement must come from the Lord. In David’s time on the run from Saul, he and his men were in Ziklag, and the Amalekites raided their camp, burned it with fire, and took their women and children captive. Every man had wives and children taken, David included, with his two wives being kidnapped. David and all his men were so overcome with grief that they wept until they had no more power to weep (1 Sam. 30:4). David himself was greatly distressed as well. David’s men were so grief stricken and physically exhausted and lashing out that they even spoke of stoning David. They blamed David for their great grief and wanted to take out their frustration on someone. David was on the run for his life from Saul, his own wives kidnapped, his camp burned, all his men’s wives and children were taken captive, and on top of that his own faithful soldiers wanted to kill him. What a horrible, hopeless situation. In spite of all that, David *“encouraged himself in the Lord”*. *“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”* (1 Sam. 30:6) Even if all our world appears to be crumbling around us to extinguish our courage, we must take refuge in our buckler, our strength, our redeemer, the Lord our God. We must encourage ourselves in the Lord our God who will never leave us nor forsake us.

Depression

If we remain discouraged for prolonged periods of time, this can lead to depression. We can examine a depressive mindset from Psalm 42 & 43. We could easily consider these as one psalm with 3 stanzas – A) 42:1-5, B) 42:6-11, C) 43:1-5 – all culminating in the same refrain chorus verse. These two psalms are not attributed specifically to David, but the language would definitely fit his case when he was alone, hiding in caves from Saul, cast down, and depressed. We will see that *“cast down”* is a shepherding term, which would also point to the experienced shepherd, David, as the author. As David was on the run in the

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wilderness, he saw a young deer panting as it sought for water; tired, thirsty, exhausted, and needing sustenance. David related to this young deer in a spiritual sense as he thirsted for close fellowship with God again (Ps. 42:1). This psalmist, probably David, is in great depression. He is deprived and thirsty for the presence and fellowship of God (v.1-2). He has been crying non-stop; tears were his meat night and day (v.3). He is being mocked and ridiculed by scoffers; where is thy God? (v.3). He is isolated, alone, and not able to have fellowship with the saints and unable to attend public worship (v.4). Then, we reach the refrain of the depressed psalmist which he repeats 3 times in these 2 chapters. "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?*" (v.5) David is struggling as to "why" am I cast down? Why am I depressed? Why is my soul disquieted?

The word for "cast down" here is a shepherding term. A sheep would lie down on their side to rest, but then might accidentally roll over on its back with legs straight up in the air. Also, they might fall to their side and then roll over to their back. The sheep in this cast down position on their back was totally helpless to remedy his fallen condition. Since the sheep cannot get back up from their back on their own, it is incumbent on the shepherd to find the lost sheep and restore him to the correct position. David wrote in Psalm 23:4 that the Lord is my Shepherd and he "restores my soul". David's soul was "cast down", and the Lord was always faithful to find him in that helpless condition and "restore" his soul. Just like David, our souls can become cast down, but our Great Shepherd is always faithful to restore our souls, to put us back on our feet.

David's soul also felt "disquieted" within him. The word for "disquieted" here means "clamor, a loud sound, great commotion as in war". His soul was not quiet; his soul was not at peace. His soul was raging and loud, instead of at peace, where it can be guided by the still, small voice of God. We need to remove ourselves from the loud distractions of this world and spend intimate time with the Lord in our prayer closet. We need to "*be still and know that I am God.*" (Ps. 46:10) In this busy, fast paced world, we need to "be still" more often. It is in the stillness and quietness of our soul that we can be in tune with God's still, small voice which will lead and direct his children.

What is the remedy for a cast down, disquieted, and depressed soul? David reminds himself in the very same verse. "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*" (Ps. 42:5) The remedy for depression is to "Hope in God". Hope is a confident expectation of future good. We see God's faithfulness in the past which gives us a confident expectation for God's blessings in the future as well. When our hope revives, it will immediately lead us to praise and worship God – "*I shall yet praise him.*" Why would we worship God in the midst of our depression? "*for the help of his countenance*" (42:5) and "*for the health of my countenance*" (42:11, 43:5). When we trust in the "help of God's countenance" then it will inevitably lift the "health of my countenance".

Notice here that David was actually talking to his soul; trying to give his soul a pep talk. It can actually be good and proper to give our souls a pep talk like David does here. Like John the Baptist in the midst of discouragement, we need to remind ourselves of what we already know. We need to know scripture and talk to ourselves in the midst of discouragement and depression to remind ourselves of the truth of God's word. Even though it might have a negative stigma in our times today, it is actually quite healthy to talk to ourselves in the Spirit; to give our souls a pep talk.

Jeremiah reacted in a very similar way when he was depressed. Jeremiah had a real reason to be depressed. He was persecuted by the king for preaching God's word. He was mocked by the people. Ultimately, he was thrown into a pit by the king. Maybe it was literally from that pit that he penned these words. "*18) And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord: 19) Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. 20) My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is*

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humbled in me.” (Lam. 3:18-20). In this moment he has no hope and no strength. However, Jeremiah keeps talking to his soul and soon the tone changes. “21) This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 22) It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23) They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. 24) The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. 25) The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. 26) It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” (Lam. 3:21-26)

When Jeremiah begins to “count his many blessings, name them one by one”, then he is surprised and remembers “what the Lord hath done”. He recalls to his mind God’s faithfulness in past suffering, persecution, and disappointment. He remembers God’s mercies and compassions are new and unlimited every morning. Great is the faithfulness of God. He reaches the same remedy for depression as David – Hope thou in God (v.21,24,26). This shows how important it is to talk about our problems. Don’t keep discouragement, depression, concerns, doubt, and fears bottled up. Sometimes we can talk ourselves out of depression by being reminded of God’s faithfulness in our life.

As David begins the second stanza of this two chapter psalm, he begins the same way “*O my God, my soul is cast down within me:*” (Ps. 42:6) This is a great reminder of what a long term struggle depression can be. David reaches the proper conclusion in v.5, hope in God and praise the Lord for his help. However, he once again begins the same cycle again of his soul being cast down. Depression will not be fully overcome in one moment or one day. When depressive thoughts repeatedly invade our minds, it takes a continual reminder to hope and trust in God for our help during these challenging times. David’s soul is once again cast down within him (v.6). He reminds himself of God’s lovingkindness and his song in the night (v.8). He acknowledges that God is his rock, but yet he still feels that God has forgotten him. “*I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*” (v.9) This is a very common response and common mistake in our depression. We blame God. We want to think that God has forgotten us. No, God has not forgotten us in our trials. He right there with us in the midst of the fire (Isaiah 43:2). David continues to struggle with the pain of insults from scoffers that daily mock and reproach him; where is thy God? (v.10) Despite these struggles and his soul being cast down yet again, David once again reaches the same conclusion – Hope thou in God. “*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*” (Ps. 42:11)

David is still struggling yet again with his cast down soul when he begins the third stanza in Ps. 43:1-5. He is praying to God for defense, justice, and deliverance from his enemies (v.1). He acknowledges that God is his strength, but yet he still feels that God has “cast him off”. “*For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*” (v.2) This is the second time he has used the same phrase of mourning because of the oppression of the enemy (Ps. 42:9). He is essentially saying, Lord, if you really loved me, I wouldn’t be so sad; I wouldn’t be mourning because of persecution of my enemies. That is a common struggle as well; Lord, if you are with me and you love me, then why am I enduring this “mourning”. The truth is, just like with David, that mourning and oppression does not come from God so don’t blame him for it. David correctly attributes the mourning and oppression to his “enemy” (not to God). We cannot blame God for our sadness. This world and our enemies will make us mourn, but God will only give us joy when we are abiding in him. David is praying for God to send out his light and truth to lead him. He desires for God’s light to bring him once again to the holy hill and tabernacles of worship (v.3). He desires to go to the altar of God for worship, to praise God who is his exceeding joy. He looks forward to worshipping God with his harp (v.4). Despite all these blessed things, David’s soul is still yet again cast down. He once again reminds himself of the remedy for his continual depression – hope thou in God and praise him for his blessings in my life. “*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of*

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my countenance, and my God." (Ps. 43:5). This is now the third time David has repeated essentially the same chorus refrain at the end of each stanza in this psalm. When we are depressed, we have to continually remind ourselves again and again and again of the truth that we know. We have to continually remain faithful in prayer and in reading God's word to remind ourselves to hope in God and praise him for the help of his countenance.

Suicide

It is very possible and even common, for discouragement to spiral into depression and prolonged depression can create suicidal thoughts. Being so overwhelmed with the pressures of this world and desiring a permanent relief from that pressure is a common response for God's children. We will consider some good, godly, righteous men who were bold in the faith at different times in their life. However, they reached a point where the weight of their trial was so great that they desired to die. These thoughts are truly common to man. Before we consider from scripture the individual circumstances of encouragement for those dealing with suicidal thoughts, let us first affirm the eternal security of God's children who may succumb to the temptation to take their own life. It is commonly taught in Christianity that if someone commits suicide then that person will absolutely go to hell. God forbid! Thankfully, that is not taught anywhere in the word of God. The very first thing that is listed that cannot separate us from the love of God is "death". Nothing "in death" nor "in life" can separate us from the love of God which in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39). It is a sin to take your own life, but Christ came to die for our sins (not just every sin but suicide). Furthermore, suicide is a sin that occurs "in your life", and there is no sin in our lives that can remove God's child from the love of God and from going to heaven at their death.

We see this scriptural truth affirmed in the life of King Saul. Before his death, the spirit of Samuel testifies to King Saul that tomorrow both Saul and his sons would be with him in heaven (1 Sam. 28:19). Saul lived a very sinful, rebellious life in many regards, and based solely on his actions, we might not have much confidence of his eternal state. However, scripture affirms not just Saul's eternal state but also his sons. While we have a reasonable basis to doubt Saul, Samuel affirms that Saul was going to the same place as his sons that would die, one of those sons being Jonathan. I don't believe anyone would doubt the eternal security of Jonathan or Samuel. Therefore, we can conclude that both Jonathan and Saul went to the same place upon their death which was in heaven with Samuel. I think one of the reasons why scripture goes out of its way in this mysterious appearance of Samuel's spirit to affirm that Saul is in heaven is so that we understand the eternal security of not just a rebellious child of God but even a child of God who commits suicide. The next day, Saul was mortally injured in battle, and he fell upon his sword and killed himself to prevent further torture by the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:1-6). Saul committed suicide. God went out of his way by the Holy Spirit's inspiration of scripture to affirm the eternal security of Saul, a child of God who committed suicide.

Samson is another child of God who took his own life, even for a vengeful purpose, but was still eternally secure to go to heaven upon his death. Samson had many problems and vices in his life he did not handle very well; he sinned many times. Then, at the end of his life, Samson petitions the Lord to give him strength one more time to kill many Philistines in his death. The Lord even grants Samson's request to have strength one more time to avenge his enemies (Judges 16:25-31). Samson took his own life and even killed more Philistines in his death than in his life. Despite all his shortcomings and him taking his own life, Samson is still affirmed in the faith chapter in Heb. 11 as was one of the great heroes of faith (Heb. 11:32). We know there is nothing in life or in death (including taking our own life in suicide) that can separate us from the love of God. Praise our loving, faithful God! *"38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39) Nor height, nor depth, nor any other*

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creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8:38-39)

Moses. In the wilderness, the Israelites were once again complaining to Moses because they were not content with God’s miraculous manna anymore. Moses had just saved the Israelite congregation from fiery destruction by interceding with the Lord (Num. 11:1-3). Right after that, they once again got dissatisfied, desired flesh to eat instead of manna, and turned on Moses and the Lord (Num. 11:4-10). Moses then promptly blames the Lord for his problem (wherefore hast “thou” afflicted thy servant, v.11) – a common mistake in discouragement and depression. Then, Moses blames the Lord that since he’s been faithful, it’s not fair for God have him bear the burden of all the people by himself (v.11). Moses felt the burden of carrying probably 2 million Israelites in his own bosom like a father carries his child (v.12). He knew he was unable to provide the remedy for their complaint; I cannot give them flesh to eat (v.13). Therefore, Moses was just ready to throw in the towel, give up, and die (v.14-15). *“11) And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? 12) Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? 13) Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. 14) I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. 15) And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.” (Num. 11:11-15)*

God did not rebuke Moses for feeling a heavy weight that felt too heavy to bear. No, God as our loving Heavenly Father sent 70 men to help Moses bear the burden of dealing with these millions of rebellious people. *“16) And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. 17) And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.” (Num. 11:16-17)* God gave Moses faithful men to help him bear this heavy burden of judging the people. Also, Moses felt the weight of fulfilling the complaints of the people by himself (v.13). Moses even doubts God when says he will provide flesh for a whole month for millions of people (v.21-22). Moses felt the weight of responsibility of others upon him, but God reminds him that you cannot provide their need. Only God can provide their need. This was never Moses’ burden to bear, but he had incorrectly put that burden on his own shoulders. We need to be reminded of that as well. It is not up to us to fix every problem in this world. There are many deficiencies and problems we cannot fix. Like Moses, we don’t need to feel the weight of that burden all ourselves because it is the Lord that will provide, not us. We don’t need to put on ourselves the weight and burden of things that are the Lord’s to bear, not ours.

The Lord comes down and puts the spirit of Moses upon the 70 elders, leaders of the congregation, to help bear the heavy weight of a rebellious people (v.24-25). When the spirit of Moses came upon these 70 men, they began to prophesy to the congregation, and they did not cease (v.25). Then, God not only sends flesh to his people by quails, but he sends them 3 feet deep for a day’s journey in every direction around the whole camp. Therefore, we see from Moses that God will send us help through others and by his Spirit when we stand in need. Also, God has the sovereign power to perfectly fix and remedy the problem that we feel insufficient to meet that which is burdening us down. You cannot fix your marriage alone, but God can! You cannot change your rebellious child’s heart, but God can! Doesn’t matter what the burden is; you can’t carry it and fix it, but God can! When Moses doubted God’s power and ability to provide, the Lord rebuked him, *“Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.” (v.23)* We do not need to think the Lord’s hand is waxed so short that it cannot remedy

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our problems and trials. No, always remember God is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all we can ask or think! (Eph. 3:20)

Elijah. Many times it is right after some of the greatest victories and blessings in our lives that we can be tempted by Satan the fiercest to depression. Even Jesus Christ, right after the powerful moment of his baptism and the Father's voice from heaven affirming him as the Son of God, then immediately he was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Matt. 3:16-4:11). After the greatest moments in our lives, there can quickly be times of great temptation and depression. Elijah had just stood down Ahab and 850 false prophets, called down fire from heaven affirming the power of Jehovah God, and the people turned back to God and slew all the false prophets. What an amazing truly mountaintop experience on top of Mount Carmel! Surely, there was nothing that could bring down this bold prophet after such a powerful display of God's power over his enemies right? Well, later that day, Jezebel sends a message to Elijah that she would kill him by that time tomorrow (1 Kg. 19:1-2). After this mighty victory and staring down 850 men, it is the threat of one woman that causes Elijah to be afraid and turn tail and run for his life. He went a day's journey into the wilderness and requested for God to take his life. *"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."* (1 Kg. 19:4) Just 1-2 days after this mighty victory, the prophet Elijah is by himself requesting for the Lord to take his life. Oh, how quickly we can go from a high mountaintop to a low, low valley.

What was God's response to the depressed, suicidal prophet? Number one: get some good sleep and get something to eat. No doubt Elijah was physically exhausted from all the excitement on Mount Carmel and then the physical effect of fear and fleeing. God blessed him to get some sleep, and then an angel woke him up to give him a good meal. *"5) And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6) And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again."* (1 Kg. 19:5-6) That is the first thing we need to do when we are emotionally overwhelmed – take care of our physical bodies (good sleep and good food and other practical considerations too) to where we are properly nourished and healthy to be able to think rationally. Then, Elijah takes another good nap, and the angel prepares him a second meal that strengthened him for 40 days and 40 nights in his travel to Mount Horeb (v.7-8). Also, note how God sends angels to minister to him during a time of severe need. The Lord even sent angels to minister to and strengthen Jesus as the Son of man after his temptation with Satan (Matt. 4:11). God is gracious to send angels to us for help during times of great depressive or even suicidal need.

God then asks Elijah, What are you doing here? (v.11) Elijah should have been boldly standing up for truth like he did days before, not running away by himself and asking to die. Elijah displays some false self-righteousness and lone-wolf syndrome. He says I have been very jealous for you, Lord, because the children of Israel had forsaken the covenant, tore down the altars, and slain the prophets (v.14a). All of that had been previously true, but the people had just been converted on Mount Carmel. They had affirmed devotion to God again, built back up the altar, and slain the false Baal prophets (not the Lord's prophets). Elijah is living in and complaining about the past problems, not living in the present. Furthermore, he gives the pretense to the Lord that "I, even I only, am left" and Jezebel is trying to kill me (v.14b). However, Elijah had been previously informed that Obadiah had hidden 100 true prophets in 2 caves from Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4,13). Elijah knew he was not the only prophet left. He just distorted reality in that moment to self-justify himself and his sinful attitude. Furthermore, he was not the only one committed to Jehovah God now. He had just converted the whole nation back to serve Jehovah God again (1 Kg. 18:39-40). Elijah is once again in his own mind distorting the reality of the present situation to justify his sinful mindset. God then tells Elijah to go and stand upon the mount before the Lord, and God ultimately speaks to him in a still small voice. God was not in the strong wind, or in the earthquake, or in the fire. Sometimes, we look for a "great

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cataclysmic sign” of what God wants us to do in our trials, but God does not speak to us by signs. Jesus said an evil and adulterous generation seeks after signs (Matt. 12:39). No, God will speak to his people in a “still, small voice” in our souls (1 Kings 19:12).

Elijah is still rebelling and has not confessed his error. When the still, small voice comes to him and asks him the second time “what are you doing here”, Elijah gives the same false excuses in v.14 as he had in v.10. Notice it is literally the exact same words in both of these verses. As the old saying goes, Elijah had his story, and he was sticking with it. He had created this false narrative in his mind, and he repeated it to himself over and over again to try to make it true. This is another common mistake in a depressive or suicidal state. We create our own reality and we repeat it over and over again to try to affirm it is true. However, no matter how many times we repeat the same incorrect thing to ourselves, that doesn’t make it true.

What was God’s still small voice calling Elijah to do? What was God’s remedy for the depressed and suicidal prophet? First, get a good night’s sleep and some good food. God will send angelic help to minister to you during your time of need. God’s message through his still, small voice gave Elijah at least 4 promises for the future and admonished him to quit pouting and get back into the fight for God.

- 1) God gave Elijah encouragement that there was more work for him to do in the kingdom (v.15-16). God was not done with him yet. God commanded Elijah to go to a specific place and anoint Hazael king of Syria, and then to anoint Jehu the king over Israel (v.15-16). God still had work for Elijah to do to serve him in his kingdom, so God essentially tells Elijah to “get busy” and get to work. Get out of this cave feeling sorry for yourself and get back to work serving God.
- 2) God gave Elijah a friend to help bear the burden of his ministry, Elisha (v.16, 19-21). God gives Elijah knowledge that the work of his ministry will not fade away, but Elisha will continue the work Elijah started (“anoint to be a prophet in thy room”). He gives Elijah the promise of his legacy. We are not intended to go through this life alone as a lone wolf. God made us as relational creatures. God is a relational God, being three persons in one Trinity. If we try to live this life serving God all by ourselves, we’re inevitably going to end up in a bad mental state of loneliness and depression just like Elijah. That’s why Jesus sent the 12 and 70 disciples out two by two. Two are better than one, because if one falls down, then the other can help him up (Eccl. 4:9-10).
- 3) God reminds Elijah that the wicked will have their day of justice (v.17). God tells Elijah that the wicked that are persecuting him, particularly Jezebel and Ahab, will not get off scot free. Instead, either through Hazael or Jehu (both of whom Elijah was supposed to anoint) or finally Elisha (who he was also to anoint), all of his enemies would be killed and judged for their sins. While we shouldn’t relish or glee in the fact of God’s judgment of sin, it is comforting to know the wicked will receive their just recompense of reward for their sins.
- 4) God reminded Elijah he was not alone in the service of God, but he had reserved 7,000 men who had not bowed their knee to Baal (v.18). Elijah was wallering around as if he was only servant of God; he pretended that he was a lone wolf, all by himself, even though he knew that was not the case. He was reminded there were many children of God (at least 7,000), and even though they were not visible at the moment, they had still not bowed their knee to the image of Baal. It’s a great encouragement to know we are not alone, and that our labors are not in vain, that there are people who love God that are out there. This told Elijah there was more to do, more people on his side, he was not alone, and he needed to get out of the cave and feeling sorry for himself and get back to serving God like he was called to do.

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Job. When we are in great sickness or suffering, we can easily persuade ourself to take the easy way out, to take our own life, or wish we had never been born. Job is a prime example of this. God removed his providential hedge and suffered Satan to destroy Job's business holdings, his servants and property, and ultimately for his ten children to pass away (Job 1). Then, in the midst of such horrible grief and tragedy, God further removed his providential hedge and suffered Satan to afflict Job's body with grievous boils. On top of all that, Job's wife turned on him and said to just "curse God and die" (Job 2). I can truly only imagine the grief over all his ten children dying, his personal painful sickness, and his wife (and later his three best friends) turning on him. Job was so overwhelmed with all these circumstances that he cursed the day he was born and even asked God why he didn't die as an infant. "3) *Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. 11) Why died I not from the womb? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?*" (Job 3:3,11; see also all of Job 3:1-26 and 10:18-20) Job ends up being accused by his three "friends" of secret, unrepentant sin. Job and these three men argue back and forth for 28 chapters (from Job 4-31). Just like with any argument when you are being falsely accused, by the end Job is worked up and saying many self-righteous things he ought not. Then, the young man, Elihu, speaks up to rebuke Job (Job 32-37). Ultimately, God proceeds to rebuke Job out of the whirlwind from Job from Job 38-41. By the end, Job repents of his hasty words, prays for God to forgive his friends, and the Lord blessed Job twice as much in the end as he did in the beginning (Job 42).

What was the remedy for Job's depressed and "wish I had never been born" state? When he saw the power and glory of God, he understood he spoke out of turn to complain to the sovereign God of this universe about his plight. When God demands an answer from Job about "where were you when I created the earth?" and many other questions, Job's only answer to that is, "*Behold I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further*" (Job 40:4-5) Then, God continues to chew out Job for two more chapters. Job finally answers that "2) *I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee. 3) Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not... 6) Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*" (Job 42:2-6) When Job saw the glory of God manifested in a powerful way, he repented for ever complaining about things in his life he was suffering from. Similar to Isaiah, when he saw the glory of God manifested and his train filled the temple, Isaiah's response was, "*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*" (Isaiah 6:5) We should never discount the suffering many people endure in this world. However, we should also never blame God for that suffering. If we are tempted to do so, we need to follow Job's example and cover our mouth and repent of that sin.

Jonah. Jonah is an example of someone who was just bitter and mad at God who says it's better for him to die than live. Jonah had been disobedient to God's command to go and preach in Nineveh. Since Jonah chose to rebel, God prepared a whale to swallow him. Jonah eventually repented, the whale spits him up, and he went to Nineveh to preach. God gave Nineveh forty days to repent, and they actually responded to the preaching of Jonah and repented; then, God delayed their judgment. Jonah promptly gets mad at the Lord for allowing the enemies of Israel, the Ninevites, the ability to repent and be saved from destruction. Jonah was so upset that God was gracious towards them, that he asked God to take his life from him. "*Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.*" (Jonah 4:3) Jonah went out of the city and made a booth to pout in. God made a gourd to protect him from the sun and to deliver him from his grief. Then, God sent a worm to destroy the gourd the next day. Then, God sent a vehement east wind towards Jonah, and he again wishes to die (v.6-8). God asked Jonah if he has a right to be angry for the gourd, and Jonah thinks he is just in being angry, even unto death (v.9). God rebuked Jonah that he had pity on this little gourd that was there for just one day and then perished, but he

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had no pity on the people of this city, many of which are too young to even know any different to be killed for judgment (v.10-11).

What was Jonah's problem and remedy for his depression? Jonah had unrealistic expectations, and he was ready to die when things turned out differently than he expected. Jonah got angry with God when things turned out different than he wanted. Jonah wanted God to wipe the Ninevites off the face of the earth. That is why he originally did not go preach to them because he figured it would be just like God to be longsuffering and forgive them. He didn't want them to respond with repentance to his preaching. He wanted God to destroy Nineveh like he did Sodom & Gomorrah. God's remedy for Jonah's depression was simply to reveal Jonah's hypocrisy, and show him he needed to repent of his bad attitude. Many issues in the realm of depression and suicide are sensitive that needs to be handled with care and love. However, at its core, a depressive attitude usually stems from bad thoughts that must be repented of to rise out of that valley. When things turn out differently than we hoped (like Jonah), we can't just throw in the towel and give up. No, we get up, repent, and serve God better tomorrow than we did today.

Example of Paul

Now that we have examined some negative responses to trials in this life, let us look at a great positive example. The Apostle Paul is a great example that despite circumstances in his life which could have easily made him discouraged and depressed, instead he lived with great joy. After being beaten and imprisoned in Philippi, Paul and Silas still had such joy to pray and sing praises to God at midnight (Acts 16:22-25). Paul wrote many joyful epistles (especially Philippians) from his prison cell. He suffered beatings, stonings, shipwrecks, persecutions, imprisonments, slander, and many other perils for the kingdom (2 Cor. 11:23-28), but he still was able to *"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice."* (Phil. 4:4) We can see through Paul that the power of Christ can allow us to conquer discouragement and depression despite the severity of our circumstances. *"8) We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9) Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;"* (2 Cor. 5:8-9) These verses show the proper "balance" to the Christian life. We don't stick our head in the sand or ignore the reality of suffering and challenges. No, we readily admit we are *"troubled on every side"* (everywhere we look there is trouble); we are *"perplexed"* (there are many things in this world we question and don't understand why they happen); we are *"persecuted"* (suffer for righteousness' sake); we are *"cast down"* (we get knocked down by the troubles of this world). Despite these challenges, we are still *"not distressed"*; we are *"not in despair"*; we know that we are *"not forsaken"* by God or our loved ones; we might get knocked down, but we are *"not destroyed"*. It is inevitable we will get knocked down and discouraged and depressed in this world, but the important thing is that when we get knocked down, we get back up. *"For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth again."* (Prov. 24:16). We may be cast down, but we are not destroyed. We will get knocked down, but by God's grace, we need to get back up.

At the end of Paul's life, he is writing his final epistle and final inspired words before his imminent martyrdom. He desires for Timothy to come and see him one last time before he is killed (2 Tim. 4:9). Paul is alone, except for Luke. Demas forsook him, having loved this present world (v.10). Other friends in the ministry have left to serve churches (v.10-12). He requests Timothy to bring him the word of God (the parchments) and his favorite cloak he left at Troas (v.13). He remembers his enemy, Alexander the coppersmith, that did him much evil (v.14-15). Then, similar to Jesus when all his disciples fled when Paul had his first court appearance in Rome, all men forsook him (v.16). Paul is an old man, in prison, about to die, body broken down due to many beatings in his life, cold, without the written word of God, just one friend there, reminiscing about everyone that has left him and those who have persecuted him. Clearly, at the end of his life, Paul here is depressed right? No. Why was Paul not depressed despite what appears to us to be such

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a sad situation? Even though all men forsook him during his trial, it was okay because the Lord stood with him and strengthened him. Furthermore, Paul knew the Lord would deliver him from every evil work in this world and would preserve him unto his heavenly kingdom. *“17) Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18) And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (2 Tim. 4:17-18) In the midst of manifold troubles and trials of this world, we need to ultimately be reminded that God will “never leave us and never forsake us” (Heb. 13:5). Even if all men forsake us, The Lord shall stand with us and strengthen us. God will deliver us from every evil work in this world, and ultimately, we will be with God in his heavenly kingdom forever. No disappointment in this life can ever diminish the eternal security of God’s children. That is why we can “hope in God”. We hope in God because he has chosen us; he has loved us; he has saved us; and we shall ultimately be with Jesus Christ in his heavenly kingdom for eternal joy with God.

Concluding Thoughts

Do not be embarrassed when you have struggles with discouragement and depression. As we have seen, truly these are struggles that are common to man. When we see someone struggling with discouragement and depression, it is not typically beneficial to just tell them “Don’t worry; it will be okay.” We really need to identify the root cause of their struggles. We need to be ready and willing to invest our time and energy to listen to them about their struggles. These are challenges that most likely will not go away quickly or overnight. We need to show great patience, gentleness, and love as we counsel those who struggle with these issues.

Before we can address the spiritual challenges, we must first take care of our bodies and our health. It may be necessary to consult a doctor for a prescribed medication which can allow your mind to think clearly through the situation. This may not be a long-term solution, but sometimes it is necessary in order to correct a possible chemical imbalance which can be hindering your current thought process. Also, do not forsake pastoral and Christian counseling. We need to be able to talk to others about our struggles, and most importantly, we need to ensure we are receiving counsel from the word of God.

The primary remedy for any of our trials in this life is to pour out the burdens of our soul unto Jesus Christ in prayer. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, but he conquered those temptations without sin. Jesus as our Great High Priest is there at the right hand of God ever living to make intercession for his people. Therefore, let us come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and grace to help us in our times of great need. Let us also ask others to pray for us and supplicate the throne of grace on our behalf. Truly, the effectual, fervent prayers of righteous men and women avails so much in the midst of these struggles.

Discouragement is inevitable from time to time in this world. When we feel our courage being extinguished, we need to trust in the Lord. Ultimately, just as David in his horrible situation, we must encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. Others can help, and thankfully they do many times. However, man will inevitably let us down. We need to entrust the keeping of our souls unto our Faithful Creator.

From John the Baptist, we see that when we get discouraged and begin to doubt the truths we have once affirmed, we need to be reminded by faithful ministers and friends of what we already know. We need to be told “again” and again and again of the truth of God’s word we already know and hold fast unto. We need to have our pure minds stirred up again by way of remembrance lest at any time we should let them slip.

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We are prone to forget in the midst of emotionally charged situations, so we need others to remind us of the truth of God's word and remind us to hope in the Lord.

When we remain in a prolonged state of discouragement, we will often get depressed. We even question inside ourselves "why" do I feel cast down and depressed in my soul? Just as John the Baptist, during those times of struggle, we have to go back to what we already know. We have to trust and hope in God. The remedy for a depressed, disquieted, cast down soul is always a renewed hope in God. *"Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."* (Ps. 43:5) This will not be something that goes away quickly. As the psalmist, we remind ourselves of the truth, but those thoughts of doubt keep coming back to our mind again and again. We must remind ourselves each time of God's great faithfulness and that his mercies are new every morning.

Depression can even get so heavy that we might be tempted to think our life is not worth living anymore. We can see from multiple godly men in scripture that this is a thought and struggle that is very common to man. If someone succumbs to that temptation and takes their own life, we do not need to fear them going to hell but instead to rest in the eternal security of all of God's children. We see from King Saul and Samson's examples that even if a child of God takes their own life, they will still be with the Lord in heaven. There is no action in life or in death (especially suicide) that can separate a child of God from the love of Jesus Christ or from their home in heaven (Rom. 8:38-39).

From Moses, we see that when we are so heavy laden that we think we cannot bear it, God reminds us that it is not our burden to bear, but it is his burden. God will also send faithful men and women to help bear our burdens with us by the guiding power of the Spirit. We are not called to bear the burdens of this life by ourselves. We should allow others to help us bear these burdens, and ultimately to cast our burdens upon the Lord. God has promised to sustain us. *"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."* (Ps. 55:22)

From Elijah, we see that in times of struggle we don't need to be alone. We need to maintain close fellowship with like-minded believers who can encourage us. When we get alone, we can develop some very unbiblical attitudes. First, we need to take care of our physical bodies. We need to get good sleep and eat good food. God will send angels to minister to us when we are in times of great need. We also need to be reminded that God is not done with us yet; there is more work for us to do in the kingdom. God will send us a friend to help bear our burdens with us. We are reminded that the wicked who afflict us shall have their day of justice. Finally, we are reminded that even if we cannot visibly see them, we are not alone in our service to God. The Lord has always reserved a seven thousand righteous remnant for himself in this world.

From Job and Jonah, we see that sometimes we can develop really bad attitudes that we simply need to repent from. We do not have the right to blame or reproach God's providence or his wisdom in guiding our lives. If we are tempted to blame God in the midst of suffering, we need to follow Job's example and simply cover our mouth and repent of these bad attitudes.

From Paul, we see conquering joy in the midst of severe trials. We might feel "troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down". Remember though that we are "not distressed, not in despair, not forsaken, and not destroyed". We may be cast down, but we are not destroyed. We will get knocked down in this world, but by God's grace, we will get back up each time. *"For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth again."* (Prov. 24:16). Let us remain faithful to fight the good fight of faith by the enabling power and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.