

The Devil's Tool  
Psalm 42:1-11  
January 27, 2019

There is an old story about the devil who was retiring from his work. He wanted to get rid of all his tools. He had a garage sale and displayed all his tools with a price tag. There were all kinds of tools like malice, hatred, jealousy, deceit, bitterness, pride, betrayal, adultery, cruelty, ungratefulness, and many more. All of them had its own price, some more expensive than others depending on its usefulness. But one of them was set apart marked with the highest price.

When the devil was asked why this particular tool was the most expensive, he said, "Because this is my sharpest and the most useful tool; it is called depression. With depression I can do anything I want with anybody regardless of their education, religion, wealth or fame. It always works; never fails."

Depression is the Devil's most powerful tool. Depression is a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness that leads to overwhelming and crushing sadness.

Depression doesn't happen all at once. It usually starts with a trigger and then builds up. It starts with anger, disappointment, frustration, anxiety, guilt, or some such thing that makes us feel uneasy and sad. These are normal emotions and we have them from time to time.

However, if these feelings prolong, we can begin to feel helpless and even hopeless. Soon we develop an attitude that nothing is ever going to get better. We feel no one cares or understands. When these feelings lengthen and deepen, we begin to lose the meaning of life. We don't care about life. We don't want to live anymore. We don't see any point in life. We begin to feel that it would be better to die than to live. Eventually, if these feelings are severe and we don't have any intervention or help, then we can become suicidal.

Not every person who suffers from depression becomes suicidal. But many people are. Depression has become an epidemic in our society. Since 1915 the risk of depression has increased tremendously. It has almost doubled every generation since then.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Depression is Growing with Each Generation," *USA Today*, 1992.

It is estimated that 16.2 million Americans or 6.7 percent of American adults have had at least one major depressive episode in a given year.<sup>2</sup> People can have more than one depressive episode in a year. Each and every year, millions of people have a period of major depression. Some people have it for a short time, and some for a longer period of time. Some people have it for many years.

Depression can happen to anyone at any point of time. Regardless of your health, wealth, fame or power, none of us is immune to the assault of depression.

Consider these names: Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Robert Schumann, Ludwig von Beethoven, Edgar Allen Poe, Mark Twain. They are very well-known politicians, musicians, and writers. These incredibly talented individuals had their expertise in different fields. But they had one common experience. They all battled the debilitating disease of severe depression.

Listen to this man and guess who this might be. He wrote, "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. To remain as I am is impossible. I must die or get better."<sup>3</sup> Do you sense a severe depression in this man? Do you know who wrote it? It was Abraham Lincoln.

Consider another man. During the World War II the Prime Minister of England, Winston Churchill told his people, "Never give up, never, never, never, never give up!" He was one of the most courageous and positive-thinking persons in history. But he called depression a "black dog" that followed him all his life. He was affected by depression again and again throughout his life.

Even spiritual giants were not protected from depression. Moses, for example, was once so deeply depressed that he asked God to end his life. After the Israelites came out of Egypt, they had a difficult life in the wilderness. Yes, the Lord provided Manna and water. But still it was a harsh life in the wasteland, no doubt about that. After couple of years in the wilderness they really missed meat in their meals.

They wanted to eat meat. And they demanded Moses to provide them some meat. Moses couldn't do that. It was a huge crowd. There was no way he could provide them meat. So, Moses cried out to the Lord. He said to the Lord, "Why have you brought this trouble to me? Why did you pick me to lead these people?"

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/depression/facts-statistics-infographic#5>

<sup>3</sup> <https://psychcentral.com/lib/dealing-with-the-depths-of-depression/>

What have I done to offend you that you put these people in my care? Did I conceive all these people? Did I give birth to them? (Why do I have to do this?) ... Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' Lord, if this is how you are going to treat me, mind as well, kill me. Please! Kill me! It is better for me to die than to carry this burden!"<sup>4</sup> Moses was depressed, very depressed.

What about Elijah? Elijah was a great prophet of the Old Testament, probably the greatest. After defeating 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, he had slaughtered them. He killed every one of them.

Then Jezebel was furious that Elijah killed all the prophets of Baal, because she was a Baal worshipper. She sent a message to Elijah saying that she would surely kill Elijah just the way he killed those prophets. Then Elijah ran away and hid himself. Then he fell into a deep depression. And he said to the Lord, "I have had enough, Lord. Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors."<sup>5</sup> I cannot live like this. It is better for me to die than to live. Elijah was severely depressed.

King David also battled depression. In Psalm 42:5 we read, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted in me? King David was asking himself this rhetorical question. He was basically saying, "I am really depressed. I know I need to trust the Lord and I am trying. But I don't have peace. I don't have comfort. I don't have assurance that God is with me. What I have is anxiety and fear. I don't feel the presence of God."

He was desperately trying to escape from his depression. But he had not been able to. David confessed in verse 3, "My tears have been my food day and night." "All day long, I weep and cry."

I want you to know that we do get depressed from time to time. And there is nothing wrong with getting depressed or being depressed. But there is something wrong with staying depressed. The Lord does not want us to stay depressed.

What can we do to come out of depression? I have a couple of suggestions. One, don't isolate yourself, but go out and serve others.

Someone once asked Karl Menninger, the famous American psychiatrist, "What would you advise a person to do who is experiencing deep depression and

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<sup>4</sup> Numbers 11:10-15.

<sup>5</sup> 1 King 18:40-19:4.

unhappiness?” Actually the person who asked the question was expecting to hear, “Go see a psychiatrist.” But that is not what he said. Instead, he said, “If you are really severely depressed, do this: Lock the door behind you, go across the street, find somebody that’s in need, and do something to help them.”

We find meaning in life when we do something that positively affects other people. We find joy when we see value in our lives. We see value in our lives when we make a difference in other people’s lives, even in a small way. And when we find joy in life, we come out of depression.

Two, put your hope in God. King David says, in verse 5, “Put your hope in God, for I shall again praise him.” And then in verse 11 he said the same thing. He said “Put your hope in God, for I shall again praise him.” David got his eyes off of himself. Instead of looking at his circumstances, he looked up the Lord.

Horatio G. Spafford was an American Lawyer and business man in Chicago with a lovely family - a wife, Anna, and five children. However, in 1871 their only son died of pneumonia. And in that same year, much of their business was lost in the great Chicago fire. But, by God’s mercy and kindness the business recovered quickly.

Two years later, in November 1873, he and his family wanted to spend winter vacation in England. Horatio still needed to take care of a few things. Anna and four daughters left first on a ship. Unfortunately, that ship collided with another ship as it was crossing the Atlantic and sank quickly. There were 313 passengers on board and 226 people died among them the Spafford daughters. As soon as Anna reached land, she telegraphed to her husband: “Saved alone. Children lost. What shall I do?”

Horatio was on the next available ship and left to join his grieving wife. On that ship, near the place where the tragedy had occurred, he wrote:

“When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrow like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot,  
Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.staugustine.com/living/religion/2014-10-16/story-behind-song-it-well-my-soul>

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 42:11.

That is an admirable faith.

“Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted in me? Put your hope in God. And praise him for he is your help and your salvation!”<sup>7</sup>