

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.15, April 9, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."** (2 Peter 3:18)

Depression and the Gospel! By Mike Cleveland, (edited for space considerations)

The gospel of Jesus Christ is perfectly suited to meet all the spiritual needs of mankind today. **In the gospel, sinners are "forgiven and given:" forgiven of all their sins, given the "oil of gladness" to replace their mourning, and "garments of praise" to replace their "spirit of despair"** ([Isaiah 61:3](#)). This is a great exchange, and it happens repeatedly to men and women as they begin to detest [hate] their sin, delight in God's Son, and devour the Scriptures.

However, there is a fairly recent movement in the world today, especially in America, which subtly draws people's attention away from the glorious gospel and the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and places it instead upon **therapeutic remedies and pharmaceutical prescriptions**. This movement is called psychology and, although the world is tiring of its false promises and empty solutions, the church seems to be embracing it more and more.

One of the dangers of this movement is the self-focus it encourages. For instance, I'm reminded of a large church that invited a "Christian psychologist" in to speak to women on the issue of depression. In one of her sessions, the speaker suggested that, although she admittedly had no biblical basis for her beliefs, the "new name" on the white stone which is given to the believers in heaven ([Revelation 2:17](#)) may be associated with their particular journey in life and reflect some aspect of their character, developed as a result of their "woundedness."

How sad it would be if believers really *were* given an eternal reminder of the wounds they endured on this earth. **And how subtle a change it is to attempt to fix believers' attention on *their* pain and the wounds *they* received, rather than on the pain Jesus endured for them on the cross and the wounds He received as He died in their place.** It is "by His stripes" that we are healed ([Isaiah 53:5](#)).

The devil is intent on diverting our attention from the cross, and the healing that flows from it. He is content if we fixate on our wounds, rather than "fixing our eyes on Jesus" ([Hebrews 12:2](#)), His suffering, death and resurrection.

No, the Scriptures say nothing of believers being given an eternal reminder of their past and their pain; **rather, the Bible is clear that the wounds which will remain throughout all eternity are the wounds on the body of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, as constant reminders of His dying love for us** ([Revelation 5:5-6](#)).

On the subject of depression, the metaphor of "**waves**" and "**sinking**" is an accurate word-picture; for those who are afflicted in this way often describe their experience as "sinking in despair" or as "waves of hopelessness" that roll over them. **This was the condition of Jonah when he was thrown overboard from the ship:** ³ *You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me.* [Jonah 2:3](#) ⁵ *The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounded me; seaweed was wrapped around my head.* [Jonah 2:5](#)

The waves swirled, swept over and surrounded Jonah. He called them the "engulfing waters" which threatened to "banish" him from God's sight forever (verse 4). Sinking in these waters, he felt that his life was "ebbing away" (verse 7). **This is an apt picture for those drowning in discouragement and sinking in sadness and/or depression.** These waves of depression, although not made of water, are no less real to the sufferer than the ocean waves that threatened to swallow up Jonah.

And yet, we see in the Scriptures that there is hope, regardless of the depth of the despair. **Let's notice where Jonah went for help in his distress and truly desperate situation:** ¹ *From inside the fish Jonah prayed to the LORD his God.* ² *He said: "In my distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I called for help, and you listened to my cry.* [Jonah 2:1-2](#) **Here is help indeed. Jonah's prayer came from "inside the fish" and from "the depths of the grave."** From the depths Jonah called to the Lord and the Lord listened to Jonah's cry and He answered Jonah's call. **It is not** a simplistic answer to those suffering with depression to exhort them to cry to the Lord from their depths, and **it is no** empty promise to assure them that God will hear and answer them, in His time and in His way, just as He heard and answered Jonah.

An old hymn written in the 1890's presents the gospel solution to depression very clearly when it states (using Peter's experience of sinking in the waves as an illustration, [Matthew 14:29-30](#)): *"I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore, Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more, But the Master of the sea, heard my despairing cry, From the waters lifted me, now safe am I.*

Refrain: *Love lifted me! Love lifted me! When nothing else could help Love lifted me!"*

Yes, the good news of the gospel is that all who are sinking and in despair may be lifted by Love and saved by the Savior, even as Peter called out to

Jesus and was quickly lifted out of the waves. When nothing else can help - no pills, no program, no psychiatrist or psychologist - God's love, in the person of Jesus Christ, stands ready to lift us up out of the waves of despair.

We see this truth illustrated repeatedly throughout the Scriptures. Let us consider David's recourse when he was overwhelmed. He wrote in [Psalm 61:1-2](#): ¹ *Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.* ² *From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.* This Psalm was written during David's forced exile from the Tabernacle at the time of Absalom's rebellion.

At this very difficult time in his life, when David's heart grew faint or, as some versions read, "when my heart is overwhelmed," he knew to go to the Lord, to the Rock of his salvation, to the great Physician of his soul. **How many there are today, like David,** whose hearts are overwhelmed with sorrow and sadness, who are under the thick clouds of darkness, who need to be led to the Rock - that strong and immovable God Who is the Maker and Healer of the hearts of people, and Who sent His Son to die in their place.

{{Charles Spurgeon, who suffered bouts of severe depression, wrote the following commentary on Psalm 61: *He was banished from the very spot which was the center of all his delight, and at the same time his mind was in a depressed and miserable condition; he was an outcast, yet he does not therefore stop praying, but rather finds his reason for the louder cries to God. "I will cry."* *It was a wise resolution, for if David had ceased to pray he would have become the victim of despair; there is an end to a man when he makes an end to prayer.*

*When my heart is overwhelmed:- when the huge waves of trouble wash over me, and I am completely submerged, not only as to my head, but also my heart. **It is hard to pray when the very heart is drowning, yet gracious people plead best at such times.** Tribulation brings us to God, and brings God to us. Faith's greatest triumphs are achieved in her heaviest trials. When I feel that it is all over with me, affliction is all over me; it encompasses me as a cloud, it swallows me up like a sea, it shuts me in with thick darkness, yet God is near, near enough to hear my voice, and I will call to him."}}*

There is a great Physician of the soul where those who are overwhelmed may come and be healed. This Physician is not a psychiatrist who prescribes a pill, but rather a **Savior who** lifts the sinking one up, a **Deliverer who** rescues the discouraged and downcast and comforts him or her by His Spirit. **He is a Rock, a Fortress, a Strong Tower, and an ever-present help in time of need.** This Rock "gives power to the weak" and "to those who have no might He gives strength" ([Isaiah 40:29](#)).

We must not minimize the situations and circumstances of those enduring hardship, difficulties and trials of all kinds. **Nor should we attempt to diminish** the experience of hurting and the feelings of helplessness and despair that all of us may go through at times.

And yet, this is exactly what psychiatrists and psychologists unwittingly do when they listen to the heart pain and soul cries of men and women, **and then recommend a pill as the remedy.** Heartaches and the effects of life's difficulties may be deep, and require much more love, consolation of the heart, and tenderness toward the spirit than a mere pill and the suggestion of certain behavior changes, can provide.

No, those suffering the waves of discouragement and the flood waters of despair are often **mistreated when they are told to take a pill** in order to alter their state of mind; the issue goes much deeper, into their very hearts, minds and souls. **It is cruel to simply numb the mind, when what is needed is the healing balm of the gospel, applied by the Holy Spirit and administered by the body of Christ.**

So let us consider how the remedy of the gospel is a perfect solution for depression and overwhelming discouragement, as presented in the Scriptures: ¹ *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted**, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,* ² *to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,* [Isaiah 61:1-2](#)

This is the writing of Isaiah. Later it would be quoted by the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke chapter 4 and He would state that this passage of Scripture "is fulfilled in your hearing" ([Luke 4:21](#)). So this is a detailed description of the main mission of the Messiah. **Notice the three main points of the passage. Jesus Christ came to,**

1. Preach good news to the poor: In this passage of Scripture, the author is using Jubilee language (Leviticus 25). In the year of Jubilee, which happened every 50 years in the economy of the Jewish nation, the poor were relieved of their burdens and released from their mortgages. **The year of Jubilee**, as it pointed forward to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, was a year in which the poor were released from their financial burdens and their debts were forgiven, even as our sin debt has been paid by Jesus and we are released from it.

Jesus Christ Came to Preach Good News to Us; our sin debt has been paid ([Isaiah 40:1-3](#)) and our souls, which we had mortgaged into sin, are now released from the debt. *For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.* [2 Corinthians 8:9](#)

2. Jesus Came to Bind up the Brokenhearted: Jesus' work is here presented as that which a physician would do. A doctor is one who binds up wounds for the purpose of mending them. Even so, Jesus Christ is the Great Physician who, by the application of His gospel, is able to effectively heal hearts and lives. Through His suffering He makes us whole, and through His death He gives us life. **There is no wound so deep or sorrow so great that Jesus cannot heal it.** This gospel is a powerful healing work, in which those who have been wounded through sin are made whole by God's grace.

3. Jesus Came to Proclaim Freedom for the Bound: Not only is the gospel a healing work, it is also a freeing work. Those who are in chains of bondage are released, set free, liberated through Christ. **Jesus was nailed to a tree so that porn addicts, drunks, wife-beaters, the proud, the defiant ones who refuse to forgive, gossipers and slanderers, etc., could all be forgiven for their sins, set free from their chains, and enabled to walk in the glorious liberty of God's sons** ([Romans 8:21](#)). Then Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven where He sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to come and live in all who believe, comforting their hearts in the truth and empowering them for service. So through the gospel of Jesus Christ the poor are relieved, the brokenhearted are restored, and the captives are released.

What good news this is indeed! But that is not all; there is much more. The gospel and its solutions produce a wonderful effect in those who believe and embrace it: *...and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, **the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.** They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.* [Isaiah 61:3](#) **The results of the gospel in the lives of those who believe it are that they are cared for, comforted and crowned.**

1. Through the gospel God "provides for those who grieve in Zion." Whether they are grieving for their sin or their circumstances, the gospel is a marvelous provision for their grief. God cares for those who cry. He sent Jesus Christ to die for them, and His Holy Spirit to live in them.

2. Through the gospel God comforts those who mourn. Jesus' death is not only a perfect foundation for our lives, but it is also a strong consolation for our tears.

3. Through the gospel God clothes and crowns those who are in despair. The results of the gospel are an absolutely beautiful exchange whereby three things are replaced; we are given a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of despair.

Yes, these are the powerful effects of the gospel of Jesus Christ that, through His own sufferings, He is able to provide for those who suffer; through His own death He comforts those who mourn over sin, and through the shedding of His blood on the cross He exchanges their ashes for a crown, their mourning for gladness and their despair for a spirit of praise. **The gospel - not a pill, program, psychologist or psychiatrist - is the solution for sin and discouragement, for grief and depression.**

So what does one do who is "sinking in the waves" of depression, who is sad, grieving, mourning, or discouraged? **The following is not intended to be a list of "dos and don'ts," but rather as specific encouragement for those who want to be able to sing "Love Lifted Me" when nothing else could help:**

1. Turn your eyes upon Jesus: ² *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.* ³ *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* [Hebrews 12:2-3](#)

This is the greatest need of the world and in the church today. People need to consider Jesus, to fix their eyes on Him and to look intently at Him, without distraction. And where, specifically, do we look? "...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...and sat down at the right hand of God." The suffering and death of Jesus Christ, whereby He purchased our pardon and secured our eternal life and His powerful resurrection from the dead, whereby we are raised and justified, should be the focus of our lives.

This means we should study our Bibles, seeing the cross of forgiveness on its pages and relishing our new life that comes through His death. We should pray earnestly for the Spirit of God to lead us into all truth that we might know of our marvelous standing before God in Christ and that we might know the hope to which God has called us, the riches of our inheritance in Him, and His incomparably great power for us who believe ([Ephesians 1:15-20](#)).

And what is the result of this intent focus on the cross? *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.* [Hebrews 12:3](#) **Looking to Jesus, considering Him, and focusing on the cross keeps us from overwhelming discouragement.** It prevents us from "growing weary" in our journey or "losing heart." It is the antidote to depression. **Someone once said,** "We can either be depressed or we can look to Jesus, but we cannot do both at the same time."

2. Turn away from man and turn to God. Sometimes people do not fully understand that, **in turning to the psychiatrist for pills, they have turned to man for the solution that only God can provide and, in so doing, they miss the real Solution and the healing that could be theirs.** They miss the crown of beauty, the oil of gladness and the spirit of praise that comes as part and parcel with the gospel. *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.* [Psalms 20:7](#) *Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods.* [Psalms 40:4](#)

It is this constant turning to the Lord and learning how to trust in His unfailing love that makes us flourish as Christians, well-nourished in grace and raised up in truth: *But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever.* [Psalms 52:8](#)

3. Learn to love the gospel: It is through the preaching of the gospel that men and women become established, firm and secure. **So learn to revel in the gospel; that is,** to delight your heart in your forgiveness through Jesus' shed blood on the cross, to revel in your acceptance with God because of Calvary, to be in awe of God, Who has made provision for your sin and granted you pardon and new life through Jesus' death. This will establish and strengthen you. *Now to him who is able to establish you by my*

gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, [Romans 16:25](#)

Those who relish the good news, **who preach it to themselves daily** and who are in attendance wherever the gospel is preached at church are those who become stable and secure, established and firm. **They experience the power of the gospel in their lives.** They enjoy the crowning of their lives with love and compassion, the comfort and the strengthening of the Holy Spirit, and the joy of knowing Jesus personally and of walking with God moment by moment.

Their lives produce beauty instead of ashes, they have gladness instead of mourning, and their lives are filled with praise instead of despair. They proclaim with David: *He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.*
[Psalms 40:2](#)

So look to Jesus, focus on the sufferings of His cross and the power of His resurrection. Make it a point to turn away from looking to man for the solution that only God can provide. Then make the gospel the study of your life, learning how to revel in it and worship God for it, finding life in Jesus' death. **God has provided the solution to depression and any other spiritual problem imaginable through the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.**

Article is by Mike Cleveland, founder and president of Setting Captives Free. Complete article is found at: <http://www.settingcaptivesfree.com/resources/article/depression-and-gospel/>

NOTE: If you are presently on psychotropic medication, you will need help in getting off. The following resource is a 'secular' resource... and yet offers a world of excellent help:

Peter R. Breggin, MD, has been called "[The Conscience of Psychiatry](#)" for his many decades of successful efforts to reform the mental health field. His scientific and educational work has provided the foundation for modern criticism of psychiatric drugs and ECT, and leads the way in promoting more caring and effective therapies. He is the author of dozens of scientific articles and more than twenty books including the bestseller *Talking Back to Prozac* (1994, with Ginger Breggin), [Medication Madness: The Role of Psychiatric Drugs in Cases of Violence, Suicide and Crime](#) (2008), and [Psychiatric Drug Withdrawal: A Guide for Prescribers, Therapists, Patients and Their Families](#) (2013).

Dr. Breggin acts as a medical expert in criminal, malpractice and product liability suits, often involving adverse drug effects such as suicide, violence, brain injury, death, and tardive dyskinesia. He began testifying in the early 1970s and has been qualified in court 85 times or more since 1987.

Click here: [PETERBREGGIN.COM http://www.peterbreggin.com/](http://www.peterbreggin.com/)

Further truth from 'Setting Captives Free'

I think one of the basic problems with this whole area of "mental health" regarding the issue of depression is that it is perceived as bad, as abnormal, and as something we must try to "fix."

After all, doesn't God want us "healthy, wealthy and wise" and to be free from pain, struggle, worry and concern? Doesn't God want us to be happy, skipping merrily through flower-filled meadows?

In short, the answer is "No" and, when that's understood, the attempts to become happy will cease and the goal to become holy takes its place.

Inevitably, when holiness is the goal, true happiness begins to bloom in lives previously darkened by self-focus.

I believe our focus should be how to glorify God through our suffering and that the biblical principle that we "are sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" is one of the best answers to the "feelings-oriented" teachings of psychology. – by Shon Bruellman, executive director of Setting Captives Free purity courses

A TESTIMONY FROM SETTING CAPTIVES FREE:

The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. Sadly enough, many of us who profess to be Christians are perishing. I now see that this is because of a lack of revelation knowledge of the cross. I've been a Christian for a long time, but I was not walking in victory and was plagued by depression.

The Setting Captives Free study *The Cross - Finding Life in Jesus' Death* opened my eyes to the full meaning and significance of the cross.

Buried doubts and unbelief left me as I focused on the cross. The saving power of God has healed me from my emptiness. If you are a Christian with issues, or a person with questions about the meaning of the Christian faith, then the Cross course is a good place to start.

By Toyin, *Setting Captives Free* student / Go to— www.settingcaptivesfree.com

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES for April!

1. Ladies Bible Study— 'LORD, HEAL MY HURTS!'— Tuesdays @ 10:00AM! Call — 615-452-5951

2. WEDNESDAYS: PRAYER SERVICE at 7:00PM! / YOUTH: Wednesdays, 6-8pm @ Southside Church building!

3. Thursdays @ 6:30pm: OUTREACH

4. Saturdays @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study

Sunday Schedule for April 14; 21; 28, 2013

1. 9:30am- Sunday School

2. 10:45am- Morning Worship / Children's Church

3. Noon Fellowship “Covered Dish” Meal [LORD’S SUPPER, 4/21]

4. 1:00pm Early Afternoon Service