

*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 Kings 19:4

David said at one point: *"For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave."* Psalm 88:3

Jeremiah said: *"Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed."* Jeremiah 20:14

When everything was taken away from Job, he was initially fine, and said:

*"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* Job 1:21

We are told that up to this point:

*"In all this did not Job sin with his lips."* Job 2:10

But then when his friends came along to try to help him, Job got depressed, and said:

*"Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived."* Job 3:3

The key to the book of Job is found in chapter 32. Job's problem was that:

*"He was righteous in his own eyes.... he justified himself rather than God."* Job 32:1,2

Until he acknowledged that the Lord was righteous and he just a sinful creature by nature, he couldn't be restored.

In all these Biblical cases, the person concerned, got depressed because he took his eyes off the Lord and eternal things, and just focussed on this world. That's the big mistake. And that's the case every time a true believer gets depressed. This world is not all there is. We need to keep ourselves focussed on things above, not on things on the earth.

*"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."* Colossians 3:1-3

*"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."* 2 Corinthians 4:17-18

People criticise Christianity for being narrow and exclusive. But no other religion can save us from our own sinful selves. Every other religion in the world is a glorified self-help group. They all tell us there's something we can do to impress God. Don't flatter yourself. The truth is that there's absolutely nothing we can do at all. The Lord Jesus Christ was sent into the world specifically to save us from our sins:

*"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* John 3:36

*"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."* John 5:22-23

So, let's all acknowledge our inadequacy, failure and sinful nature. Let's not be scared of doing that. Only once we recognise the problem can we truly repent of our sins, and pray to God for salvation in Jesus Christ. And the Lord has promised that He will not let anyone down who truly turns to Him:

*"And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."* John 6:40

*"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* John 6:37

*"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."* John 12:25

Coming to the Son will make us free indeed:

*"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."* John 8:34-36

## *Embracing Self-Hatred*

Millions of people in the world today are depressed. The medical profession, with all their knowledge, can't help. All they do is spend lots of money on counselling services, mental health units and putting the patients.... er.... sorry, clients.... on antidepressant tablets, probably for the rest of their lives.

I read an article on depression in a newspaper once, and the writer who had experienced it, said, quite rightly, "Depression is a bout of absolute sanity." And that's true. If all we have is this world in it's continual state of decay, and we're only here for a very short time anyway, there's no real point to anything. This is a miserable place. Of course it's depressing.

Solomon, the wisest man in all the earth found this out:

*"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit."* Ecclesiastes 1:14

Everything in this fallen world is vanity. It's pointless. These things are just fact. It's no good hiding from it all by filling our lives with things of no consequence and pretending it's not true. All of us should get real, and accept truth. What surprises me is that there are so many people in the world who aren't depressed. So many who think that this world is wonderful, that they can achieve such a lot in it, that there is so much excitement here, so much to do to keep them occupied. Yet they're all going to die soon enough.

Modern psychology hasn't got the answer. All we're told is that we should have a sense of self-worth, self-acceptance, self-esteem and self-confidence. We're told that to conquer depression, we must love ourselves, have pride in our achievements and have a good feeling about ourselves.

Because of this philosophy dominating our education system, our television networks, and, sadly, also our churches, there's an army of people out there in the world who have come to think that there's something seriously wrong with them because, for whatever reason, they don't feel that confident about themselves all the time.

So, for example, people have cosmetic surgery, people go on confidence building courses, and many, many people fill our psychiatric hospitals, all because none of them feel as confident about themselves as the modern

psychologists are telling them they ought to be. Well, the modern psychologists are all wrong. Do you feel bad about yourself? Do you lack confidence? Do you have a low self-esteem? Well, look up! Don't be persuaded by the world around you that that's a bad thing. It's a good thing, because it's the truth. We really are such weak, sinful creatures by nature. To lack confidence or self-esteem is an acknowledgment of reality. Underneath everything, we know it's true anyway, but we're too scared to admit it to anyone else in case they think we need psychiatric help. But all we are doing by acknowledging our weaknesses is being honest with ourselves.

Modern psychologists think that the only alternative to a sense of self-esteem is despair. But it's far better to have a sense of reality about ourselves, because only then can we begin to do something about it. Whipping ourselves up into a false sense of self-confidence is not the answer, but, instead, it's living a lie. The longer we live a lie, the worse we'll become when we find out it was all a sham.

The one thing all depressed people have in common is that they turn inward on themselves. By doing this, they make themselves utterly useless to everyone around them. Not only do they waste their own time, but they waste the time of everybody else who tries to help them. The helpers could be doing something useful themselves instead. I'm sorry to be so harsh, but that's the way it is.

In fact, the problem with depressed people is too much self-esteem, not too little. Me, me, me, my problem, my problems. That's all they can think about. They really think the world revolves around themselves. By nature we are all so selfish. It was said of Jesus Christ that He:

*"...went about doing good..."* Acts 10:38

A depressed person should be told, "Do something useful. Help a little old lady across the road." Of course, they won't. They might say something like, "Nobody cares about me, so why should I care about anybody else?" Which is a fair comment. But it's still a selfish one.

When I was in the cub scouts, they had a motto that we should try to do one good deed every day. But how many of us actually did a good deed every day, or indeed a good deed at all? None of us. It sounded good, but nobody actually did it. So, if we find such difficulty by nature to do even one good deed a day when we're well, how much more will we find it difficult to do something useful for somebody else when we're depressed. There is only one hope for any of us. It doesn't matter

whether we're depressed or not. We all need a Saviour to save us from this wretched condition, from our own sinful, self-centred nature. If we don't recognise this as our fundamental problem, we may as well give up all hope now. Everybody by nature is in this condition, whether we recognise it or not. We're all in the same boat.

We must seek the truth about ourselves. Only then can we find a real solution. The Bible tells us the truth about human nature:

*"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."* Genesis 6:5

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* Jeremiah 17:9

*"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."* Psalm 14:2,3

*"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* Romans 3:23

Nothing we can do is good enough. We're all failures. The psychologists are all wrong. Does that mean we should despair and try to end our lives? No! God has provided an answer, if only we accept it. There's a Saviour to be found in Jesus Christ. But we need to acknowledge that we need Him. We need to acknowledge our real condition. We need to call on God for mercy to save us from our sins. And if we do all that, He will.

*"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."* Jeremiah 29:11-13

*"Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be bid in the day of the Lord's anger."* Zephaniah 2:3

*"There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."* Isaiah 45:21-22

*"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."* 1 Timothy 2:5

*"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."* 1 Peter 3:18

The Christian religion is not irrelevant, as we're constantly being told. Rather, it gives us exactly the perfect remedy for our human condition.

At this point we need to separate in our minds depressed people from those with what the Bible calls "evil spirits." Both would be treated by a hospital's psychiatric department, so to this world they are considered very similar. But really they are completely different.

Christ and the apostles came across many people with "evil spirits."

*"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."* Acts 16:16-18

This lady spoke the truth. The men she was talking about were indeed the servants of the most high God shewing the way of salvation. In most church circles that would be called good witnessing. But she had an evil spirit, which Paul cast out. If he had not done that, people would begin to equate having an evil spirit with true religion, which of course it isn't. A person with an "evil spirit" can never be a true believer. We should never think that they ever could be, even if they are in our churches (which many are). True believers will always be in their right mind:

*"Then they went out to see what was done: and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid."* Luke 8:35

True believers will know the truth and the truth will set them free.

But not only do people with "evil spirits" come to church regularly, many depressed people do too. And many true believers can be depressed. At one point in his life, it is said of Elijah:

*"But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and*