

**Matt. 27:1-5:** When morning came, all the chief priests & the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death. & they bound him & led him away & delivered him over to Pilate the governor. Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind & brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests & the elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." & throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, & he went & hanged himself.

**Intro:** We've been focusing on Judas, his false repentance, & his death. Imitate Peter, not Judas. Peter fled to Christ! Last Sunday, we focused on the way Judas killed himself & the prophecies his death fulfilled. God is always doing more than you think, & everything He says is true & will come to pass. Today, we're going to consider depression & suicide from a Biblical perspective. What does the Bible teach us about depression & suicide? Experience: Family member; Man from my school; Twice in last month, people expressed distress to me. Jesus gave His life for you, so that you would never take your own life, but find joy & hope in Him.

**1. Lots Of Bible Heroes & Church History Heroes Have Been Depressed To The Point Of Desiring Death**  
**Depression: (Webster's 1828):** A sinking of the spirits; dejection; a state of sadness; [What state could be more sad than not wanting to live anymore? Did you know that lots of people in the Bible wanted to die!]

- **Rebekah: Gen. 27:46:** If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living.
- **Rachel: Gen. 30:1:** Give me children, or I shall die!
- **Moses: Num. 11:14-15:** I am not able to carry all this people alone; the burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once
- **David: 2 Sam. 18:33:** Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!
- **Elijah: 1 Ki. 19:1-4:** Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, & how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me & more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." Then he was afraid, & he arose & ran for his life & came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, & left his servant there. <sup>4</sup> But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness & came & sat down under a broom tree. & he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."
- **Jeremiah:** Jeremiah told the truth about God's judgment that would come on God's people. Pashhur the priest, chief officer of the house of the LORD, didn't like these prophecies so he beat Jeremiah & had him put in the stocks. Jeremiah praised the LORD for deliverance, but he also grieved over his life & suffering:
- **Jer. 20:13-18:** Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers. Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed! Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, "A son is born to you," making him very glad. Let that man be like the cities that the LORD overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning & an alarm at noon, because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, & her womb forever great. Why did I come out from the womb to see toil & sorrow, & spend my days in shame?
- **Jonah: Jon. 4:9:** Yes, I do well to be angry, angry enough to die.
- **Job: Job 3:11-12:** Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb & expire? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?
- **Ezek. 14:14:** even if these three men, Noah, Daniel, & Job, were in it, they would deliver but their own lives by their righteousness, declares the Lord GOD.
- **Jas. 5:11:** You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, & you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.
- **Paul: 2 Cor. 1:8:** For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

**Charles Spurgeon:** I could say with Job, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." I could readily enough have laid violent hands upon myself, to escape from my misery of spirit.

**Thaddeus Williams:** I'm working on a chapter for a new book that deals with the hiddenness of God. Here is a rough snippet that I hope encourages you: Over the years I have spoken with thousands of Christians who harbor a totally unnecessary amount of shame, doubt, & self-worry over one particular issue. They don't feel God anymore. God seems distant & unthrilling. The honeymoon has ended. They no longer feel the life-giving embrace of God's felt presence & worry that they've done Christianity wrong & God has hit the road. Many would gladly give up a limb if only to feel God's love again. Many overanalyze themselves silly trying to pinpoint where things went wrong, how the magic was lost. "If only I read more, pray harder, do more, then I can conjure up my old spiritual euphoria." But nothing works. What am I, some kind of spiritual freak? To make matters worse, they may attend a church service with happy-clappy, major-chord worship anthems, surrounded by fellow believers who all seem so joyously swept up in divine romance. Everyone seems to be blissfully basking in the warmth of His goodness, while troubled believers shiver in the cold. They now not only feel disconnected from God but disconnected from brothers & sisters who are apparently far more connected to God. Christianity seems to work for everyone but me. It can be dreadfully lonesome. I know from experience. Here is where the spiritual & social expectations of today's church can generate an idyllic, spit-shined version of what it means to know God that, frankly, does not match what we see in the muddiness & complexity of Scripture. Perhaps those whom churchy culture makes to feel most freakish are actually those who would be most at home sipping beverages with the often brooding authors of Scripture. Isaiah 45:15 says, "Truly, you are a God Who hides Himself." That is a Holy Spirit-inspired author of Scripture speaking. So that's a first point to stop & absorb into your bones. If you feel like God is hiding from you & that you no longer feel the buzz of His presence then that has been a normal experience of people seeking to know God from time immemorial. You are hardly alone. There is nothing freakish about feeling like you are forsaken or abandoned by God. There has been, what I believe to be a helpful trend in culture over the last several years, the effort to take the stigma out of mental illness. We must advance a Christian version of this phenomenon. It is a sweet grace of God that He included Psalm 88 in His inspired Scriptures to be read by millions to normalize what they have misidentified as their spiritual freakery. It is normal to feel "my soul is full of troubles" (3), like "a man who has no strength" (4), "cut off from [God's hand]" (5), "in the depths of the pit in the regions dark and deep" (6), overwhelmed (7), shunned by friends, eyes dim from sorrow (9). "O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?" (14). These are the words of Heman the Ezrahite who we know very little about other than the fact that he was a musician who served in David's royal court & that he penned this, his only preserved lyrics, that have helped countless Christians realize that feeling downcast has been part & parcel of a relationship with God for millennia. And it is a grace of God that this Psalm does not end on a high note of hope, but with the dismal words "my companions have become darkness" (18), or as the NIV puts it, "Darkness is my closest friend." Sometimes life feels like there is no light at the end of the tunnel, just more dark tunnel. Psalm 88 grants us permission to acknowledge that feeling. All that to say, it does no good pretending to yourself or others that you are a spiritual superstar who exists in a perpetual state of spiritual bliss . . . If you have experienced the hiddenness of God then join the club with biblical characters. In the oldest book of the Bible, Job said that God passes by him " & I see him not. He moves on, but I do not perceive him" (9:11). In Job 30:16-20 he says, "Depression haunts my days. At night my bones are filled with pain, which gnaws at me relentlessly . . . I'm nothing more than dust & ashes . . . I cry to you, O God, but you don't answer. I stand before you, but you don't even look." In 1 Kings 19:4 Elijah cries out, "I have had enough, LORD . . . Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died." Jeremiah literally wrote a book called Lamentations in which he says, "I have cried until the tears no longer come; my heart is broken" (2:10 cf. Jer. 20:14, 18). Jonah sat sun blistered under a scorched tree wishing for death, "It is better for me to die than to live" (4:8). Habakkuk felt like God had broken His promises as the prophet watched his beloved city Jerusalem smoldering under the heat of Chaldean conquest, "O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, & you will not hear?" (Hab. 1:2). Through the Psalms David describes himself as "distressed" (4:11 25:17; 31:9; 69:17; 116:13), "greatly troubled" (6:3; 71:20; 77:4; 86:7; 88:3), "weary with moaning" (6:6; 77:3), "forgotten" (13:1; 31:12, 42:9; 88:5), "forsaken" (22:1), "lonely & afflicted" (25:16), "like those who go down to the pit" (28:1; 88:4, 6), "dismayed" (30:7; 90:7), "wasted" (31:9; 32:3); "brokenhearted" & "crushed in spirit" (34:18), "feeble & crushed" (38:8), "poor & needy" (40:17; 70:5; 74:21; 86:1), "panting," "thirsty," "cast down" (42:1, 2, 5, 6, 11, 43:5; 63:1; 74:1), in "turmoil" (42:5, 11; 43:5), "rejected," "disgraced," "shamed," "bowed down to the dust" (44:9, 15, 25; 89:45), "restless," "anguished," "terrified," "fearful," "trembling," "horrificed," "overwhelmed" (55:2, 4, 5; 88:7), "fainting" (63:11; 77:3; 84:2),

“sinking,” “weary,” “parched,” (69:2, 3, 14), “stricken,” “rebuked,” “failing” (73:14, 26), “downtrodden” (74:21), “afflicted,” “helpless,” “destroyed” (88:15) . . . And we’re supposed to believe that a relationship with God is all cotton candy & sunshine? Paul said that he & his ministry companions found themselves “so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself” (2 Cor. 1:8). Even Jesus is described as “a man of sorrows acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53), He described His soul as “deeply grieved to the point of death” (Mk. 14:34), & cried out “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” You are also in good company with many historic heroes of the faith. The Protestant Reformer Martin Luther confessed, “For more than a week I was close to the gates of death & hell. I trembled in all my members. Christ was wholly lost. I was shaken by desperation & blasphemy of God.” Then we hear the prayers of the Puritans. “My soul feels alienated from you,” Philip Doddridge complained, “Why can I not just come to You with the affection of a child, as I once did? Why do I avoid serving you? It was once my greatest pleasure. Now it seems like a burden.” William Bridge lamented, “I am done, Lord, I am done. I have questioned & questioned my condition these many years. & I see there is no end of such questioning. I get nothing by it. I am a poor weak creature, & I fear I will never be able to bear testimony of the truth of Jesus Christ.” David Clarkson begged, “Lord, hear me! Bring my soul out of this mire & clay, out of unbelief, out of the pit where there is no comfort, no refreshment, & no relief.” David Brainerd, evangelist to the Native Americans whose journals inspired multiple generations of missionaries, longed for death at least 22 places throughout his diary. For example, Sunday, February 3, 1745, he wrote, “My soul remembered ‘the wormwood & the gall’ (I might almost say hell) of Friday last; & I was greatly afraid I should be obliged again to drink of that ‘cup of trembling,’ which was inconceivably more bitter than death, & made me long for the grave more, unspeakably more, than for hid treasures.” William Cowper, the great Christian poet & hymn composer, was haunted throughout his life with the thought, “It is all over with you; you are lost.” Charles Spurgeon, hailed as the “Prince of Preachers,” spoke frankly about his recurring battles with seemingly “causeless depression” as “a shapeless, undefinable, yet all-beclouding hopelessness.” C. S. Lewis, likely the most quoted & influential apologist of the 20th century, said “Go to [God] when your need is desperate, when all other help is vain, & what do you find? A door slammed in your face, & a sound of bolting & double-bolting from the inside. After that, silence.” The list could go on & on – Abraham Kuyper, Lottie Moon, Francis Schaeffer, Joni Eareckson-Tada, & more. If you feel distant from God, you are not a freak. You are in good company. & God never wastes an ounce of our angst. He uses all of it for our good & His glory. Give up the charade. Stop pretending your Christianity is all smiles & rainbows. True Christianity is far more profound, realistic, messy, character-forming, & sanctifying. It always has been. Jesus gave His life for you, so that you would never take your own life, but find joy & hope in Him

## **2. God Totally & Absolutely Forbids Suicide**

**a. Life is a gift from God: Gen. 1:27:** God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male & female he created them.

- **Ps. 139:13-14:** For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully & wonderfully made.

- **Acts 17:24-25:** God who made the world & everything in it . . . gives to all mankind life & breath & everything.

**b. You are not God; Only God gives & takes life: 1 Sam. 2:6:** The LORD kills and brings to life

- **Deut. 32:39:** See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive

- **Job 38:1-5:** Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind & said: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, & you make it known to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements – surely you know!"

**c. God owns you since He created you, & He owns you since He redeemed you: 1 Cor. 6:19-20:** You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

**d. Suicide is selfish, self-murder, & murder is forbidden by God: Exod. 20:13:** You shall not murder.

- **Matt. 5:21-22:** You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder; & whoever murders will be liable to judgment.” But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment . . .

- **1 John 3:15:** Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, & you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him  
- **Prov. 8:36:** all who hate me [God's wisdom] love death. **GOSPEL!**

**e. Christians are called to persevere to the end in order to be saved: Matt. 24:13:** But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

**f. Is it possible for a true, genuine Christian to commit suicide? Is it possible for people who commit suicide to go to heaven?:** This is a tough question. What does church history teach?: the medieval church said no.

**Charles Spurgeon said no:** He that commits suicide to get out of trouble leaps into the gulf to escape from the water; drowns himself to prevent himself from getting wet; leaps into the fire because he is scorched. Do it not; do it not. He that kills himself goes with his hands red with blood before his Maker, & goes thence to his own damnation. But, soul, since thou art yet alive may God teach thee to confess thy sins, & to seek for mercy.

**Lawrence Bilkes:** Pastors such as John Bunyan, Wilhelms á Brakel, & possibly also Bernardus Smytegelt did believe & say that self-murderers surely are lost & are in hell. But many other theologians & pastors from the Reformation, such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Perkins; & from the Second Reformation, such as Gisbertus Voetius, William Ames . . . & many others refused to pronounce a judgment.

**g. Justification is not by works:** The issue is not can you do something so bad that it would keep you out of heaven, but the issue is this: is suicide such a horrific sin, as the last act of your life, that it is certain evidence that you never did truly trust in Christ alone as your Savior by faith alone?

**h. Justification is not by confessing every sin you've ever committed:** Some may believe you can't be forgiven for suicide because you can't ask for forgiveness for it, since you are dead. But we are not forgiven because we remember & confess every sin. We should confess every known sin, but again the issue is: does someone who commits suicide endure to the end, trusting in & obeying Jesus? It may be hard to know this with certainty.

**i. What do modern, faithful pastors/theologians think?: Grace To You:** It may be possible, but unusual; **John Piper:** There could be seasons in a Christian's life that things get so dark that they take their own life, but it's a terrible way to meet Jesus; **Ligonier Ministries:** Sinclair Ferguson & Derek Thomas: Suicide is not an unpardonable sin. Derek Thomas even says thinking like that is Roman Catholic theology, not the Gospel. Bryan Chapell (*The Hardest Sermons You'll Ever Preach*): Bryan Chapell (death of a friend of his who was a pastor): this man was saved; Wilson Benton (PCA Pastor) (death of a Christian leader): this man was saved; Michael Horton (death of a close, Christian friend of his): this man was saved: "Even if we are too weak to hang on to Jesus, He is strong enough to hang on to us." Rick Phillips, Tom Schreiner, & OPC position – Christians can commit this sin.

**j. My answer:** It's hard to be certain on this question, but I lean toward mercy. Let's trust Jesus with this, warn people, & pursue hope & joy in Christ!

Jesus gave His life for you, so that you would never take your own life, but find joy & hope in Him.

### **3. By God's Grace, We Must Fight Depression & Suicidal Thoughts**

**a. Remember the main things in life:** 1) The glory of God: Story: I wanted to die in the Navy: **Isa. 48:11:** My glory I will not give to another.

2) Your transformation into the image of Jesus Christ: This is the main thing God is doing in your life as a believer! Your pain, your suffering, your loss, your heartbreak & heartache is being used by God to make you more like Christ  
- **2 Cor. 4:17:** this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison  
- What about God's discipline? If it is discipline, God disciplines us only in love! **Heb. 12:6:** the Lord disciplines the one He loves, & chastises every son whom He receives.

3) Remember God's Mercy-Heart: Jonah, Moses, David's census; Hezekiah, Syro-Phoenician Woman, Peter

**Jonathan Edwards**: Resolved, to examine carefully, & constantly, what that one thing in me is, which causes me in the least to doubt of the love of God; & to direct all my forces against it.

**b. Trust & obey: Hymn**: Trust & obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust & obey!

1) The Word of God and prayer: a) We live in a fallen world & life is hard: the world is cursed because of sin.

- **Acts 14:22**: through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

b) Fight the good fight of faith with God's Word: **Ps. 13:1-6**: How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I take counsel in my soul & have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider & answer me, O LORD my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken. But I have trusted in your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

- **Rom. 15:4**: whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance & through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. [Hopelessness: single strongest predictor of suicide]

- **Ps. 34:10**: The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

- **Gen. 50:20**: As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good

- **Rom. 8:32**: He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

- **Rom. 8:28**: we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

- **Rom. 8:35-39**: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Isaiah 40; 2 Chronicles 20; **Mk. 9:24**: I believe; help my unbelief!]

- **Rev. 21:4**: He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, & death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. [Good books!]

2) Life is War: Army Coach Video: I'm gonna fight! Till I can't fight no more!

We are called to fight the good fight of faith! We are called to put on the full armor of God! We are called to bring our bodies under subjection & make them our slaves!

- **1 Cor. 16:13-4**: Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

- **2 Tim. 4:7**: I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

**Practical Tools For War**: Get enough sleep; Eat properly; Exercise; See your doctor; Work/purpose; Serve others

**c. You need the help & fellowship of the local church**: We need each other. I remember during a hard time in my life: you came to meet with me; you came to talk with me; you came to cry with me; you came to pray with me. You invited me over to your house if I didn't want to be alone. You were there for me. You spoke truth to me. You kept me alive! You were Christ to me! Matthew 25!

- One former pastor of mine, who didn't even know what happened to me, texted me on that hard day: "Praying you will find in the compassionate Christ the healing for your hurts today."

**d. Jesus is better – look to Jesus!**: Jesus knows more of suffering than all the world has ever known!

Come to Jesus! **Matt. 11:28-30**: Come to Me, all who labor & are heavy laden, & I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, & learn from Me, for I am gentle & lowly in heart, & you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, & My burden is light.

- **Francis Thompson's poem, "The Hound Of Heaven"**: All which I took from thee I did but take, Not for thy harms, But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
- **Katharina A. von Schlegel**: Be still, my soul: thy Jesus can repay from His own fullness all He takes away.
- **Garrett Kell**: God may take things that are precious to us to remind us that He is our greatest treasure. This mysterious kindness if no cruel, but a way He gives us more of Himself.
- **Ps. 73:25-26**: Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides You. My flesh & my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart & my portion forever.
- **Hab. 3:17-18**: Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail & the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold & there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.
- **2 Cor. 1:3-4**: Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of mercies** & God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Jesus died so that you will never die, but live forever!

Jesus laid down His life so that you might take up yours for everlasting life!

Jesus was a man of sorrows & acquainted with grief, so that you might have joy & be overwhelmed with happiness!

Jesus faced trials, anguish, & suffering like this world has never seen, so that now you might grow from all your trials & suffering to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ & someday have no more sin, no more pain, no more death, no more heartbreak, no more heartache, & no more suffering forever!

Jesus cried & sweat like great drops of blood so that you might never cry again – except for tears of joy!

Jesus was cursed by God, so that you will never be cursed!

Jesus was crushed by God, so that you will never be crushed!

Jesus was forsaken by God, so that you will never be forsaken!

Jesus endured the greatest pain, suffering, & loneliness, so that you will never feel pain, suffering, or loneliness again!

Jesus went to hell, so that you will never go to hell!

And Jesus rose from the dead, giving you absolute certainty that all this glory & delight is yours forever in Christ!

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Jesus gave His life for you, so that you would never take your own life, but find joy & hope in Him.

Christ Jesus Came To End All Depression

In Life The Pain Comes With Heartache Aggression

Hard Things Unexplained Can Come In Succession

The World, The Flesh, And The Devil Oppression

Sometimes You Just Want To Die In Suppression

But Christ Came To Die For All Our Transgression

Then Rose From The Dead Killing Death And Depression

By Faith Alone We Make Our Confession

He's Joy And Hope And Pursues With Aggression

He'll Chase You Down With Mercy Progression

Stay Close To His Church, His True Love Expression

Prayer And God's Word Will Guard From Regression

Say No To The Lies, Take Captive Oppression

He Prays For You Now And Makes Intercession

The Sadness Will End, You're His Love Song Obsession

He'll Make You Like Christ, You're His Bridal Possession

And One Day Soon There Will Be No Depression

For Christ Is Our All And Our Joy Obsession!