

“When Despair Captivates The Child Of God”

“Walking Through The Valley Of Depression”

Scripture For Study: II Corinthians 1:8-12

Introduction

The subject matter that I am going to discuss in this lesson is not just one which I have read about through my years of study, although I have spent over forty years of doing personal and family counseling as a pastor. It is also not a subject which I have heard other people talk about. But, the subject of depression is one which I truly encountered back in the year of 1997. At that particular time I was pastoring a large 10,000 member church with a tremendous amount of personal stress and a huge responsibility. Prior to coming to this very large congregation, I had spent eight years of my life building another church from 42 members to over 2,000 in membership. I had worked day and night for years without enough rest and without sometimes even stopping to meditate on the goodness of God. And, a few years before in 1993, I had a terrible vehicle accident in Uganda, East Africa in which one of my best friends and I were thrown from the over turning van in which we were riding. My dear pastor friend died in my hands with his blood all over me. This traumatic experience was the beginning of what later developed in my life into what is called clinical depression. Four years after the accident I learned that even as a child of God, I had not dealt with the accident properly, thus resulting in this horrible experience of depression. So, I want each of you that is studying this lesson to know that although I was never incarcerated as a prisoner in a prison, I was in bondage to the darkness of the soul. I never wanted to work, I didn't want to be around anyone, and it seemed that my life was over and I didn't desire to live. Yet, somewhere in the recesses of my heart I had to believe as a child of God that God would come through for me and bring me out of this seemingly hopeless situation. I am happy to report that four months later after much prayer, much counsel from Christian counselors, an enormous amount of Bible study, and after completely reorganizing my life, I was able to return to normal with the desire to live and to serve God the rest of my life. Yet, I must be transparent and tell you that I still sometimes battle the dark monster of depression, but the difference now is that I can see it coming and stop before I get into the valley of despair where I once was. So, I can tell you today that there is much hope for each of you that are in the valley of darkness, and that hope lies in the goodness and plan of God for your life. If you will study carefully this lesson and put into practice what I am going to show you from God's Word, God will deliver from this monster of depression and give you a purpose for living.

Although many believers in Christ believe that once a person gets saved and really tries to live in obedience to God, that person will never go into the valley of despair as a child of God. But, this belief is not true from the Bible standpoint. There are many illustrations of people in the Bible who were trying to following the will of God for their lives that ended up in times of depression and extreme discouragement. Let me mention just a few of these so that you will not feel that you are the only believer that has ever gone through depression if you indeed are presently saved and serving Jesus.

First, let me mention to you the great prophet Elijah in the Old Testament. In Chapter 18 of I King's, Elijah is on Mt. Carmel praying down fire from heaven and then destroying the prophets of Baal. Then, in Chapter 19, he is completely discouraged running from the wicked Queen Jezebel, and he ends up sitting under a juniper tree begging God to die. He feels all alone and has convinced himself that he is the only real prophet of God left in the land. He begins to whine and complain about his circumstances and ultimately falls asleep in a tired worn out body and spirit. God sends an angel to touch him, provide food for him to eat and water to drink, and then the angel of God directs him to Mt Horeb where he has a fresh encounter with the living God to renew his vision and passion for the work God has called him to do. This is truly an amazing story of a man conquering the despair that came to his life.

Another example in the Bible of a person walking into the valley of despair and depression was John the Baptist. John the Baptist was in **a horrible prison when he began to doubt that Jesus was who He had claimed to be.** This story is found in Matthew, chapter 11, and we find in this chapter that Jesus sent back John's disciples to tell him just to stop and reflect on the miracles that John has seen Jesus perform. This message of hope brought peace to John's heart and even prepared him for a terrible death. May I say that regardless of the difficulties that we encounter in life, Jesus will be enough if we will turn our problems over to Him. And, even if things don't turn out the way we would love for them to turn out, we still can have a peace in our lives that makes us trust God in spite of whatever we are going through!

The third example of a man of God going into the valley of despair was the great apostle Paul. Yes, you read it right! The apostle Paul who was one of the greatest men of God that ever lived yet experienced such valleys of depression the he even despaired of life. In this lesson I am going to use Paul as an example of one who shows us how to deal with depression and come out of it on the other side just like walking through a valley and climbing to the mountain tops beyond. I plead with each of you that study this material to pay close attention to how Paul dealt with His depression and the victory that God gave him. There too is hope for you. You must not give up and must never believe that your circumstances will never get better, even if you are incarcerated in a prison. There is always hope in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let's move ahead with our study and see how Paul dealt with his depression so that you can deal with yours.

I. NOTICE THE TRANSPARENT PREACHER. v. 8a

A. Notice the recipients of this transparency.

In the first part of this verse, Paul calls the recipients of his letter, "brethren". This means that they were probably believers and that they needed to know that as believers they too would experience many problems with despair because he as the founding pastor of the church in Corinth had faced many moments of despair and depression in his life, and as a matter of fact, he was going through tremendous problems at the time of this writing.

The amazing thing about this story was Paul's transparency about the problems he was going through. Having gone through depression myself for four entire months, I know that the natural thing to do is to refrain from telling people how you genuinely feel. But, this is not the way to overcoming despair. Although our Christian friends may sometimes break a confidence and tell someone else, or about what we are going through, it is still very important for a person in depression to share with a trusted brother or sister about their feelings and emotions during this time of darkness. To not share transparently with someone else will contribute to suppressing these feelings and enhance the problem. So, have you shared your feelings with some brother or sister that you trust lately? If not, you need to find one or two people to open up your heart, even at the risk of being hurt in the process. Just remember that transparent people become vulnerable, but the risk is truly worth the result.

B. Notice the reason for this transparency.

Paul says to the believers in Corinth that he does not want them to be ignorant of what he is going through. Now, why do you think that Paul wanted them to know of his suffering? Well, I believe there are several reasons. First, I believe that because of the problems that Paul was having with the Corinthians that they were contributing to his problems. Also, I believe that he wanted them to know that even a leading pastor sometimes needs the sympathy and empathy of those around them. Thirdly, I believe that Paul just needed to get his real feelings off of his heart as a therapeutic measure.

I would also like to say that Paul pulled no punches in what he stated because in his description of what he was going through, he implicated the people in the area of Asia minor where he had suffered so much. Some scholars believe that in this text Paul was referring to the suffering that he had endured in Ephesus that is described in Acts 19. This, indeed, could have been Paul's reference, but the obvious thing is that Paul was not going to water down the message for the sake of some guilty Christians who has contributed to his problem.

Now, how does this apply to you who are suffering with depression while locked up in prison? Well, it should remind you to become so transparent that you don't accept the blame for the hurt others have caused you, but you must make sure that you don't blame others for the problems you face, when you very well could have contributed to the mess that your life is in. So, you must

not accept the guilt for other people's sins, but you must be transparent and confess your own sins in order to be forgiven and to be set free from the suppression of super spiritual feelings which may have contributed to the depression to begin with. In other words, many times we as believers feel that it would be a sign of weakness if we admitted to others that we were in despair. Please hear this: it is not a sign of weakness to tell others that you are suffering despair regardless of how great a Christian you are. Remember we are studying the Apostle Paul, and he went through the valley of depression.

II. NOTICE THE TREMENDOUS PROBLEM. vs. 8b-9a

A. The problem included an intolerable squeezing. v. 8b

Have you ever felt like you just could not take any more? Well if so, you are in good company because Paul felt that way too. He just felt that if any more problems came his way, he would not be able to bear them. I can tell you also that as a man of God with over 43 years of ministry experience, that there are often times when I just don't think I can take any more. Either because of the unexpected spiritual warfare that Satan brings my way, or just because of all the every day bad circumstances that I face, I just feel sometimes that I can't go on. Yet, it is in these times that God gives me more grace and the strength to carry on. And, he will do the same for you if you will trust him.

B. The problem included an insufficient strength. v. 8c

Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that he had experienced a time when he had no more strength to go on. One of the symptoms of real depression is that a person is usually in a state of fatigue or tiredness. I know that when I went through depression, I had no energy and no stamina to carry on my work. I was constantly weak and I had to force myself to do everything I did.

If you are in a prison today, there are probably many factors that have contributed to your weakness and despair. One of those factors is that you are not always getting the right kind of food. Therefore, you need to ask your family or another friend to please bring you some better food so that you can nourish your body and mind. Another factor is that you are not getting enough physical exercise because of your restrained environment. Thus, you must force yourself to exercise all that you can because as you exercise your body, some little chemicals in you body will stimulate your brain and send feelings of rest and peacefulness to your brain. This is why that many people who go through depression experience a lot of difficulty in the mornings. Why, because they have been lying down sleeping during the night with no exercise of the body. Therefore, no stimulants have gone to the brain to stimulate the feelings of peace and pleasure. This is why that a lot of depressed people feel so bad in the mornings, but after they have been out of bed for a while, they begin to feel better because of the physical exercise. So, in order for you to overcome depression you must eat some good food and exercise a lot to regain your strength.

C. The problem included an intense sadness. v. 8d

In the last part of this verse, Paul told the Corinthians that his despair was so great at one time that he "despaired of life". I believe this means that Paul either had lost the desire to live, or that he actually thought he was going to die every day that he was in despair. Based upon what I experienced when I went through clinical depression, I would say that Paul had no desire to live and

truthfully didn't care whether he lived or died. He had decided that he would be much better off if he did die, but he also knew that life and death are both in the hands of almighty God. No one has the right to take his or her own life and put their friends and family members through the literal hell of having to live with the scars of a suicide in their family. I believe that there is no more selfish sin than a person can commit than suicide. Therefore, if you are thinking about taking your own life, let it go! Get it out of your mind because this is an attack of Satan on you and your family. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

D. The problem included an imposing sentence. v. 9a

In the first part of verse nine Paul said, "we had the sentence of death in our selves". This could very well mean that Paul was in prison at the time of this writing and he was not sure whether he was going to live or die. I am inclined to believe indeed that Paul was in prison in Philippi, and that he was not sure when the executioner would come to take him to his death. So, every morning when Paul arose from sleep, he was facing the uncertainty of the day before him. He did not know whether he would live or die, and yet, in the book of Philippians, Paul's central theme was having the joy of Jesus. Paul was a man that in his darkest hours he still could rejoice in his personal relationship with Christ.

Dear friend, every day that you and I rise to meet a new day, we are living with the inevitable fact that we are going to die. I am going to die and you are going to die. So, what shall we do? Well for sure, we must make sure that we have been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, and if we are saved, then we should live with no fear of the future because our future rests in the hands of the Son of God. We are promised that heaven is before us, and all of our suffering will be behind us when we see Jesus face to face. So, do not despair! Even if you are in a condemned prison, there is no need to despair because Jesus has the power over death, hell and the grave. Listen to what Jesus told Martha in **John 11:25-26**. "**Jesus said unto her. I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?**" There is no reason to fear death if we have Jesus Christ in our hearts!

III. NOTICE THE TIMELY PURPOSE. vs. 9b-10

A. The first purpose of depression and suffering is to bring us to a recognition of our inadequacy. v. 9b

In this part of verse nine, Paul tells the Corinthians that the reason God has allowed him to go through so much suffering is so that he will come to recognize that trusting in himself to get through the problems of this life is totally impossible, and it is totally foolish. Paul learned that regardless of how much education he had, how religious he was, even if he had a good job and was successful, he did not have the strength to face the darkest hours of life. And, may I say to each of you prisoners; neither do you. Maybe the reason God has allowed you to come prison is to put you into a situation where you are not allowed to do much for yourself in order that you might turn your focus off of yourself and get it onto Jesus. He alone can turn suffering into blessing. Remember the story of Joseph in Genesis? This is exactly what God did for Joseph. He turned what others ment for bad into something good for this great servant of God who was treated so unfairly. God will do the same for you!

B. The second purpose of depression and suffering is to bring us to a reliance upon God's sufficiency. v. 10

1. Paul understood that God had been sufficient in the past. v. 10a

In the first part of this verse, Paul states that God had been faithful to deliver him in the past when he was facing death. And, I can tell each of you that when we stop and look back in our lives, all of us can attest the fact that God has spared our lives so many times when we could have been killed or gotten into worse circumstances than we presently are in. He assuredly spared my life in the terrible accident I experienced in Uganda back in 1993, and he still has the power to protect us right now which is the next point.

2. Paul understood that God is sufficient in the present. v. 10 b

Based upon God's faithfulness in the past, Paul is confident that God was with him in the present. May I say to each of you studying this material, if you will stop and recognize the presence of God, you will discover that he is with you and that he has promised to never leave us according to the Book Of Hebrews. **In chapter 13:5-6, the scripture says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."** My beloved friend, you are not alone in the midst of your despair. Jesus is with you and you must trust Him to bring you through these dark days of your life.

3. Paul understood that God would be sufficient in the future. v. 10c

How do you know if someone is trustworthy and dependable? You know it by your experience with them in the past and your relationship with them in the present. This is why Paul told the Corinthians that Jesus could be trusted because He had brought him through many problems in the past, and He was with him in the present. And, Paul's trust in Jesus to help him with his despair in the future was based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which gave to him a hope even beyond the grave. If Jesus has been faithful to us in the past, if He is with us in the present, then, we know that we have access to His resurrection power for the future.

Just a note! During the four months of my severe depression, I thought that I was a total failure and that I had no future whatsoever. I was so low that even when I read the scriptures, they didn't mean anything to me. I was so low, that I felt that my prayers didn't even ascend above the ceiling. I also went for days without sensing the presence of God. And, it seemed that God was so far away although by His word I knew that He was nearby. And, during those dark days of my life, I often ask God why He had allowed this to happen to me. Well, my personal discovery in the darkness is worthy of mentioning right now. First, although I could not sense God's presence, I did know that He had promised to always be with me. And, then one day I suddenly realized that God would not be a very big God if He owed me (Stan Frye) an explanation for everything He allowed to happen to me. That thought changed my life! Who did I think I was that I would question the sovereignty of God in His plan for my life. I am talking about the God of the universe Who literally spoke everything into existence. Why would I ever question His will even to allow me to suffer? Therefore, I came to understand that it was all right to question "why" to begin with, but then I had to move on to ask "what" is God going to do through this terrible ordeal that He has allowed to happen in my life? The question was and still is, could I and can I still trust God although I don't understand everything that is happening to me? Let me proclaim from the house top that "yes", I can trust Him because He has never failed me in the past, is not failing me now, and He will not fail me in the future. Yes, I can believe that some good is going to come out of the darkness and that I will again walk in the light! Praise God!

IV. NOTICE THE TENDER PEOPLE. v. 11

A. These tender people are passionate people. v. 11a

The next thing we notice about how Paul the apostle dealt with depression was that he relied on the prayers of God's people. He knew about the strength that God gave to him through the prayers of God's people, and he realized that he would never be able to face the valley of despair unless he had God's passionate people praying for him.

These people were tender and compassionate people who themselves had known what it was to experience suffering and persecution. They were people that had been sharpened on the anvil or iron of hardship, neglect, and deprivation. These were people that could identify personally with what Paul had gone through and was going through at the very moment. Paul had stated earlier in this first chapter of II Corinthians that when God provides comfort in the midst of our trials it is so that we in turn may provide comfort for others who will experience what we have experienced. May I tell you that whenever you are provided comfort for your trials, there will come a time when you will be able to comfort someone else because of the lessons you have learned through it all. Take heart my friend! You are going to be an instrument in the hands of a loving God to help minister to others just because God has extended to you His gracious comfort through someone else.

I also want to tell you that when I was going through the darkest days of my deepest depression, I determined that I would never overcome what I was facing unless I stayed away from the very negative people who always look for the worst and discourage us by their skepticism. Instead, I searched for people who would give me comfort and compassion, but would not preach to me and use the Bible to beat me over the head. This helped me tremendously to ultimately become victorious over the valley of despair which I was walking through. I encourage you to do the same as well.

B. These tender people are praying people. v. 11b

As Paul sought out people to help him through his time of distress, he had learned to look for people who were devoted to intercessory prayer. These were people who were always thanking God on Paul's behalf because Paul was feeling very unwanted and unneeded at the time he wrote this letter. Praying people who really love Jesus are more apt to talk to God about you and your circumstances than they are to talk to you or to others about you and your problems. These are truly the kind of people you need around you when you are facing depression.

As a prisoner, it would be very easy for you to say that in your difficult circumstances and around a limited number of people that it is impossible to find these kind of tender passionate and praying people. But, I really believe that if you will pray and ask God to give you someone to help you, He will do just that. That person may be another saved inmate, or it might be a visitor from outside the prison. So, why don't you just ask God today for that someone!

C. These tender people are also positive people. v. 11c

I have already mentioned to you that when you are walking in the valley of depression that you need to avoid negative people. Well, let me mention to you again that Paul relied on positive people who would offer prayers on his behalf. These were people that were so positive that they were thanking God for the great things that God had done for them through Paul the founder of the church in Corinth. This was so important to Paul because he was feeling unappreciated and unneeded at this time. Why? Because the very people he had given his life to now

doubted that he was an authentic apostle. No matter what anyone says, we as creatures of good are so designed that we must have appreciation and feel wanted if we are to survive the terrible circumstances we sometimes face in this life.

Let me tell you that often time as a prisoner, you just don't feel wanted or appreciated any more. And, the truth is that many times when a person is incarcerated, that person does lose his or her dignity and worth. Yet, if we spend our lives identifying with praying and positive people, we should experience their gifts of encouragement which will remind of us of how much we have meant to them and we will readily know that we are appreciated. When we know that we are truly appreciated, then we will feel a sense of worth and self-esteem which is mandatory to recovery from depression. My question is , "With whom do you spend your time and hang out with?" The answer to this question will reveal to you whether you are on the road to a deeper despair or on the road to higher ground. I pray that you are hanging out with tender people!

V. NOTICE THE TRIUMPHANT PRODUCT. v. 12

What are the results of learning to deal with depression in the proper way? Well, I am convinced that there will be a life of triumphant living. Your joy will come back and you will be able to rejoice whether you are still in prison, or if God sees fit to set you free. You will discover that in spite of all that you have been through, God has just been working on you so that you will have been conformed to the image of His dear Son. You see, God is not through with you yet just because you are in despair. He still has a purpose and plan for your life.

So, you must not give up, but you must keep pressing on. Now, let's look at three great products that will come to your life if you apply the biblical principles that God has used Paul to lay out in this book of II Corinthians.

A. First, there will be a joyful life of simplicity. v. 12a

What does it mean to have a life of joyful simplicity? It means that you will begin to experience real joy in your life, regardless of your circumstances and regardless of what you have or don't have. You will recognize that the simple things of life are more important to you because your focus will now be on Jesus rather than things and even other people. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself, even if you are in prison, you will begin to recognize that life is about a personal relationship with Christ living in a simple way as much as you can. In other words, because of the victory that Jesus gives you, you will now begin to analyze your life to see how you can remove the clutter of broken relationships, bad decisions, selfish desires, and many other things that have resulted in your being where you are today. Do you have this joy yet? If not, get ready because Jesus wants to give it to you if you will allow Him to do so.

B. Secondly, there will be a joyful life of sincerity. v. 12b

In verse twelve of our text, Paul tells the Corinthians that a joyful life of simplicity and sincerity is only possible if we have a clear conscience. And, we can only have a clear conscience if we have become totally transparent with God and confessed every known sin in our lives, and if we have removed the pretension and hypocrisy that brought us to where we presently are. Let me ask you a question! Now be honest! Are you a pretender or hypocrite in any area of your life? Or have you taken off the mask and admitted what you really are? You see, a life of simplicity with joy in the Lord is not possible until you open up your life to God and to others and confess the phoniness that is in your life.

Maybe you need to stop your study right now and spend some time with Jesus becoming real and asking Him to remove your mask.

If you will, you are on the way to receiving a clear conscience which is the key to a life of simplicity and sincerity.

C. Thirdly, there will be a joyful life of submission. v. 12c

Now, this is the hard part! How can you experience the triumph or victory that Jesus wants you to have? Well, it starts with a complete submission or surrender of your life to Jesus Christ. You must give up control of your life to Christ just like you did on the day that you were arrested. Since you were arrested, the prison officials tell you when to go to bed, when to get up, when to eat, and when to take a bath. In other words, you no longer make the decisions about your life. That is the way it must be with surrendering to Jesus! You must take yourself off the throne of your heart and put Jesus there. You must take orders from His Word, and you must submit to His authority in every area of your life. The question is, "Are you willing and ready to do this?" This is the only way to a triumphant and victorious life. Do it right now!!

Conclusion

In bringing this study on dealing with depression to a conclusion, I want to share with you some very practical things to really help you get out of the valley of despair. What I am about to share with you, I learned through my four months of clinical depression and in the months afterwards trying to discern how I got myself into depression in the first place. You have a choice! You can pay undivided attention to what I am about to share and get on the road to complete recovery, or you can refuse to implement the steps I am going to share with you and spend the rest of your life trying to get out from under the dark cloud that hangs over your head.

Before I give you the steps that led to my victory from depression, I need to explain to you that depression is a threefold attack of Satan against an individual. This is true for the saved as well as the unsaved person. If you are not truly saved, you will never understand the steps that I am going to share with you. **So, you need to get saved right now by asking Jesus to come into your heart and forgive you for all of your sins, and you need to surrender to Him right now!**

The Bible teaches us that every human being is born with three parts: body, soul, and spirit. It is the body which makes us self-conscious. It is the soul that makes us conscious of others in our relationships. And, it is the human spirit that makes us God conscious. When Satan comes to attack us with deep dark depression, he always does in these three areas. Therefore, I want to show you how to analyze your present condition, in order to develop an agenda or plan of attack to defeat the depression that you are going through. Bear in mind, there is no quick fix for depression, but there is a process that you must begin, continue, and complete if you are to become well. So, here we go with the process. Study these steps well and then implement them in your life.

Step I-Body

Having read many books on depression, I have learned from psychiatrists and psychologists that depression probably originates in our brains when there is a chemical imbalance caused by a variety of factors. I will only mention those that I discovered had occurred in my own life.

How I diagnosed my situation- I began to think about and analyze the negative things I had done in my body that probably contributed to the chemical imbalance in my brain. First, I discovered that I had not been getting the proper rest for my body. I was going night and day in my ministry and refusing to stop long enough to rest. And, even when I would go to bed at night, I could not sleep soundly because I was so keyed up. Secondly, I was not eating the right foods because I was always on the go and therefore, I was not getting the proper nutrients and other things that I needed for my brain. And, I was eating and drinking a lot of things that were contributing to bad health. Thirdly, I was not getting the proper exercise for my body because by the time I came into my house

each day, I was already so very tired that I just could not walk or do other exercise. And, there was probably another factor that contributed a lot to my depression, and that was my low blood sugar which I had experienced for a long time. These were many of the factors that hurt my physical health tremendously.

My plan or agenda to restore my body-The first thing that I did to find a remedy for my bad physical condition was to consult a medical doctor. When I did, he gave me some antidepressant medication which helped me to snap out of the immediate depression so that I could start the long term agenda to bring back my physical health and restore the right chemicals to my brain.

Now, I know that when you are a prisoner in prison, it may be difficult for you to get the proper medication for your depression, but you can follow the plan that God gave me to restore my physical welfare.

First in my plan in addition to taking some medication was to start making sure that I got the proper rest. I began to go to bed much earlier each evening, and sometimes I would just take a Tylenol or panadol to relax me so that I could sleep throughout the night. I refused to stay up late like I used to.

Secondly, I began to get a lot of exercise by walking every day that I possibly could. I usually walked at least thirty minutes or more every day that I walked. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, the walking helped stimulate the chemicals that sends the pleasant and peaceful feelings to the brain. This helped me tremendously, and I know it help you as well.

Thirdly, I analyzed my diet and began to see that I needed to eat and drink better

and eliminate such things as caffeine and a tremendous amount of sugar from my diet. However, I know that in prison, especially in Africa, you don't have any choice about what you eat and drink. Yet, maybe you can get your friends or family members to bring you some good fruits or vegetables that will help your physical health.

The three things that I have just mentioned helped my health tremendously. I began to feel better about my self. I lost a lot of weight which was really hurting my body, and I began to feel so much better because I was getting proper rest, exercising, and trying to eat better. My energy level began to improve, my breathing became better, and even my brain began to function better. All of these steps helped me tremendously. I trust that they will for you as well.

Step II-Soul

As I stated earlier, the soul is that part of a man or woman which makes that person conscious of others around them. It is in the soul where our emotions are. The soul is the home for bad and good emotions such as anger, hatred, bitterness, guilt, fear, love, forgiveness, peace, joy, contentment, etc. It is also in the soul where we make decisions of the will which determine which emotions we will allow to control us and demonstrate to others, good or bad. Therefore, when we consistently harbor and suppress evil and bad emotions, the ultimate result is discouragement and depression. So, in order to develop a plan or agenda to overcome depression, one must analyze his or her soul to see what he or she is harboring or suppressing there. We will take a look at this procedure.

How I diagnosed my situation-When I was trying to analyze my life to discover what emotions I had harbored and suppressed in my life, I found many

things that I probably would never have admitted if I had not bottomed out in the valley of depression. So, in order to see the real me as I was, I had to be ready do handle some bad news. It was difficult, but God gave me the victory.

First, as I looked at my soul, I discovered that I had some bitterness toward my dead father that I had allowed to fester for a long time. You must understand that I always had respect for my father, but I never could get along with him. The reason this was true was because he was not saved until several years before he died, and because I could never do anything to please my father when I was a boy growing up. It made no difference what I did, I never did the project or errand in a good enough way to make my father happy. Therefore, I turned bitter about this.

Also, during my early years, my father never treated my mother very kindly. She was on her death bed dying when for the first time in my life, I heard him express his love for her, which is acceptable in the American culture. Then, I was bitter toward my dad because he never provided the spiritual leadership for our family that he should have done. Yet, I know that for many years he only had religion and not genuine salvation, and a lost man can't really provide spiritual leadership. So, my first discovery was bitterness toward my dad.

Secondly, I discovered in the recesses of my soul that I had bitterness toward God because He had allowed the accident in Uganda which I mentioned earlier and He had allowed the accident to take my best friend and cause me permanent injuries. I just couldn't understand why a loving God would allow this to happen, but as I discussed earlier, God taught me some wonderful lessons through all of this.

Thirdly, as I searched the depths of my soul, I learned that I had some deep seeded guilt over some things that I had done while I was a child, and although God had forgiven me, I had never forgiven myself. Therefore I had to confess the sin of disbelieving that God will forgive when He says He will.

Fourthly, during my investigation into my life, I discovered that I had some fears that I had never really dealt with. So, I had to confess these fears and admit to God that I was not nearly as secure as I had wanted others to believe. This was like stripping the paper off of a package to really find what was underneath. It didn't feel so good, but it help me to get healing.

So now, you get the picture of what you must do in order to get healing in the soul. I certainly did not mention everything that God showed me, but these are enough examples to get you started on your inspection. God is ready when you are to allow Him to turn on the light and reveal to you what you need to get rid of and confess even publicly what you have been harboring in your heart and life. Now, I want to move on to provide the plan for dealing with all of these things. This plan will be from my own experience as well. Keep paying attention!

My plan or agenda to restore my soul- I have already given you some insight into how I dealt with the problems I discovered in my soul: the seat of my emotions and will. Now, let me give you some particulars to help you really get to the bottom of your soul problems.

First, when I discovered bitterness in my life toward my father, I sat down and wrote my dead father a letter which I would like to have given him if he were still alive. In my letter, I confessed to him that I was so hurt by the way I could never get his approval. I also confessed to him that I didn't like the way he had treated my mom and the lack of spiritual leadership which he should have given our home. I finished the letter, but because I had no way to send a letter to

heaven where my dad was, I just decided to tear it up and throw it away after sometime. Now, why did I write this letter to my dead father? Because I needed to get the bitterness out of my life and bring it all to the surface of my being. I can tell you that it really worked and God gave me the release that I needed to forgive

my father. By the way, even in my letter, I told dad that I had forgiven him and that everything was all right, and that I looked forward to seeing him in heaven.

The second thing I did was to write a letter to God and confess my bitterness toward him because of the horrible accident in Uganda. This was a very hard letter to write, but while I was writing this letter, I did not have fear of God, but I actually sensed the Divine love that can only come from the presence of His Holy Spirit. After I wrote God a letter and confessed my bitterness, I kept the letter for a while and then destroyed it. My guilt in this area of my life went away.

Thirdly, when I dealt with the issue of me not forgiving myself, I went to the Bible and begin to read many passages on God's forgiveness and I came to the conclusion if God could forgive me, then I must forgive myself or else, I would be calling God a liar when he had promised to forgive me. Praise God, I was set free from years of beating myself up over not forgiving myself.

I would also mention that during this time of working on my plan for the healing of my soul, I discovered that I had an unforgiving spirit toward some living people, and I had to sit down and write them a letter of apology, or even go see some of these people in person. What a release God gave me when I finally took care of these matters and made these wrongs right. When I did, more healing came to my soul.

On and on I could go about how God helped to heal this part of my life so that I could come out of the valley of despair, but I believe you have gotten the message on how to start working on your life. Get with it and start analyzing your soul to see what you can find in it. You might even want to write the things down on a paper to see the list of things you need to deal with, one at a time. I did

this and it helped me immensely. I am sure that it will help you as well. I just can't wait to hear about the change in your life.

Step III-The Spirit

God has given to every human being a human spirit which makes that person God conscious. When a person gets saved, according to the Book of Ephesians, Chapter one, God's Holy Spirit comes into a person's life and captivates the human spirit and seals that believer until the day of redemption.

When Satan attacks a child of God with depression, it is usually because there are probes in the body, in the soul, and also in the spirit. When I was struggling to discover what in the spiritual sense had contributed to my depression, I discovered several things.

How I diagnosed by situation- First, I discovered that most of my Bible reading was more for sermons so that I could preached to others rather than allowing God to speak to my own personal heart and soul from His word. In this honest investigation I had to admit that I had failed to read the word enough for my own benefit.

Secondly, as I pondered my situation, I began to discover that most of my prayer time was intercessory prayers for others and requesting God to grant certain things on behalf of my ministry, rather than praying specifically for God to work in my life and show me what needed to be changed or improved in my spiritual walk with God. I can assure you that when I changed this area of my spiritual life, I did not like some of the things God showed me at first. But, as time went by and the healing process began, I really saw the benefit of what I was doing and what I had been missing before.

Thirdly, as I delved into the recesses of my spiritual walk with God, I uncovered the fact that there was absolutely no real meditation in my life, either upon the word of God or upon the blessings of God seen all around me. I had to admit that meditation was foreign to my spiritual experience. I trust that it isn't for you!

Lastly, I must confess that in my sincere endeavor to find what was wrong in me spirituality, I discovered that I was not cultivating and practicing the presence of God day by day and hour by hour in my Christian life. When I suddenly realized what I had been doing, my heart was broken, and I really began to see the broken fellowship that I had with Jesus. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that I really did need spiritual resolve and spiritual revival in my life as a child of God. I am sure that you will discover this in your own life if you become honest.

My plan or agenda for restoration of my spirit- What did I do to correct the problem in my spiritual walk with God? First, I began by confessing all my failures that I have just mentioned to you. I then received God's forgiveness for my personal negligence and I put a plan in place to solve my spiritual problems.

The first thing I did in my plan for restoration was to change the way I read the Bible. I did always have to study for sermons to preach to others, but God really began directing me to read through books of the Bible on a regular basis, and as I read, I found new truth just for me and my spiritual walk with God. You will find the help you need as well.

Secondly, the next thing I did was to pray more specifically for myself and ask God to really work in various areas in my life. Guess what? He showed me many areas that I needed help and improvement. He will do the same for you.

Thirdly, I began to make a daily mental effort to meditate upon passages of scripture, usually a short passage for each day. Also, I spend much time in meditating about the goodness of God that He has shown us in nature, in the universe, and all around me. This has truly changed my life and made me much more God conscious as I go about my daily walk with God.

Last of all, after God showed me what He did about failing to practice and cultivate the presence of God in my life, I started every day resolving to talk with God as much as I could all day long, to ask Him for intimacy each morning as I prayed, and since that time I have tried very hard to fellowship with Jesus in a very special way every moment of every day as my schedule of ministry will allow. This action has revolutionized my Christian life. If you will work on this in your life, I know that it will change your life as well.

Now, this very long conclusion really does come to a conclusion. I trust that all of the information that I have shared from the word of God in II Corinthians and in other passage, and also all of the facts from my personal testimony will sincerely help you to be delivered from the valley of despair. Just remember, there is no quick fix to defeating depression, but there is a surrender to a process that demands that you set up a plan of attack in these three described areas of your life.

One more note! While I was in the valley of depression, I read the book of I Corinthians over and over and over! There were days that I could not sense God's presence, but I did cling to His promises. Believe you me! God used His word and all of the other things that I have already mentioned to deliver me from despair. Yet, I still face battles with impending depression from time to time. The difference now is that I can see when it is coming my way, and I can stop before going to the bottom. I plead with all of you prisoners and spiritual workers to apply the principles personally to your lives if you are depressed, and if not teach them to others who are battling this terribly real monster. God is not through with you just because you are in despair, but He still has a plan and purpose for your life. May I say that the best is yet to come if you will study this lesson and activate the principles in your situation. My prayer is that whether in prison or on the outside that God would grant you deliverance from the slough of despond.