

Aspects of Depression

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[0 : 00] And we've talked about why we want to study depression. We've talked about how we should study it with humility and with kindness and with great care because it's complex.

It's complex because it's in that area where body and mind and spirit and all everything connects. It's complex because Satan is at work to confuse, to bring out lies, to confuse helpers and friends and family.

And it's complex because we're all different. And so while you might see something that's similar, you'll never see something identical. And so Proverbs 14, 10 says, each heart knows its own bitterness and no one else can share its joy.

There's a lot of wisdom there in that proverb to say, while we all experience joy and sorrow, there is something particular about each person's joy and sorrow.

And so our whole attitude should be one of humility, of slowness, of thoughtfulness, of great care. Because like Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says, we're dealing with persons here and we're dealing with souls.

[1 : 21] That means we should care about them. So quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry. So that's kind of what we talked about so far.

The crisis, the complexity. And now we're going to look at the condition itself. That depression itself. And we're going to look at it from five different perspectives.

Or how it touches five different areas of our life. We're going to talk about life situation. We're going to talk about thinking, feelings, bodily symptoms, and behavior.

Behavior. I'll give you those again as we go along. But those five different areas. Because it touches, it manifests itself in each one of those areas.

And so we're going to explore this condition of depression as we look at how it affects each one of those areas of our lives. Guys, we need to say three quick things, three caveats, before we get into those five areas.

[2 : 30] The first is, are all of those areas interrelated? Or are they separate parts of your being and they never touch?

Well, they're all interrelated. Our feelings and our thoughts go back and forth and affect each other. Our body and our minds relate to each other.

So we need to realize that if we're talking about one thing, it's going to have implications for every other part of your life. Number two, that's the first caveat.

Number two is the sequence that we're going to talk about them. The sequence that I gave them to you. Life, thinking, feelings, bodily symptoms, behavior. That sequence that we're going to go through them doesn't mean we're not saying that that's how it happens in depression.

First, you have a life situation. Secondly, you have thoughts. Third, you have feelings. Fourth, you have bodily symptoms. We're not talking about that these things happen in chronological order.

[3 : 36] They can definitely happen in the order that we're going to give them. But they can happen in the exact opposite order. They can happen in any particular order. Because, again, we're talking about something that's interrelated.

It's more of a braid than five separate things. Number three, we're going to spend most of our time talking about thoughts today.

Our thoughts. The reason we're going to spend most of our time thinking about our thoughts is that that's actually the area that we can have. We have the most control over.

That's the area that with God's help and with God's grace we can begin to work on. We want to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. There's not a whole lot sometimes that we can do about our life situation.

Obviously, there's some things we can do. But we rarely have much control about those sorts of things. And so we want to spend most of our time thinking about thinking.

[4 : 44] Because it's the area that we have the most access to and God calls us to work on. So, the condition. We're going to start very briefly with life situation.

Life situation. We're talking about. And it's so important to recognize God's providence in depression.

It's important to recognize providential changes in your life that can contribute or at least lay the groundwork or something to depression.

Or it can be the trigger. Or it could be at least an initial cause. There are providential changes that we all experience.

So, we can think about bereavement. Losing a loved one. A loss of job. Or a time of transition.

[5 : 48] That's another thing. I've seen, heard of cases where you're just transitioning from one part of your life to another.

And that added stress in your life can take its toll on you physically or emotionally. Financial difficulties. Things like that.

Stress. Sorrow. Takes its toll on us emotionally. Physically. And even spiritually. We're talking particularly about hard things.

Generally. But. This is so important to realize. There's a lot of wisdom here. It's not always hard things. It's not always.

Sometimes it's success. Sometimes it's great spiritual success. Sometimes it's great financial success. It's something like that. Any kind of success.

[6 : 45] Spurgeon in his lectures to his students. He. In this part of this lecture that I'm going to give a quote from. He's talking to students about when God uses us.

And amazing. Wonderful. Things happen. And things are going powerfully well. And. This is what he says. Poor.

Human nature. Cannot bear. Such strains. As heavenly. Triumphs. Bring to it. So we're not talking about bad things. Or difficulty.

Or you know. Real trials here. But heavenly triumphs bring to it. There must come a reaction.

Excess of joy. Or excitement. Must be paid for.

By subsequent depression. While the trial lasts. The strength is equal to the emergency. I don't think he means emergency in a bad sense. Just. While this great thing is happening.

[7 : 43] The strength is equal to it. But when it is over. Natural weakness. Claims the right to show itself. And he's speaking from experience.

When he had gone through great times. Of. Of God. Using him. In amazing ways. He said. I've noticed. I've noticed in myself.

I've noticed in other people. That while that's happening. We're carried along. God gives us energy. Spiritual energy. To go through that. And yet.

There could be a great physical toll. At the end. That has to be paid. I think he might be a little strong. When he says. It must be paid. By subsequent depression. But. He's saying.

You shouldn't be surprised. You shouldn't be surprised. Now. I know. Of. One pastor. Who God was using. In his church. And it was a time.

[8 : 38] Of. What we would think. Is almost revival. Twenty some people. Had been saved. And baptized. In a year. With more and more following. And. He started suffering.

Panic attacks. Out of nowhere. He never had experienced. Those sorts of things before. And. I think. This. That's what Spurgeon. Is talking about.

Because. Big. Life. Changes. Good. Or. Bad. Can. Powerfully. Affect. Us. And.

That's why. One of the first steps. In understanding. This condition. Especially. As it's connected. To you. Is. Talking to someone. Who's maybe. More objective. About this.

Than you are. Because. It's very easy. For us. To. Miss. The connections. Between. What's going on. Our lives. And then. Understanding.

[9 : 35] Well. That's why. I feel this way. We don't like. To see. That. Sometimes. Because. Let's be honest. We all like. To think. That we're stronger.

Than what we are. We like. To think. That. You know. We can handle. These sorts of things. Better than what we can. But. When someone.

Who's seen it. More objectively. Comes along. And says. Now. Look at. Look at what's been. Going on here. Look at what you've been. Through. This has been.

Too much. Or this is really. Hard. Or. We don't like. To see that. Necessarily. Because that shows us. That we're weak. And not in a bad way.

We're weak. Because we're creatures. We aren't God. We're not omniscient. We're not omnipotent. We're not omnipresent. We're very.

[10:30] Confined. We need. Small. Limited. Creatures. Whose lives. Affect. Our. Our. Hearts. And our minds. And our bodies.

And that's why we need. An objective. Person. Maybe someone more independent. Maybe someone. Outside of the situation. Who can. Who's. Who can see enough of it.

To give us some good. Advice. now there's other life situations to figure in as well when you're talking about this condition you need to think about age because as you age your hormones change your brain chemistry changes your physical abilities change your responsibilities grow and change the people that are looking to you generally gets bigger not smaller and so sometimes we could even have been carrying a load for so long that now we think of it as almost like this is just a permanent part of my life and we don't realize we don't take into account that I've been carrying this for so long and it's taking its toll now like I said I don't know about all of you but I do find it easier to see that in other people than to see it in myself it's easier for me to see the connections between life situation more clearly in others than in myself and so again this is so important to find someone outside of yourself to talk to you it might be a spouse but then again you know the spouse can be in the trenches with you so maybe it needs to be someone farther away so that's one part of the condition life situation so as you're thinking about depression you want to bring that in and factor it and then think about it number two and this is again where we're going to spend most of our time we're going to talk about thoughts false thoughts and this is a going to be a bit of a review we've already talked about a lot of these and so we're not going to give you

I'm not going to give you lots of examples these are things we've already talked about in our previous studies but what we want to think about is how does a depressed person think what are their thought patterns and what you're going to see if you could somehow record if you could get a VCR or whatever and record what how do they think how do they process life you're going to see that it's an extremely pessimistic almost fatalistic hopeless interpretation of all of life it's not that life is so terrible but that they interpret it and they think about it and they perceive it in that kind of way and when someone can get locked into the false interpretation this is where you can start to see this cycle downward from maybe normal sadness and rough times and then it's joined with this kind of continual oppressive kind of thinking that drives the person lower and lower and deeper and deeper until it becomes they really need outside help to get them out of it one person put it like this our perception of an event or experience powerfully affects our emotional behavioral and physiological response to it so how we perceive something happening powerfully determines and affects how we emotionally respond to it how we behavior how we respond to it in our behavior and how even our body responds to it so our perception our interpretation of the life events powerfully affects our emotions now that's really what the Bible says when it says as a man thinks in his heart so he is how a man thinks is going to have an amazing connection to what he is what his response is what he's like now again we can't do a lot necessarily to change the providences that we pass through but we can certainly change the way we think about them the way we view them and the Bible if you take it as a whole is one big argument for this kind of against this kind of despairing way of thinking you just remember after the fall God is immediately giving promise and there's all these promises throughout the Old Testament and then Jesus shows up or John the Baptist and then Jesus shows up and they're saying there's good news there's something very good that is happening that should drive away this kind of despair you can think of all those Old Testament verses or even the early parts of the gospel where it's saying the people sitting in darkness have seen a great light and so here we are we're on the other side of the dawn rising so the Bible is one big argument against this kind of despairing way of thinking but we want to look at it we want to think about it so we've already looked at some of these false thought patterns and our happiness study and we're not going to spend a lot of time on them but let me run through them and the first is false extremes we've already talked about this black and white kind of thinking where there's no sorts of shades of gray there's no nuance so you can think of

[17:02] Job's life let me ask you how did Job spend most of his life most of his life what was it like for him what did God do for him what's that under the great blessing of God God for years years and years and years but when he passed through a time of suffering so he's over here thinking God is good under the great blessing of God then he passes through that time of suffering and he swung eventually he got to the other side where he was thinking well God is my enemy practically and it's that black or white thinking I'm either a friend of God and life is great or I'm an enemy of God now there's no other considerations there there's no other possible interpretations there that's what we're talking about these false extremes

Job's friends were guilty of it and to a certain degree Job had thought that was thinking sort of that way so these false extremes it's all or nothing you need to guard your mind against that kind of thinking we want the Bible to guide us and the Bible is not way over here or way over here it gives you lots of nuance lots of ways of interpreting and so you need to avoid the false extremes false generalizations again we're looking at this is how a depressed person thinks and I just want you to put if you've never been there put yourself into this into this person's shoes and what would it be like to this is how you're thinking about all of life so false generalizations one thing happens and now you say that's it that's how it's always going to be that's how everything is that's how everything is so one thing happens and now you generalize it to that's my whole life now I can think of times when

I have done this when something hard and difficult is happening and emotionally and mentally I can go to that place of yep this is my whole life and it's wrong so remember Jacob he thought Joseph is dead and remember Simeon is captive down in Egypt and now this strange Egyptian is asking for Benjamin so a lot of bad things are happening right here do you remember though what his conclusion was what he said does anyone remember everything is against me now he is completely backwards but do you see the generalization there everything is against me was he remembering God's promises to him was he remembering how he wrestled with God and God and God gave him a blessing remember he slept and he saw it stairway to heaven but yet now everything is against him that's how a depressed person is thinking it's not just one or two things are against me everything is against me everything is against me terror is all around there's no escape all men are liars God has forgotten me I'm going to die that's it so this false generalization now imagine life is full of bumps but imagine that now every time you get bumped you start adding and you go to this extreme of now everything is against me false filter when we are depressed we tend to pick out the negative in every situation and think about that that's why we need others to come beside us a lot of the time and we need to help each other that's why we need a more objective person to really talk to us because this kind of false filter will destroy you where it's like the every all parts of life are coming at you and everything good everything true and excellent and praiseworthy all of those things get strained out and now you're left with just the bad and it can get that filter can get stuck and and then only the Holy

Spirit as he uses the word of God and other people can get it off and so I just watch out for those false filters of now all of life is bad then false transformation so we've had false filter false transformation and so here's where we transform neutral or positive events and we turn them into something bad into negative ones so a depressed person can't necessarily ignore good events but what he does or she does is they can transform them into something bad or they can disqualify themselves from it disqualify themselves so this is really important this is what makes it so difficult and this is why we need

God to help us so much is they usually don't necessarily argue that the gospel in a Christian situation they usually don't argue that the gospel isn't real or isn't true but they are convinced that it's not for them that somehow they don't qualify that they are the exception it and again it's not even a normal way of thinking it's almost like not even normal unbelief it is a kind of unbelief but it's almost more irrational than I choosing not to believe it they're just why are you the exception well I just am tell me why well I just am listen to what Richard Baxter said in his Christian directory this is what he says on this topic and you'll notice that they have this false filter on but then they also have this false transformation thinking going on this is what he says they read all the threatenings of the word with quick with lively sense and application so it's not that they're not reading the word of God it's not that they're opposed to reading the bad things or something they're reading the threats they're reading about hell they're reading about judgment and they can they have no problem applying it they have no problem understanding it but then he goes the promises they read over and

over without taking notice of them so they read the word of
[24 : 45] God and they're only seeing one part of the story so they read it over and over without taking notice of them as if they had not read them or else they say they do not belong to me the greater the mercy of God is and the riches of grace the more miserable I am that I have no part in them so they see the grace of God and they see the mercy of God and the more you talk it up they transform it into oh then how bad it is for me that it doesn't qualify I don't qualify I have no part in it and that's what makes it almost so difficult and that's what makes it and separates it from just spiritual discouragement the discouraged person is willing to consider encouragement the spiritually discouraged person can be encouraged with the truth maybe they've forgotten some of the truth maybe they need to rethink about it in a different way but they can be encouraged but this depressed person the sad situation is that they can find poison in the best food the gospel itself can get somehow transformed into something that makes them even sad sadder and again that's why it's difficult and that's why we need the

Lord's help in this so false transformation false mind reading again we talked about this before where I could tell what you're thinking about me I know what you guys are all thinking about me I know what you're thinking when you see me I know why you did what you did I understand what's going on here and so we can tell what others are thinking they really care for me but the reality is none of those conclusions have any sort of basis in reality none of them are supported by the facts and so the sad thing is instead of church being a help sometimes this terrible way of thinking turns the people of God into their perceived enemies and that's why they seek solitude that's why they want to be alone because they've so twisted things in their own minds that going to their brothers and sisters and being with the family of

God is instead of being with their friends it can almost it feels like to them like it's being with their enemies so everywhere and everyone is a danger and it's a false way of thinking it's a sad way of thinking and our minds and our feelings are not telling us the truth so we need help and we need to really call ourselves to task and say is that really what is going on false fortune telling so this is sort of like false mind reading except now I know what is going to happen in the future we expect catastrophe we look for it and then when all we see in the future is bad things are going to happen then it does produce hopelessness hope is good things are coming but hopelessness is nothing good is coming it's just bad is coming and then that kind of hopelessness it produces helplessness where I guess I can't do anything about it and it saps your energy and it takes you further down into inactivity and further down into despair then we have false feelings based reasoning now all that just says is where we reason just from how we feel about something and our feelings aren't even right false feelings based reasoning so

I feel this way I feel this way about my life I feel this way about the situation and so this is the way it is I feel this way so therefore that's how it is now emotions can accurately reflect what is going on in my life they're not lying to me all the time they can and they do accurately tell me what's going on in my life but the reality is in this fallen world with these fallen bodies with these confused hearts sometimes those emotions just get completely out of order so some of his low points David said this and he's talking about how he feels he's talking out of these feelings he says I am cut off from the Lord Psalm 32 32 22 in my alarm I said I am cut off from your sight so how is David feeling when he said in my alarm I'm cut off from your sight how is he feeling alone in my alarm what does that mean he's afraid so he feels afraid he feels alone and so he opens his mouth and he says I'm cut off from your sight God can't see me his fear determined what he thought was real I am cut off from your sight and that's just not true but that's what he's showing us is sometimes we can take our feelings and say yep that's what is really happening and a depressed person will do this invariably

[31 : 26] I feel sad I feel miserable and they're thinking therefore my life is that way it really is that way I feel miserable so my life must be miserable I feel sad so things are really sad I feel bad so things are bad I told you this before you've heard it from other pastors where some Mondays I wake up and I feel miserable and I just have to say that's how I feel things aren't bad things that's not how it really is I'm not going to act on my feelings I am going to ignore my feelings for now because they're just not they're not in order they're not right they're not jiving with what is reality so I'm not going to pay them any attention until they get in line so false feelings based reasoning then we have false should ofs and could ofs

I think we saw something of that in the movie we saw of Jenny she felt like she had to do everything a lot of it was I probably an idol of perfectionism and but it's also mixed in there with a real desire to

please the Lord a real desire to serve the Lord it's it's not a either or it's combined but here she is she felt like she had to be a perfect mom she she's this new pastor's wife and so she's thinking I have to do everything I have to be the woman Bible study leader even though I'm not really good at it but that's what I need to do and I think if we look at her sympathetically we have to say you know what she met well to a great degree she was trying to serve the Lord but she was really laboring under a wrong idea and so was her husband just because you can squeeze something into your life just because you can possibly shove it in there does that mean that you should well it's unrealistic God made us as limited creatures you just remember Martha got stuck in the busy busy busy and it upset her when she saw Mary doing so little but Jesus looked at everything and said Mary was doing exactly what she was supposed to do and Martha needed to to not be so busy and so there's that false should have false could have so you're looking back at your life and you say I should have done that or I could have done that or you take on all those should have and could have and they end up being more of a burden than you can bear then connected to that false responsibilities that's when we assume responsibility and blame for ourselves for things that are happening in our life negative things that are happening in our life when there's really no basis for that responsibility I think especially parents can do this I know I can do this now are we responsible for our children parents are we responsible yes are we 100% responsible are they perfect extensions of us do they 100% reflect us our actions our responsibilities and so when your child turns against the Lord and turns his back on the church is that 100% your fault no could you honestly say I could have done this I should have done this yes but they are their own people even the littlest ones are their own people with their own hearts turned against

God with their own wills with their own minds with their own thoughts their processing life their interpreting life their souls are having dealings with God they are not little robots that we can pour our programming into and so not everything is our responsibility now obviously we could go the other way and if you hear me saying they are not your responsibility at all then you just totally missed the point they are a responsibility but they are not perfect extensions of you ever not when they're young not when they're old and so that false responsibility where you think everything is your fault your job you have to make it better you have to fix it well that's doing more than what God has given you to do so we're running out of time when you are depressed all or many of these kind of thought processes are happening now they could happen before the feelings happen or they can start to happen after the feelings happen

[37 : 09] I'm not saying when this happens but this is how a depressed person is thinking this is how they get to that point so one of the first steps is going to be recognizing these things in your life or recognizing those things in your loved one's life and bringing the truth to bear bringing wise counsel to bear bringing understanding to bear we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds and so even if bad things happen we can receive them with a clear positive hopeful outlook that's full of the gospel controlled by the gospel this is where we need to start working or start getting help so very quickly we have to talk about the others we talked about life situations we talked about thinking patterns what else is part of condition well obviously feelings feelings are part of it it's the most noticeable part so how does a depressed person feel and the best way to describe it is overwhelming pervasive sadness now everyone feels sad from time to time life is hard there are losses normal sadness is a part of what it's like to be a creature in

God's image that is not necessarily depression even long feelings of profound sadness that are related to some very difficult thing that is not necessarily depression but the question is has it become overwhelming pervasive so is it marked by prolonged!

Bouts of unconsolable crying or perhaps if you're not a crier maybe nothing gives you pleasure anymore everything is bland it's possibly to be normally sad and yet still find some joy and part of your life but depression has this tendency to be a deadness to your whole life so no part of your life do you find joy or relief or peace or some sort of happiness but all you can think about are your sins all you can think about are your mistakes all you think about is just dark things or do you feel! angry you mentioned this men especially a common characteristic is irrational irritability and anger are you constantly on edge it's like there's no grease on the wheels everything is hot everything is grinding what about extreme anxiety or panic again I talked about that pastor who was going through a wonderful season of revival and all of a sudden he starts having panic attacks well the reality is he was a newish pastor he was the only full time pastor at his church he was not physically well on top of that he was not physically well at all and he starts having these panic attacks where

his fight flight or freeze mechanism in his brain is just switched on even though he's sitting there it's like you're going through a car accident even though you're just sitting there and I just want to say that's quite different from just general worry that's different from what I would say is normal sinful worry it's extreme it's irrational it's not really connected to some sort of life event and

I would say that that's a biological problem with a lot of spiritual ramifications and consequences and probably some spiritual dimension to it but again you can see if you have some of these false thought patterns and then you have sickness and on top of it and you're not taking care of yourself the this irrational extreme anxiety could happen do you feel like God hates you or is far from you as a Christian or maybe you knew his smile at one point but now it feels like he just hates you or God's word is dead to you or prayer is impossible or you feel cut off from God the Bible records characters who felt that way maybe not for a long time maybe for a longer time

[42 : 13] Job knew that feeling Jeremiah and Lamentations 3 1 through 3 felt that way and you can read that do you feel suicidal or wish you could just die and we're talking about feelings listen to Charles Spurgeon's commentary on Psalm 88 he felt as if he must die indeed he felt half dead already all his life was going his spiritual!

life declined his mental life decayed his bodily life flickered he was nearer dead than alive some of us can enter into this experience from many a time have we transversed this valley of death shade and dwell in it by the month together really to die and to be with Christ will be a gala days enjoyment compared with our misery when a worse than physical death has cast its dreadful shadow over us are good men ever permitted to suffer this indeed they are and some of them are even all their lifetime subject to bondage it is a sad case when our only hope lies in the direction of death how low the spirits of good and brave men will sometimes sink under the influence of certain disorders everything will wear a somber aspect and the heart will dive into the profoundest depths of misery again

Spurgeon asks are Christians do they ever experience that well Heman in Psalm 88 experienced it and Spurgeon knew what he was talking about bodily symptoms is our next thing I'm just going to have to go really quick the Bible mentions bodily symptoms like insomnia tiredness weight fluctuations digestive problems breathlessness bodily pain Psalm 32 and Psalm 38 describe the bodily consequences of what it feels like of true guilt but it can also be the same for those who are laboring under the result of false guilt your body doesn't necessarily experience false guilt or true guilt different your body feels the same depressed people often go to the doctor with unexplained physical problems thinking I have cancer I have something that's really wrong and nothing can be found then we want to talk about last of all behavior and just two points here first they stop doing things they enjoyed and were good for them like going to church being with family friends they stop things that were helpful to them and secondly they start to do things that make them feel worse so staying indoors drinking alcohol pushing people away shutting the door isolating themselves they're trying to get away and they don't do the things that they are good for them anymore

I just want to quote Spurgeon one more time and then we're done! If those who laugh at such melancholy did but feel the grief of it for one hour their laughter would be sobered into compassion resolution might perhaps shake it off but where are we to find the resolution when the whole man is unstrung the physician and the divine may unite all their skill in such cases and both find their hands full and more than full the iron bolt which so mysteriously fastens the door of hope and holds our spirits in gloomy prison needs a heavenly hand to push it back and when that hand is seen we cry with the apostle blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ the father of mercies and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our tribulation so here's where we're going to end and say what a sad situation but there's hope even in that situation because of who God is he's the God of comfort! the father of mercies and in him there is grace for sin and there is mercy for those who are suffering and so our hearts should be looking to God and saying open the doors bring in the light we're dismissed