

Was Jesus Depressed?  
The Nature of a Troubled Heart  
Introduction

This question has significance for our culture and especially for individual believers and for the Church. The answer may be yes or “let me think about it.” The question has significance because if Jesus, the sinless and impeccable One, was *depressed* and or subject to *depression* (please note the use of the verb and noun), then it must be reasonable and appropriate for the believer to follow His example. Following that line of reasoning, the thought process goes something like this: If Jesus had bad feelings, and He did, He must have been depressed because depression is bad feelings. Moreover, bad feelings are just part of *life*. Therefore, it must be acceptable for believers to be depressed. In this scenario *depression* is define as bad feelings. It indicates something a person is. He is in a state of being that involves feelings but so often overlooked are the person’s thoughts and desires. The word depressed is a verb and is used to indicate something a person is and does or doesn’t do based on feelings. The final conclusion would be something like this: since Jesus was depressed and conveyed His bad feelings to God and others, it is acceptable for believers to do the same.

Secondly, others may not have considered the question for any number of reasons. A third response to the question is a resounding and emphatic *no*. The person may find it ludicrous or even blasphemous to even consider Jesus as having *depression* or being depressed. Notice again the use of *depression* as a noun and *being depressed* as a verb. Why would someone respond in this latter way? As mentioned in the first paragraph, Jesus is the perfect, sinless Lamb of God. He was undefiled and blameless before the Lord. The *no* seems to indicate that the person views *depression* as either a less than biblical response to God and His control and even sin. You rarely if ever hear or read of depression as sin.

The way of reasoning outlined in the first paragraph represents a psychologized approach to man and his problems. It flows from the idea that actions are based on feelings rather than thoughts and desires. Feelings are considered unrelated to thoughts and desires and are unrelated to the person’s relationship with the Triune God. Many construe from Scripture that bad feelings, and perhaps even good ones, are to be a person’s guide. Moreover, there is a desire on the part of culture to justify the validity of bad-feelings states including *depression* as being a body-physical problem. From that foundation, conclusions are drawn about people including Jesus, David, Paul, as well as others. The attempt is to justify the culture’s approach to bad feelings (see 2 Corinthians 1:8 and 4:8 as a reference to Psalm 88:15 as indicating “Paul’s *depression*.” See my blog where I address these passages but I add here: Paul was down not out; he was not living by feelings although he had bad ones!).

In order to correctly address the subject of Jesus, bad feelings, and *depression*, I must give background information. In that light, please note that definitions and terms matter. Today, the term *depression* has been mined by the mental-health establishment and is used to refer to a person who presents with a myriad of symptoms most prominently bad feelings and a resultant behavior. It is important to know that a symptom is not a sign. It is subjective and determined by the person and then conveyed by description to someone. Feverishness is a symptom and is subjective. A sign is an

objective measurement such as temperature of 102 degrees (a sign). The person may complain of feverishness (a symptom) as well. The person who has been labeled as having *depression* may present with certain signs that are attributed to *depression*. These include an apathetic appearance, a droopy face, and slowness of or non-existent movement.

Medical professionals have established a list consisting of certain characteristics that they believe lead to and in fact establish a diagnosis of *depression*. The medical world has developed two questionnaires consisting of two and nine questions respectively. These are termed Professional Health Questionnaire (PHQ) 2 and 9. PHQ 2 is used for proposed ease; it is a “coned-down” version of PHQ 9. It consists of two questions: *Over the past two weeks, have you ever felt down, depressed, or hopeless; Over the past two weeks, have you felt little pleasure, or interest in doing things?* An affirmative answer to these two questions enables, in fact forces the health care provider, to make a diagnosis of *depression*. Please notice that the diagnosis is based on answers to questions. There is no objective diagnostic marker from the physical examination or laboratory used to label a person.

Let’s change focus slightly and move to a typical cultural, societal, and medical mindset about people and so-called *life*. The word *life* is viewed as things happening or not happening. “It is the way things are.” From a non-biblical perspective people are viewed as victims to and in *life*. They may be told that *depression* isn’t just feeling down. It is a disease not simply a condition. They may be told that feeling fatigued and having trouble concentrating and making decisions may be part of the feeling state called *depression*. The person is plugged into a treatment regimen including medications and psychotherapy. However, when biblical truth is inserted into the discussion the conversation takes a radical turn. The conversation focuses on the person and his thoughts and desires based on the standard of biblical truth. That is true freedom (John 8:31-32). I will develop this concept throughout our discussion.

Further, the term *life* refers to God’s providence, but neither culture nor medical science uses that term or think from a correct vertical reference. Sadly, churches follow that lead. Bringing God and His control into the picture is considered unscientific or unethical because it “steps-on-toes” and it mixes religion and *real* science.

Sometimes God is brought into the picture, but too often He is pictured only as a helper not the Lord of lords and King of kings. In my field of rheumatology, there are various journal articles that have over the years reported a high percentage (usually around 50%) of *depression* in patients with certain conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis. The death of a loved one is often associated with a high frequency of bad feelings commonly diagnosed as *depression*. This high frequency of *depression* is based on answers to questions to the PHQ discussed above. The person is considered is considered a victim to God’s providence.

Application:

1. What is the basis for a diagnosis of *depression*?
2. What is the difference between a sign and a symptom?
3. Name some of the so-called feelings states and what seems to be a common feature and does a person’s thinking/thoughts and desires fit into the picture?

Was Jesus Depressed? Part I  
The Nature of a Troubled Heart  
Introduction, continued

Let's move the person into the office of a medical professional. Once the person has received the diagnosis of *depression*, the person begins a journey, often lifelong, of drugs-medications, psychotherapy, mindfulness therapy, meditation, cognitive behavioral therapy and the like. In spite of therapy, most often the person experiences a merry-go-round of rising and falling feelings both good and bad. At times he feels as if he is drowning in a tsunami of feelings. The goal seems to be less bad feelings and presumably a better functioning person but at what and whose expense?

It is assumed that *depression* is a body problem not simply something going on in the body but something wrong *with* the body (see my books and articles that distinguish between *with* and *in* the body: *Depression Through A Biblical Lens: A Whole-Person Approach*; *Being Christian In Your Medical Practice*; *True Competence In Medicine*).

I use the term *in* the body to indicate activity in the body such as a rapid heart rate. The heart may be functioning normally (exercise for example), but the body is responding as it should. The problem is *in* the body. Physiological activity is in evidence, but the body is normal. The person may have exercised "to get shape" or he may be out of shape – deconditioned. The body though is otherwise normal. It is also known in the secular world and the biblical world that a person's thinking and wanting produces physiological changes in the body such as a faster heart and respiratory. Again the problem is *in* the body not *with* the body. If the problem is *with* the body, the heart rate may reflect a faulty heart valve or muscle or the patient may have a disease such as hyperthyroidism that makes induces the heart to go faster. In those instances the problem is *with* the body.

Let's go back to our person who tells you about bad feelings and often calls it *depression*. Begin with a biblical perspective. Engage the person in a conversation and simply ask questions moving from feelings to wanting and thinking. You move from feelings to thoughts and desires. When you do, you learn a great deal. The person will invariably define his bad feelings in terms of his thoughts and desires or wants. Thought and desires focus on control – having it or the lack of it. Feelings flow from thoughts and desires. Now you are stepping into the crux of the problem.

Too often, bad feelings are given more attention and validity than thoughts and desires. They are viewed as the driving force of a person and "improving them" is the goal of treatment. The person and the medicalized culture consider the person a product and a victim to and of his feelings. The person may claim that feelings drive everything and his goal is relief from them. Often he is told that he has a right to and deserves to have good feelings.

He and the mental community have failed to rightly understand biblical anthropology. The Bible teaches that feelings, thoughts, desires, and actions are linked. Feelings are the result of thoughts and desires and vice versa. Often the person has a patterned way of thinking and wanting that has preceded the present episode. The pattern and the episode that brought a diagnosis of *depression* are linked. Once bad feelings take center stage the person is told and often thinks on his own that something is wrong *in* the body and maybe even *with* the body (as noted, the two are not the same). Again, the

person seeks help that is usually defined as relief without effectively addressing thoughts and desires, the issue of control, and the significance of his relationship with God. Rather, the desire which has become a demand, for relief drives the person and relief is the main focus of the person, his family, and medical team.

Let's move to the Bible. I repeat a commonly overlooked and ignored fact. Biblically-speaking and practically, thoughts and desires are linked to feelings. The Bible teaches that the believer is to think God's thoughts and desire what God desires. As God's image bearer, Adam was designed and equipped with the capacity to do just that – to think, desire, and function as God Himself. Thus, any person but especially the person who carries the label of depression and those who have given him that label must consider the person's relationship with God. He does that by asking and answering questions regarding the person's relationship with the Triune God and how it influencing him. The trio of thoughts, desires, and feelings must not be separated. If any and all of them are divorced from biblical truth, a spiral of bad feelings results until the person seems to be drowning in his feelings. A cycle often results: thoughts and desires that are not met or are met in the *wrong* way (not acceptable to the person) influence feelings which in turn influence thoughts and desires. All three influence feelings. It is as if the person is held bondage to bad feelings.

I find it interesting that mental health professionals rely on other treatment modalities including mindfulness therapy and cognitive therapy. Studies indicate that people are "improved" – they feel better. How is that possible? Simply by changing thinking (perhaps even wanting) brings some kind of relief. Please note: changed wanting and thinking are part of the Holy Spirit's activity in the believer (Ephesians 1:15-20; 3:14-19)! All believers are called to change their thinking (1 Corinthians 2:16; 2 Corinthians 10:3) and to change their desires (Psalm 40:6-8; 51:6). Secular therapies are steeped in atheistic evolutionary philosophy derived from the Greeks and Middle East. They are competing with the Triune God. They have invaded the Holy Spirit's kingdom.

Based on this brief introduction (blogs I and II), I will begin to unfold the concept of bad feelings as applied to Jesus and then to believers. Stay with me!

Application:

1. What is your source of truth and why?
2. What is your view of thoughts, desires, actions, and feelings? How are they linked?
3. What does the Bible say about thoughts, desires, actions, and feelings?

## Was Jesus Depressed? Part II The Nature of a Troubled Heart

How do you help the person, or yourself, who has been labeled as depressed? A good place and even necessary starting point is the rational and the relational. By rational I am referring to knowledge. What is one's source of truth (rational). By relational I am referring to one's relationship to God in Christ by the Holy Spirit. How does his relationship with God affect thoughts, desires, and actions? In order to provide help I begin by asking the person to define *depression*. He may need help in doing so but bad feelings and resultant behavior are always described. You are then in a position to help move him redefine his definition of *depression* and to offer him true help. I also help the person define his thoughts and desires in the situation but also as a patterned way of life, even years preceding the present situation.

Most people begin to understand my interest in them and desire to help. However, these same people often say it almost impossible to swim against a tsunami of feelings. They don't believe they can think correctly or they refuse to address thoughts and desires. It is critical that they make the connection between thoughts and desires that proceed and influence feelings. I am careful to avoid the term *cause*. As I noted in the introduction, the situation (s) – *life* - is/are God's providence which is His control and ordering of all things for His glory and the believer's good (Genesis 50:15-21; Romans 8:28-29). The situation is the context in which the person demonstrates the influence of his relationship with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

The concepts just presented are foreign to many people especially those in the medical field and often in the Church. The key to a ministry of biblical truth whether from the pulpit or one-on-one is the presentation of biblical truth that is most relevant and appropriate given the person's willingness, maturity, and ability to hear and apply it in his present situation. Giving and receiving biblical truth is a privilege, blessing and an art. Truth is to be given in a manner that blesses the person and honors God. Godly living is one goal of ministering biblical truth. We must agree that truth will set believers free especially those drowning in feelings (John 8:31-32). Therefore, God's people must have truth at the ready and be wise in applying it in order to bless others.

Certain caveats are necessary. We must agree that God's word and Christ are truth (John 17:17; 14:6). All truth is biblical truth rightly understood and all error is Satan's error. Therefore, God's truth must be tailored to the person. Moreover, the deliverer of truth must model Christ in terms of presenting the truth. In that light, please note that there is a simple working definition derived from Scripture for feeling states such as those labeled as depression and worry. The person's focus is on control, his and not God's and on pleasing self rather than on pleasing God in the situation. Most if not all persons in the situation initially will disagree! As a result, the person gives in to feelings, expresses himself in various ways (such as anger and fear), and gives up on God, others, and responsibilities. Especially for *depression*, the person falsely pictures himself in his situation as if the tunnel is so long, the mountain so high, and the hole so deep that he is trapped and a victim. He is resource-less and hopeless.

As a brief aside: biblically, worry and concern are not synonymous. Rightly defined, worry is sin and concern is godly (Proverbs 14:8; 22:3). Worry is concern gone wrong. This dynamic is a subject for another time. Similarly, the Bible pictures fear as

fear of man and trust in self which is sin and foolishness and fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom and part of godliness. Fear is also a subject for another time. There is no such leeway with depression. Many will deny this fact citing personal experience and claiming harshness on my part.

From such passages as Romans 8:28-29 and Genesis 50:15-21, it is always proper to present God's truth with care to the believer in his situation. The passages as well as others highlight God's power, authority, and control and His goodness. However, these passages present theological truths that are "heavy" given the person's view of God, self, others, and the situation. They must be handled with care. God and the person deserve it! By that I mean when faced with "hard times" and unpleasant situations – God's providence – the believer may refuse to hear and even reject the truth about God, His providence, and himself. He thinks that he can't process it. The Triune God wants believers to use the situation as an occasion to please Him by becoming more like Christ which is one of the best activities and blessings this side of heaven.

Application:

1. What is your view of truth and how are you applying it?
2. Read Romans 8:28-29 and Genesis 50:19-21:
  - a. What is your view of Romans 8:28-29 and Genesis 50:19-21?
  - b. What truths does Paul highlight? Be specific.
3. How are you preparing yourself for pleasant and unpleasant times?
4. What is your view of bad feeling?

## Was Jesus Depressed? Part II, Part A Proper Anthropology is Critical

Return with me to the person who presents with bad feelings and his response to them. More than likely he has been diagnosed with *depression* and is often on one or more medications. Enter truth, your source of truth, and your confidence in using that truth .

An overriding truth for every believer is the reality of his status as a *becomer*. Biblically (our source of truth), every person is a *becomer*! The believer is unique: he became a believer and one who is becoming more like Christ supernaturally (John 3:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:9). Scripture pictures every believer to have been chosen by the Triune God in Christ for salvation and for life after salvation manifested as growth in Christ by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:4; Romans 8:28-29; 2 Corinthians 5:9, 17). At a point in time, the soon-to-be believer becomes a child of God, a brother to Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This radical change occurs at the person's rescue from Satan's kingdom and family (Colossians 1:13). As a result of his initial becoming, he is also a *becomer*. That which was begun at salvation will continue on earth and into heaven. The believer is to become more and more like Christ, the only person with whom God was well-pleased (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). One aspect of the truth that sets a person free is growth in Christlikeness. The Triune God expects, deserves, equips, motivates, and guarantees growth in Christ. The agency of the Holy Spirit is essential for this growth. He never works for or against the believer. Rather, He works in and with the believer (Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:5-10).

You might be asking: why so much theology! What does that have to do with bad feelings called *depression*? The answer is EVERYTHING. Stay with me! The person, including the believer, labeled as depressed (a verb) or *depression* (a noun) will find it hard, claiming it to be impossible or non-desirable to become more like Christ. He bases his conclusion on his feelings and situation divorced from God's perspective. However, God's goal for the believer - for him to become more like Christ - is not terminated or hijacked by circumstances (God's providence!). Rather, they are God's tool to be used by the person to help promote growth in Christlikeness (Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-8). In order to help the person with bad feelings, we must determine the source of the bad feelings and the person's response to them. The two are linked but so often this linkage, as well as the linkage between thoughts and desires, is ignored and or denied.

It may get trickery here. The medical world wants to blame feelings states on the material and physical. They do know that thinking influences feelings and vice versa. They parade out a myriad of scans depicting changes in certain areas of the brain. I address this subject later with Jesus. Man is a whole person – inner (heart) and outer (body) man. The brain is part of the physical body. Changes in brain physiology as opposed to anatomical changes are to be expected in people during hard and easy providences of God. From Romans 6:6 (*For we know that our self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done with that we should no longer be slaves to sin*). A changed heart is the most powerful weapon that the believer has to live by saving faith rather than sight and to live according to biblical truth rather than feelings derived from a wrong view of God, self, and life.

A fundamental consideration for a proper evaluation of thoughts, desires, actions, and feelings is a proper view of man. Since man was created God's image and a whole person, we must remember that man is a duplex being. By duplex I mean he is a united twofold, being: outer/body and inner/spiritual. Man has a body, but he is not only body. He has a soul/spirit, but he is not only spirit. Rather he is a whole person. Therefore, thoughts, desires, and actions are whole-person activities - outer and inner man. The Bible teaches that man thinks, desires, and acts in both his inner man (terms in the Bible include heart – the most common - mind, soul, or spirit) and in his outer man – his body. We must avoid the sacred-secular dichotomy and the physical-spiritual dichotomy. The Bible teaches that man thinks, desires, and acts in both the inner and outer man, his body including the brain and the heart or man's spiritual aspect. Unfortunately the secular knows this fact so well that they use it in such activities as cognitive behavioral therapy. Therefore, the whole person must be addressed when addressing bad feelings states which are reached by learning thoughts and desires. I will continue elaborating this impotent truth.

#### Application

1. Review the biblical teaching that man is a unit: inner and outer man function as such.
  - a. Agree or disagree and why?
  - b. What is the significance that man is both body and spirit?
2. How does knowing that man is a unit help you be a blessing to someone who complains of bad feelings?
3. God is interested in His people becoming more like Christ. How do feelings fit in?



## Was Jesus Depressed? Part II, B Proper Anthropology is Critical

Medical science so often believes and teaches that feelings, often termed emotions, originate in man's body, his outer man only. All is physical. Some go as far as teaching that the brain is man's moral compass. It is interesting to note that there is no term for brain in the Old or New Testaments. It is considered part of the man's body. It is physical. If the brain, not the heart or man's inner person is the seat of man's motivation, thinking, wanting, and morality, the Holy Spirit has no place to work. The Bible teaches that man thinks, desires, and acts in his whole person – body and soul. The Holy Spirit regenerates and indwells man's heart (John 3:3-8; Romans 8:9, 11; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 3:16-17). However, medical science teaches that feelings are only physical in their cause and in their continuation. A few may venture out and say feelings are spiritual. By spiritual they use a small "s" referring to man's mystical connectedness to something both inside and outside of him. They have no place for the Holy Spirit. Others view feelings and emotions as something to "get in touch with." I don't know how to do that, but in the best light this approach may be getting at thinking.

Those who conclude that feelings are physical and originate in the body assume that something is wrong *with* the body (the body is the problem) and not simply something wrong *in* the body (the body can be influenced by the inner man and the outer man can influence the inner man). The medical establishment uses this rationale for the use of medications even though nothing pathological has been determined to occur in the body including the brain. This fact is in spite of so many neuroimaging studies that have been done. Blood flow change and metabolic activity in the brain have been reported but the significance of these changes are far from clear. Also correlation and causation are not synonymous.

All feelings are physical – they are felt. Please remember that God created man a sensual being. He takes information in by his senses including touch and the nerve receptors associated with it. Man is a faith-based being which influences his interpretation of that which he experiences and considers real. Biblically-speaking, there is a connection between the inner and outer man. It is not anatomic but we know from Scripture that we are to guard our hearts because it- not the brain - is the wellspring of life (Proverbs 4:23). In some way, a person's inner and outer man is linked. Inner-man activities of wanting and thinking affect outer-man activities of thinking, wanting, and doing and vice versa. Medication affects the outer man but has no effect on the inner person.

Man was created a sensual being with a nervous system that is divided into central (brain and spinal cord), peripheral (nervous system in skin and muscle), and autonomic (that control heart, lung, and gut for instance). As noted above, man, initially at creation and continually after creation receives information through the senses – he has a sensual experience - and interprets that information both in his body, typically the brain, and the inner man (the heart). Medical science denies this fact. Moreover, the Bible teaches that man is a receiver, interpreter, and implementer of that which he receives. The term feeling must be defined. You may feel a pinprick or heat. The neural message flows along nerve fibers. I am not speaking of this. By feelings I am referring to a whole-body experience of pleasant or unpleasant feelings. These feelings and their intensity are the result of thinking

and wanting about self, God, others, and God's providence. Control, real or perceived and God's or the person's, is a central issue for all feelings.

Bad feelings may result from wrong thinking and wrong wanting in both the inner and outer man. Even if bad feelings originate from some bodily defect (an anatomic or physiological defect), the root of and response to the feelings still must be addressed biblically. This means evaluating the whole person – thoughts, desires, and actions in both the inner and outer man from God's perspective.

Too often, in an effort to help a person with bad feelings, people begin with the person in his present situation and fail to consider his patterned response to God's providence throughout his life. An important biblical truth (more theology!) regarding mankind is the simple but profound fact that every person born (except Jesus!) has a self-centered and patterned lifestyle and mindset that he carries with him and brings to every situation. Until a believer, the person is a self-pleaser. Some may deny the fact that the baby in the womb is a self-pleaser by nature. Nevertheless every person is born a rebel against God and is a self-pleaser (Psalm 51:1-5; Romans 8:5-8; Galatians 5:16-18; Ephesians 2:1-3). The bad news is much worse than most people like think. This has relevance for ministering to people who carry psychological labels. Moreover, the good news is much better than most believers understand and care to acknowledge!

The believer, as a changed person, is now a becomer. He is called to put off his lifestyle of pleasing self, pleasing Satan, and enjoying sin. He is equipped for and called to put on God-pleasing which is growth in Christlikeness. This growth takes the form of functioning as a God-pleaser in thoughts, desires, and actions. The believer will heed Jesus' call to deny self what he wants and even demands by pleasing God (Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:23; 14:27; John 12:25). Armed with these theological considerations we are ready to move ahead! Stay with me!

#### Application:

1. Armed with a proper biblical anthropology, how will you address bad feelings no matter the diagnosis by the medical profession?
2. What biblical truths do you for yourself and for the other person to help you get victory?
3. Think through how the information presented in first blogs may apply to Jesus as well as to you. Write out what you learned.

### Was Jesus Depressed: Part III Jesus the God-Man and His Troubled Heart

Jesus at Lazarus' death and resurrection and His time in the Garden of Gethsemane are perfect occasions to examine and answer the questions raised in the opening blogs. These occasions are documented in John 11 and the Garden incident which is documented in all the Synoptic gospels (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46). The account recorded by Matthew and Mark is similar. Luke's account is shorter but includes Jesus' sweating of blood, a single time of prayer, and the presence of one ministering angel. What do we learn?

All the accounts use strong feeling words to describe Jesus in His situation. In John 11:33, 35, 38 we find words that are translated as *deeply moved* and *greatly troubled*; *wept*; and *deeply moved*. In Matthew 26:37-38 and Mark 14:33-34, the Holy Spirit has the gospel writers use terms that are translated as *greatly distressed and troubled* and *soul that is sorrowful*. In Luke 22:43-45, Luke adds that *an angel from heaven appeared to Him strengthening Him and being in agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became like drops of blood*. What an experience at two different times in Jesus' life! The words as a group indicate an inner-man upheaval, a churning and a stirring up within, whole-person angst and anguish. These would qualify as describing trouble and Jesus' response to it. This description includes an inner-man component and a physical, outer-man component. Jesus was fully man – inner and outer man.

One may say that Jesus was experiencing a tsunami of feelings. To correctly understand the Holy Spirit, we must look beyond the feelings and ask what drove Jesus throughout His life and at this moment. What thoughts and desires gave rise to the terms used to describe His response? Should believers imitate Jesus' response? Was Jesus' response normal and if so by what criteria and standard do we use? Was Jesus depressed?

We must define normal and a key word in helping us do that is defining the word *experience*. The term *experience* is used two ways; one is the person's response to what God is doing and the other refers to what God is doing as He governs His world and all His creatures. The first refers to the results of a person's response to God's providence. The second encompasses a larger context and the word indicates the situation that a person finds himself or God's providence. It refers to the situation that a person is placed by God. God may use the sins of others or the person's own sins as the means for the person being in the situation.

When the term *experience* is considered as the person's response the term involves a whole-person response which we discussed in earlier blogs. In a fallen world sinners even saved ones experience misery and hard times. John Murray called these God's frowning providence. God's providence may include the good, the bad, the ugly, and not so ugly in a person's life in a sin-cursed world. The believer's response to God's providence is a response to God. Again some may consider this is "heavy" theology. Moreover, the truth of the Holy Spirit declares that the experience or situation doesn't determine a person's response. It is the context for it. The person including Jesus is not a victim. These last points are most crucial.

The inner-man anguish of Christ should get our attention. He was fully man who thought, desired, and acted in the context of God's providence – His situation. He

thought God's thoughts, desired God's desires, and acted according to both. He trained Himself (Hebrews 2:10; 5:7-10). Jesus responded to His situation in both the inner and outer man. You, too, believer will have or have had situations in which you experienced inner-man anguish and turmoil as you responded to God in your situation. These responses don't just happen. They began sometime somewhere. They were practiced over months and years. They reflect thoughts and desires in the inner man. The response may be associated with bad feelings – a trouble heart (John 12:27; 13:21; 14:1, 27). Each of the words – thoughts, desires, actions, and feelings – is critical. God's tough providences – hard situations - are part of living in a sin-cursed world (John 15:18-21; 16:31-33; Romans 5:12-14). Even the creation groans as does the Holy Spirit and believers (Romans 8:19-27)!

Christ's anguish that we read about in the gospels was something only the God-man could experience. We could add Jesus' laments over the Jewish people God's covenant people documented in Luke 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 23:28-31. Jesus knew what was in store for the nation if there was no repentance. He knew what His cost was to secure salvation for a people who rejected Him. As He anticipated going to hell on the cross, His whole inner person properly recoiled. Throughout His life, He was preparing to face the cross and separation from God. We get a glimpse of the Son's inner –man angst and what precipitated it.

People both believers and unbelievers, at some time experience inner-man angst and bad feelings. But too often we want to equate our experience with Christ's or read from Christ's experience into our own. Rather the experience is not the key but Christ's response in terms of motivation, thinking, wanting, and doing (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). No person will leave heaven, take on flesh, hide the privilege of being recognized and worshipped as God, and face the devastating wrath of God as Jesus did. What made Jesus tick? He had a right perspective on Himself, life, and God.

Application:

1. After reading the John 11 and the account described in the Garden, what is your view of Jesus' feelings, thoughts, desires, and actions?
2. What controlled Jesus and why?
3. What motivated to continue His course to the cross?

## Was Jesus Depressed: Part IV Jesus the God-Man and His Troubled Heart

We know from Hebrews 4:15 (*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are - yet without sin*) that Jesus is the believer's High Priest par excellence. The author seems to draw a parallel between Jesus' temptation and believers. We must be careful here. Redemptively and as the humble Lamb of God, Jesus faced the eternal wrath of God and entrance into hell while on the cross. That is not us. Rather, Jesus as the High Priest experienced the fullness of the weakness of the human condition and man's fallenness but without sin. Often times this truth seems to be a theological truth that is not helpful to the person in his situation. It seems too theological and does not make sense or thought applicable to the individual person. "It is OK for Jesus but not me," one patient told me. The author of Hebrews, a book whose theme can be summarized as - *Jesus is better than* - thought it foundational for his congregation to have correct theology. His congregation was facing/experiencing God's tough providences. Facing persecution mostly from their own people, they were on the verge of returning to Judaism and calling God a liar (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31). Any and all truth is as important for us today as it was for that congregation.

Returning to Hebrews 4:15, the word in the original language translated as sympathize is the compound word *sumpatheo*. Jesus did more than simply feel for us or like us. Please notice the root of the original word is the well-known word *pathos*. The root highlights the experiential aspect of Christ's humiliation. Please note that humiliation and humility are not synonymous. Humiliation is best considered the person's situation and experience – God's providence. Humility represents the person's response to his situation. Christ's humiliation was the position He placed Himself! He voluntarily left heaven and took on a body. He also humbled Himself which is another matter. A person can experience humiliating circumstances but not be humbled. Jesus left heaven, set aside for a time the right to be worshipped and honored as God, and took on human flesh and the continuing temptation for self-pleasing and covenantal unfaithfulness. Jesus knew and still knows what it is like to live by feelings, experience, and logic divorced from God's wisdom. The use and reliance upon this trio is a result of the fall. They are the guiding standards for fallen man. However unlike fallen man, Jesus came to do His Father's will and to function as the ultimate God-pleaser (John 4:31-34). Along the way continually He was challenged to serve Himself. In response he relied on biblical truth (see Matthew 4 and Luke 4 and His response to Satan's attacks).

The word translated *weakness* in Hebrews 4:15 is *asthenia*. This word means lack of strength and even will. The unbeliever functions by the mantra of for self, by self, and to self. Unfortunately because of remaining sinfulness and continuing self-pleasing habituation in the whole person, the believer also functions in the same manner. The author of Hebrews emphasized Christ's complete identification with mankind except without sin. Jesus knew what it was like to be tempted to please self. This temptation presented itself daily and regularly almost moment by moment. Jesus' perfect and successful ministry consisted of His covenantal faithfulness to the Triune God's agreed upon plan established in eternity past (John 6:37-43). In this way the Holy Spirit and Jesus was preparing Him for His time in the Garden of Gethsemane and the cross.

Moreover, Jesus understood us - our desires, thoughts, and actions especially when faced with unpleasantness and adversity (God's providence). The temptation to use His power and authority for Himself was always before Him (Hebrews 2:10; 5:8). Jesus knew what it meant to experience the fullness of the weakness of fallen humanity. He knew what it meant because He was tempted to please self in lieu of pleasing God (Matthew 4; Luke 4). Such was one aspect of His Messianic ministry. Daily and regularly, He was faced with the choice between covenantal faithfulness and pleasing the Father or of unfaithfulness and pleasing Himself. Throughout His ministry, the ever-looming question was: would He fail as the first Adam had? Would He fail as the nation of Israel had failed? The answer was and still is a resounding NO!

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Bible records a once-for-all experience of the God-Man. The magnitude of what was happening is simply mind-boggling and beyond human comprehension. Unless your thinking is Holy-Spirit motivated and guided, you won't be able to begin to grasp what was occurring in the person of Christ.

Jesus is not just a man. He is the Man. He is pictured in the psalms as God's man who could ascend the holy hill and dwell delightfully and completely in God's presence (Psalms 1-2, 15, 24). King David had insight into that fact. He knew there was a greater David (Psalm 110). Jesus is Savior because He is God and man - one person and two natures. There is no change, conversion, or confusion of either of His natures. Only God could save; only man sinned.

If Jesus never faced, felt, and received the wrath of God and its burden, unsaved sinful man would be left to his own thoughts, desires, and feelings and the inability to lift up himself. On this earth, unsaved mankind would be consumed by the mantra: *I must have*. He would function in some capacity as his own hero of sorts. After death, unsaved mankind would be in hell and its eternal torment.

Christ's work differed from any other person. In Gethsemane, He faced God one-on-one. He looked into the eye of His Father - a God of justice, wrath, and righteousness. He was about to suffer the full penalty of sin as the covenantally-faithful Sin-bearer. He was preparing for the ultimate sin-bearing - forsaken by the Father and going to hell on the cross. Yes, Jesus had inner-man anguish, turmoil, and bad feelings. His soul was troubled. Was He depressed? NO! As such he is the One believers can and will imitate owing to the indwelling Holy Spirit.

#### Application:

1. What is consequence and significance that Jesus identified with fallen man?
2. Jesus' inner-man angst was a result of what?
3. What was His response?
4. How did He distinguish between "feelings" and the situation? On what basis did He make that distinction?

## Was Jesus Depressed: Part V Troubled heart: Inner-man Turmoil and its Reasons

This is a continuation sixth in a series of blogs devoted to answering the question: was Jesus depressed? I chose Jesus because no one has experienced (see previous blog for a proper definition of the term *experience*) such a wave of inner-man turmoil and anguish. Some may think that they have but I have labored hard to show this is an invalid way of thinking. However, as believers we are to imitate Christ – thoughts, desires, and actions which are linked to feelings and vice versa. Christ has gone through the waters of God’s hardest providences and won the race because of the joy set before Him (Hebrew 12:1-3). That joy is the joy of ever believer: the bliss of being in the presence of God initially on earth via the indwelling Holy Spirit and in heaven eternally. Believers are not only called to imitate Christ, but they are united to Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit making the believer fully equipped for imitating Christ not simply as duty but as privilege and blessing (1 John 3:1-3).

We will focus on Jesus at Lazarus’ grave and Jesus in the Garden in order to answer the question: was Jesus depressed with all its implications. From the start, I have set out the importance of defining terms. Otherwise people will bring into the Bible the culture’s mindset and terms and use them to redefine biblical truth. As a result, biblical truth and the Bible’s message are distorted and people are confused.

Before we proceed to the Garden let’s reconsider chapter 11 of John's gospel. In it, John records Lazarus’ death as a preview of the cross and Jesus' response to God's judgment, sin's penalty and misery, and God’s solution. Jesus was deeply moved, but He did not shed His blood then. You know the story. Lazarus had died and was in the grave for four days before Jesus arrived. Jesus delayed His arrival on purpose which is given in John 11:4: *so God would be glorified*. That statement summarized Jesus’ motivation for and to life as the Messiah. He came to please His Father and do His will – the two are linked (John 4:31-34). Jesus considered His life and death as the fulfillment of the Triune God’s plan of salvation from eternity past (John 6:37-43; 17:1-5, 24-26). Jesus always had the proper focus. He saw His mission through the completion of it and the end results – the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:1-3). He lived in the *already*. He was actively engaged in His mission all the cross but beyond – all the way to heaven. The *not yet* partially took place at His Ascension, but a greater *not yet* will occur at His second coming. He stayed the course, in part, because He always had an eternal perspective in mind. His focus and motivation were away from self and toward God and toward heaven (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Upon approaching the scene, Jesus encountered the results of the curse of sin: misery and death. The people were grieving perhaps hopelessly. Jesus pointed Martha and ultimately Mary to the resurrection and resurrection life (John 11:25; Romans 6:9-11). He pointed to Himself! John used four different words to express Jesus’ inner-man angst (see Part III). Jesus was *moved within* – *stirred up* and *in turmoil*. The content of Jesus’ anguish was the fuller realization of the magnitude of the eternal plan of salvation. Jesus’ focus and motivation centered on the Triune God’s concern for the people, for the Father, and for Himself. The content of His inner-man anguish should not be missed. Jesus began vertically – with the Triune God and His presence, purpose, plan, power, provision, and plan. He then moved to the His role in accomplishing that plan. He looked

over the carnage – death, misery, and inner-man angst of the people. He also knew the people were not armed with the same truth that He was. They grieved with hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

He knew and anticipated the coming of the horrors of facing the full wrath of God. But now in a real sense, the scene at Lazarus' grave acutely pointed to the cross, God's wrath, and separation from the Father. Simultaneously Jesus knew the other side of the cross: His resurrection, ascension, and session. This dual view enabled Him to link His grief with joy (see John 16:20-24). He grieved as one with hope. Paul taught this truth in 1 Thessalonians 4:13. Christ modeled grieving God's way. He modeled the *what* and *how* of a troubled heart (John 12:25-27). His response to and in the situation was not dictated by feelings; it was based on His knowledge of Himself and the Triune God. It was based on His relationship with the Father and the joy of pleasing Him. Jesus had feelings, but these were based on thoughts and desires. Such it should be for all believers. Jesus kept these truths and developing realities at the forefront of His heart (John 6:37-43; Hebrews 12:1-3).

Let's change the scene. In Gethsemane, the gospel writers pictured Christ coming face to face with a soon-to-be fully received tsunami of God's just wrath. Who could stand under it? Jesus above all others understood God: His jealousy and zeal for His name AND the horror of separation from God. This knowledge and proper understanding of it seemed as if an avalanche of boulders of God's wrath was crushing Him. Therefore, rightly He cringed in anguish before God. His heart was rightly troubled.

Back at Lazarus' grave, Jesus had a foretaste of the Gethsemane and the cross but without the shedding of His blood. In the Garden, Jesus first spilled His blood before God before He shed it before men (Luke 22:39-46). At the cross, He spilled His blood so all could see the perfect Lamb (John 1:29, 36). John pictured Jesus as coming to grips with the full wrath of God. Jesus would soon go to hell on the cross - forsaken, humanly-speaking a truly hopeless and miserable state. Yet He went. Words don't adequately describe the fullness and reasons for the inner-man anguish of Jesus and His response. His desire to please His Father was greater than His desire to please Himself. Feelings were not His guide. Such it should be for believers.

To the people at Lazarus' grave and at the crucifixion, Jesus was a loser. John pictured Jesus as one who was beginning to experience the significance of a real hell and real separation from God as every believer's substitute. You and I, to properly understand Jesus' responses at Lazarus' grave and the Garden must understand the reality of hell, God's perfection as Just Judge, and Jesus' all-consuming desire to please the Father and complete His task. Jesus knew in a comprehensive and penetrating way that it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). Yet that is what He did by divine choice and plan!

Did He have bad feelings? Yes. Was there inner-man angst? Yes. Was Jesus depressed? No. On what basis do we say that? He did not give in to feelings. He knew their source and He knew the antidote for depression (as well as worry), which was to trust and obey as a blessing and privilege (John 14:1-2). The joy of pleasing His Father was His food and drink (John 4:31-34). The content of His anguish was founded and bathed in biblical truth. It cost Jesus to please the Father and complete the work set for Him. Jesus' focus was on completing the mission and His motivation was pleasing the Father.



Knowledge, hope, and trust led to joyful obedience and form an unbroken chain. Armed with this, His control was not an issue. Jesus knew the Triune God was in control. Moreover, Jesus knew His origin, identity, purpose and destiny. His vertical relationship controlled His response to God's providence, to the Father, and to others. Not His will but the Triune God's will be done. It was duty, yes, but more: privilege and blessing for the Triune God and His people. So it is a blessing for every believer today (1 John 5:3). A proper view of self, God, and God's providence is one of the Bible's antidote to living by feelings, to grieve God's way, and to have a troubled heart God's way.

**Application:**

1. What is your view of John 11 and the Garden?
2. What do you learn about God, Jesus, and yourself?
3. John 6:37-43 and Hebrews 12:1-3: how do these passages help you rightly view Jesus in the Garden?
4. How does Hebrews 4:15 influence you as you respond to God and His providence?

## Was Jesus Depressed? Part VII At the Grave and at Gethsemane

In recent blogs I have addressed the question: was Jesus depressed? I raised the question for several reasons. One, there is a tendency to move from the culture and its definitions and labels to the Bible and impose the cultural mindset onto the Bible. Two, the question raises the possibility that a person could approach bad feelings as any other medical condition. Three, if Jesus, the impeccable One, was depressed then it is not sinful and reasonable and expected for any believer. Moreover, bad feelings could be used as a reason for a feeling-based lifestyle. Four, concepts and treatment follow the Medical Model. It presumes that some organ, tissue or function of the body is pathologically abnormal and the cause of the patient's complaint. There is a physical reason for any symptom. The Bible is not necessary or it can be used only as an adjunctive tool to gain good feelings.

Following the medical approach and imposing the culture's usual definition of *depression*, you could conclude that Jesus was depressed and that Paul was depressed as well (see 2 Corinthians 1:8-10; 4:8-10).

Previously, I considered Jesus at Lazarus' grave and in the Garden of Gethsemane. We learned that these accounts are replete with what I call "feeling-laden" words (John 11:33-35, 38; Matthew 26:37-38; Mark 14:3-34; Luke 22:44-45). These words indicate inner-man angst, an unrest, and agitation and distress within. John in his gospel used similar words to describe Jesus as one who was troubled within and who directed His apostles to cease from their troubled heart (John 11:33; 12:27; 13:21; 14:1, 27). John paints the picture that the apostles were their own heart-troublers (14:1).

The presence of a troubled heart rightly understood and defined is not sinful because Jesus' heart was troubled! Jesus taught this truth in John 14:1, 27. There was unrest and angst in the apostles which was leading to a sinful, troubled heart. It was the night before the crucifixion. The apostles were faced with the real possibility that Jesus would be removed from them. They faced hostility and danger. From their perspective, uncertainty was the order of the day. For them, Jesus was about to be a loser and they as well. Yet they stayed the course although they sinned along the way.

Jesus experienced a troubled heart throughout His life but especially in His last days (John 11:33; 12:27; 13:21). In the Upper Room discourse, among other things, Christ was setting the stage for His death, resurrection, and ascension. That was too much theology for the apostles to grasp at that moment. The Holy Spirit had not come officially. John records Jesus' perspective on His situation and inner-man response as Jesus counseled Himself: *Now my heart is troubled and what shall I say?* (John 12:27). He continued this theme in John 14:1 (see next paragraph). The cross and separation from God was looming larger and larger on the horizon. Jesus had declared – counseled Himself - that He was not turning His back on the Triune God Who had purposed in eternity past to save a people for Himself. Jesus moved forward armed with truth. He did not give in the feelings. He was covenantally faithful. He counseled Himself with truth based on relationships!

In John 14:1, Christ gave a simple yet profound command based on truth and not feelings: *Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust in me* (John 14:1). In the original language Jesus tells the apostles to stop your troubled heart. Their hearts were

troubled in the wrong way and it was continuing! Jesus could easily have said: *be troubled in your heart as I am*. There is a correct way to have a trouble heart!

Jesus in John 14:27 (*Peace I leave with you; peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled and do not be afraid*) gave the same command. Please notice. The words to the apostles are not suggestions. They are commands. Jesus expected His apostles to obey in the hardest of times. In verse 27, Jesus adds the gift of His peace as a motivator for stopping an inner and outer-man activity. Basically, Jesus told the apostles to “see” with the spiritual eyes of faith and not the physical eyes of sight (2 Corinthians 5:7, 9). The Triune God was in control and that was the best thing for Him and for them. However, the apostles were focused on other things and how they were or would be affected. Self had taken center stage.

Circumstances seemed to dictate to the apostle a contrary response for them in contrast to what Jesus had graciously commanded. Bad feelings, circumstances, and confusion about what they knew were their guide. They had ears and eyes, but at this point they did not hear or see properly. Jesus did not leave them! He kept His promise thus imitating the Triune God who held Him up. Jesus knew the end and that proper knowledge led to hope and trust which moved Him along His journey to the end God’s way for God’s glory.

Jesus’ words were not devoid of cognitive activity. They were “thinking” words immersed in the desire to please His Father. Jesus, Paul, and you are whole persons - thoughts, desires, actions, and feelings. These activities occur in both the inner and outer man. Jesus and the Father met in the Garden prior to the once-for-all forsakenness on the cross. As Luke points out, Jesus first shed His blood before God prior to the cross as He prayed (Luke 22:44). Throughout His lifetime, Jesus had been preparing for the cross by putting off self-pleasing and putting on pleasing the Father. He relished pleasing God and practicing covenantal faithfulness in the so-called little things as well as bigger things. Nothing was bigger than the cross. Jesus was prepared and yet His inner man angst was palpably and audible. Do you feel and hear it?

I repeat: Jesus had made it a habit of pleasing the Triune God. His motivation and His focus were on completing the Father’s will. Christ’s motivation to please the Father and complete the plan developed in eternity past was magnificently displayed at Lazarus’ grave and in the Garden. Christ was focused on the joy as well as the burden of pleasing His Father. He knew that satisfaction in this life and the next would come only if He finished the race well. Now, Jesus was coming face to face with the fullness of God’s wrath. Yet faced with a choice, Jesus was more consumed with an overwhelming desire to please the Father. Jesus had trained Himself well. Still the preparation for this time and the total acceptance of God’s wrath is beyond all human comprehension except the God-man’s. His prayer in the Garden expressed His proper vertical orientation - knowing God and His will and the willing obedience to it in order to please His Father. This proper reference sustained Him all the way to the cross. Jesus counseled Himself throughout His life but especially at this time. A troubled heart cannot remain. It does not please God and it is not a blessing for the person. It suggests bad theology. Rather, a proper view of God, Himself, others, and God’ providence enabled Jesus to put off self and put on pleasing God. Jesus was not depressed when the medical and secular world would say He was!

**Application:**

1. Experiences - everyone has them. They come from God's hand. How does that truth affect your thinking and wanting?
2. Feelings – everyone has them. They are linked to thinking and wanting. How is it possible to please God in spite of feelings?
3. Apply John 4:31-34 to the Garden and the cross. What do you learn about Jesus at the beginning of His ministry and at the end?
4. What was the difference between Jesus' ministry before the cross and on the cross?

## Was Jesus Depressed: Part VIII The Cross

Jesus on the cross expands our understanding of Jesus and His Messiahship. On the cross, the fullness of Jesus' mindset is displayed. His ministry was continuing and intensifying! Interestingly, His inner-man angst was much less evident or at least the gospel writers don't mention the angst until the time Jesus is ready to commit His spirit to the Father (Matthew 27:46, 50; Mark 15:34, 37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30). Jesus was the Victor before, on, and after the cross!

On the cross, Jesus ministered to His people because He was focused on pleasing His Father. It was as if He had settled the inner-man distress/angst in the Garden. As I have mentioned previously, He knew His origin, identity, purpose, and destiny. These four facets of life seem to be the preoccupation of the philosophers. Jesus answered those clearly and definitely. He knew the way home –it was through and by the cross. Jesus' words on the cross were a further demonstration of His commitment to pleasing His Father and completing His ministry. He ministered to His mother and to John the apostle He loved (John 19:25-27); to the thief (Luke 23:43); to those who would be saved at Pentecost (Luke 23:34); and to believers in all ages to come. On the cross Jesus certainly had an aching and decaying body. But we get no indication that His heart was troubled to the point that He gave in to feelings. He had something much more powerful and secure as a guiding principle.

As Jesus neared the end of His life, He asked why the Father had forsaken Him. We know that as God Jesus knew. We also know that as the God-man there were things that it was not His prerogative to know or to communicate to us (Matthew 24:36). A map of the future with every detail made known would place the person on a par with God. And God shares His glory with no one (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11)!

Further, knowing the beginning, the end, and everything in between would be a hindrance to developing active, informed, and intelligent faith, But in this case, I suspect Jesus knew full well the answer (Matthew 27:45-46; Mark 15:34). Consider that from the time Jesus left the Garden, He was in full control as evidenced by the fact that He ministered and only then did He give up His spirit (Matthew 27:50); it was not taken from Him. He did not die a martyr or a victim. He breathed His last (Mark 15:37), and He committed Himself to the Father (Luke 23:46). In a last act of covenantal faithfulness, Jesus declared to the whole world: *it is finished* (John 19:30). The eternal plan of redemption had reached one great climax. His Resurrection and Ascension pointed to the second installment of the *already* His first coming was the first instalment and prelude to the consummation of the *not yet*: His second coming which would user in the new heavens and the new earth.

One reason for Jesus' continual God-pleasing activity is given in Hebrews 12:1-3: Jesus endured/persevered in covenantal faithfulness for the joy set before Him. His joy consisted in pleasing the Father and returning to the right hand of the Father as the Lord of lords and King of kings. As a result, Jesus is the Author and Perfector of saving faith for His people (Hebrews 6:18-20). His return would complete the circle of life that John mentioned in John 6:37-43 and in 1 John 4:7-12. Those gifted to the Son and received by the Son would be returned to the Father (John 6:37-43; 17:1-26).

Believers imitate Christ (trust and obey) when they are directed by the knowledge of who God is, who they are, and what Christ has done for them. Christ's work consisted of living and dying perfectly and His resurrection, all as an expression of His covenantal faithfulness. Jesus did not give in to His feelings. He tethered them to His relationship with His Father and He used the fact and knowledge of His relationship to please His Father and gain victory for us. So, too, is every believer to function from the vantage point and gift of a living, vital relationship with the Triune God in Christ by the Holy Spirit. It is the believer's duty, privilege, and blessing to imitate Christ and enjoy the joy of doing so. Only the believer can begin to understand what these last words of Jesus signified. The cross is foolishness for and to the unbeliever but for the believer it is the wisdom and power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21, 24). Jesus was not depressed! He was busy pleasing His Father. Had His heart been troubled? Yes. Was He depressed according to the culture's definition? No. Did He live by feelings? No. He had bad feelings, but their origin and His response to them were tethered to thoughts and desires.

No one, believer or unbeliever, will come face to face with the Living God as Jesus did until Judgment Day. Until that day, only the believer can begin to understand and appreciate God's providence. Only the believer can be troubled within God's way. Only he can use his troubled heart to assess himself in terms of knowledge, hope, and trust. Only he can trust God's way for God's glory (John 14:1, 27).

We don't want to miss the significance for everyday living. Living by feelings, good ones or bad ones, would have diverted Jesus from pleasing His Father. He had them, but He relied on biblical truth and its application via the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:1-5). Jesus used God's providence for what it was intended: to please His Father thereby paving the way for believers to look toward the cross throughout his life (1 John 3:1-3). The application of biblical truth always trumps using your feelings as your guide. By definition, Jesus was not depressed.

#### Application:

1. In a feeling-oriented culture, good feelings are exalted and even sought. Bad feelings are to be removed. What are some of the methods of getting good feelings and removing bad ones?
2. How does Scripture picture man as a whole person?
3. How are feelings related to thoughts, desires, and actions?
4. Sensual living is not necessarily sexual living. God designed man to take things in by the senses. However the believer relies on a proper grid – biblical truth – to interpret what he sees, hears, touches, and tastes. What is your interpretative grid for what you bring in by your senses?

## Was Jesus Depressed: Part IX

*I am Thirsty.  
It is Finished!*

*Depression* is an ongoing topic in almost every aspect of the culture. Pundits say it is a physical problem in its origination and in its course. It is considered a brain problem and medical science has gone to varying lengths to convince others. They also speak of the symptoms of *depression* (not signs which are objective and verifiable but symptoms which focus on the subjective). People with *depression* as a label speak of their *depression*. It considered personal – they own it. Some biblical counselors debate on the use of medications and the proper use of the Bible.

Certainly bad feelings are felt in the body and can become the overriding preoccupation of a person and the medical personnel taking care of the person. We live in a fallen world, our bodies are under the curse, and everyone is a sinner (Romans 5:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Therefore, bad feelings are unavoidable. It is important to remember that the person diagnosed with *depression* has at least two major concerns: bad feelings and relief. The cause of the feelings and the response to them are of no or only a minor concern.

Pundits tend to talk about *depression* rather than the person and they emphasize a "just is" aspect of life and *depression* and they focus on "triggers" and "stressors." Actually "triggers" and "stressors" are God's providential control in the person's life. A response to them is a response to God and His control. Two predominant themes occur in the literature: something outside of a person "causes" a person to feel a certain way. When the feeling is "bad" the person is diagnosed as having *depression*. I repeat the term refers to feelings and the person's response to them, but the latter is often unrecognized. A second theme addresses origin. It is assumed that bad feelings arise spontaneously. The idea seems to be that bad feelings just are. In the first instance, there seems to be no thought as to how something outside of a person can "cause" bad feelings. The person is considered a victim to that which is outside of him and even to his own body. In the second instance, a patterned response is not considered to be important. Moreover, a person's self-identity, his worldview, and his reference to God and himself are not given serious consideration in the genesis or perpetuation of bad feelings. It is vital in helping people who have been labeled with *depression* to understand that bad feelings have a source and that they are expressions of the person's thoughts and desires.

Consider two of Jesus' sayings that were recorded in John's gospel: *I am thirsty* and *It is finished* (John 19:28, 30). These sayings occurred at the end of Jesus' life and are a continuation of His singular motivation for being on earth: He came to earth to please His Father which was through covenantal faithfulness which moved Him to the cross and beyond. Certainly what He experienced as the God-man was mind-boggling. Much has been written regarding the physical distresses and tribulations of Christ's crucifixion. As I have written, Jesus was a whole person throughout His life: inner (heart) and outer man (body). In the Garden, we only know what Jesus desired and thought based on the four gospel accounts. How was it possible for Jesus to keep focused? A logical question follows: focused on what? Was He simply enduring the cross in order to get it "over with?" Was He hanging on and accepting His "plight"? Was He simply coping, trying to get by? What motivated Him? What was happening to His "chemical

neurotransmitters" and other neuropeptides and molecules in His body? What would an MRI of His brain have shown at varying periods of His life especially at Lazarus' grave, in the Garden, and on the cross? The Bible does not tell us. We don't need to know! We have enough information to minister to God's people. Was Jesus depressed? If not, why not? Please remember, terms must be defined. Which standard will you use when you speak of *depression*?

Consider the words of Jesus recorded in John 19:28: *Later, knowing that all was now completed and so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, I am thirsty.* Notice the order of words. Jesus knew something. Jesus' troubled heart was anchored to truth – about Him, God, and His mission. Therefore, feelings were subject to God's thoughts and God's desires. The concept of completion (the word in verse 28 and *finished* in verse 30) played a major role in Jesus' thoughts and desires. He ran the race as the Winner and never as a loser. Jesus went to the cross as the Victor and He died the Victor. Jesus was always on schedule - God's and His. He kept on track.

What did Jesus know? How did Jesus know "it" was finished, complete, and perfected? What was the "it" that was complete? The questions and the answers are critical. Scripture does not tell us how Jesus knew it was complete. Yet loud and clear John proclaims to the world that Jesus knew it was finished. This knowledge ushered in Jesus' words: *I am thirsty*. Notice the reason given in Scripture for these words: that Scripture would be fulfilled or accomplished (Psalms 22:15; 69:21). The Scriptures spoke about and explained Christ as Christ explained the Father (Luke 24:25-27; John 1:18). These sayings by Jesus on the cross were a most fitting declaration and the first installment of the Triune God's design, love, justice, and mercy. Jesus Christ, the Living Water and Life, experienced physical thirst and physical death so that His people would never go thirsty spiritually and would live forever with the Triune God. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit would follow at Pentecost. He would indwell the Church and individual believers so they each would prove covenantally faithful to the honor and praise of the Triune God.

I hope you are like me in the sense that you are utterly amazed. Christ's words expressed His profound respect for Scripture and the God of Scripture at a time when a person would be at the height of self-focus. As a result the person would be troubled within as a testimony to self-focus. As a result the person would continue to give in to feelings and give up on God and his own responsibilities which is a biblical-determined working definition of *depression*. Jesus was concerned with running the race well and completing the course looking forward to the "joyful reunion" of the fullness of the Trinity (Hebrews 12:1-3). He experienced bad feelings but filtered them through something larger than Himself. He has given believers a model for counseling ourselves!

#### Application

1. Consider Matthew 27:45-50; Mark 15:33-37; Luke 23:44-46; John 19:28-30: what strikes you?
2. Jesus conducted Himself and taught with authority: how is His authority in evidence in these verses?
3. Contrast your respect for Scripture and the God of Scripture with the view that Jesus articulated on the cross? What do you learn and need to change about yourself?
4. What do learn about feelings: their origin and your response to them?



Was Jesus Depressed: Part X  
Conclusion: A

In this series of blogs I have contrasted the cultures' view of a troubled heart and God's view by referring to biblical truth. Sadly, too often, believers follow the culture. They begin with the culture's definition and based on the culture's wisdom (or lack of it) move to the person. Culture has formulated a definition of certain feeling states without a proper understanding of the person's thinking and wanting. They fail to evaluate a person's patterned thinking and wanting. Culture has an incorrect view of God's control. The person is labeled and the label then wags the dog so to speak. Medications and talk therapy are recommended to people who have diagnosed with various feeling states including *depression*.

I think all people, believers and unbelievers, should find it interesting that talk therapy in its many forms is reported to make a person feel better. Talk therapy attempts to change a person's thinking about himself and others. Secular talk therapy has no proper vertical reference. Its professed goal is making a person feel better by changing his thoughts thereby changing his response to what is outside of him. The secular world gives no credence or credit to God's creative design of man and has no concept that the Bible teaches the link between thinking, wanting, doing, and feelings. The secular, medicalized, psychologized approach to man, his problems, and solutions is stealing from God and is a sin against the third commandment much like attributing the weather to Mother Nature. By God's design, man is God's image bearer and as such thinks, desires, and acts in his whole person – inner and outer man. Therefore as a duplex being, thoughts, desires/wants, actions, and feelings are linked. Only biblical truth properly addresses this linkage.

Jesus experienced the reality of living in fallen world with the constant temptation of pleasing self. Jesus was a real person. The fact that He was the God-man – two natures, one person – only intensified the pressure to think, desire, and act as the ultimate God-pleaser. Not even one thought, desire, or action (or inaction) could be self-focused. If that happened Jesus would have failed as the perfect Messiah. His ministry as the Messiah would have failed. God would have been proven a liar, a cheat, and a loser. This was Satan's deign for God as he sought to discredit God through Job's failure. Satan claimed that Job would curse God if enough pressure was placed on him (Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5).

As described in the book of Job, Satan is a created being on a tether. He is God's agent. Satan wanted to show the world that God was not who He claimed to be. Rather, God used Satan as His minion and to show the utter fallacy and sinfulness of satanic logic. Job came to acknowledge and relish the fact that God is God and he is not. He relished the fact that he had a relationship with God and God with him which enabled to trust God (Job 38-42).

Initially, Job relished his relationship with God. Then Job lost his land, his possessions, his family, and his health. He was burdened and his heart was troubled. Initially Job's heart was troubled correctly (Job 1:22; 2:10). As the book unfolds, Job is burdened by his friends and their unwise, half-truth, false counsel in the context of God's providence. For Job, the tunnel seemed so long without end or light, the mountain so high, and the hole so deep. Job experienced bad feelings. The three friends made

demands on Job. His troubled heart was now based on feelings and the *I wants*. I am sure he would be labeled as being depressed. He demanded the friends to cease and desist and for God to explain Himself. In the end Job's troubled heart became a joyous one when God confronted him. God gave him a piece of Him (Psalm 34:8). Job repented. *He saw the light as he had been in the Light* (Psalm 36:9). He knew in a different way that he was not God and that he no right to demand an accounting from God. He was overwhelming satisfied!

You could almost hear Jesus speaking to Job: *your heart is troubled. Take yourself out of the meat grinder. Here is how: trust God and trust Me* (This is my paraphrase of John 14:1). Job did just that after he came face to face with the living God and he did not die. God gave Job a piece of Himself and Job rejoiced!

Application:

1. Give examples of occasions when your heart is/was troubled.
2. Evaluate your responses in terms of content, focus, and motivation.
3. How would you apply John 14:1, 27 to each occasion?

Was Jesus Depressed: Part XII  
Conclusion: B

By way of contrast, compare Jesus' words on the cross as recorded in John 19:28, 30 and His motivation with that of Samson as recorded in the book of Judges. Samson, God's man at the time, was the impetuous and sensual one living by his feelings for the "right now" (Judges 14:1-3, 7; 14:18-20; 15:18; 16:1, 4). Samson often had a troubled heart which originated from a self-focus, from a lack of biblical truth, and from a motivation to get. In that sense he modeled the first Adam and Israel who did what was right in their own eyes (Genesis 3; Judges 17:6; 21:25). Chapter 15 of the book of Judges records the mighty work that Samson had done for God. He slew 1000 men, enemies of God, with the jawbone of a donkey: *Because he was thirsty he cried out to the Lord: you have given your servant great victory. Must I now die to thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised* (Judges 15:18). Again, Samson had inner-man angst. He was not a happy camper. He felt deprived. He viewed everything, even God, through a need lattice characterized by *I want* and *I deserve*. In that sense he was no different than Esau (Genesis 25:29-34). Unlike Esau, he cried out to God to give. His bad feelings demanded it! He may not have been diagnosed with *depression*, but he would have received some type of label and given various treatment regimens.

Samson was less interested in pleasing God than in having God please him. In the end, Samson called on God we hope from a properly troubled heart. He slew more of God's enemies in his death than he did in his life (Judges 17:28-30). In this final action, he was a type of Christ. Jesus is the greater Samson, the true Judge. He did not seek revenge but justice. Jesus was not led by His senses and feelings apart from biblical truth as were Job initially, Samson, and Esau (Genesis 25:29-34). Jesus knew Himself - His true origin, identity, purpose, and destiny. The situation did not dictate to Jesus or hold Him captive. He had practiced covenantal faithfulness throughout His life on earth. He relied on His relationship with the Father to think and desire rightly and to respond biblically. His heart was troubled, but it was troubled in a God-honoring way (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13: Paul called the Thessalonian congregation and all believers to grieve God's way. The answer to a trouble heart is to trust God as we saw in John 14:1, 27).

A believer's troubled heart must originate in the same way as Jesus' did. The basic ingredients for a troubled heart God's way include: the proper content, the proper focus, the proper motivation, and the proper duration. Jesus' troubled heart (and His non-troubled heart as well) was tethered to His knowledge of God and Himself. He knew God was real. He knew that God was ever-present (relational), powerful, purposeful, made promises, had a plan, and provided for Him and His people. These 6 "Ps" were never far-removed from Jesus. This knowledge helped Jesus to focus on reality – the Triune God's unwavering Intratrinitarian relationship and the purpose for Himself and the whole creation. Jesus had "high theology!" Jesus also had a proper focus: He focused on completing the work of the Father (John 4:31-34).

Jesus was myopic so to speak or perhaps you can say He had telescoped vision. His singular focus on the Triune's God design established in eternity past helped Him avoid unwanted and misleading information especially that which comes from feelings. Lastly, Jesus had one motivation to reach His God-given and agreed upon goal: to please the Father by doing His will and completing the work established in eternity past. Again,

John in his gospel belabors this point (John 4:31-34; 5:19-30; 6:38; 8:26; 9:4; 10:37-38; 12:49-50; 14:31; 15:10; 17:4).

A troubled heart is a given and part of living in sin-cursed world with a decaying body, sinning, and being sinned against (Romans 5:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18). The believer is still affected by the effect of sin on his thinking and wanting (Romans 1:18-23; Ephesians 4:17-19). Fallen man still thinks and reasons, but his view of God, man, and self is sinful and selfish. Fallen man does not understand and does not accept God as God and man as man. Rather, he is a God-want-to-be. Self comes first, second, and third. The believer has been removed Satan's family and kingdom but still has remaining sinfulness in the whole person (Ephesians 2:1-3, 4-6; Colossians 1:13-14). Therefore, the believer can and will learn how to trust and enjoy when he has a troubled heart.

One key for godly living is not the absence of a troubled heart, but the presence of a heart that is troubled for the proper reasons and is expressed in the proper manner. Such is true of all the so-called feelings states. Therefore Jesus told His apostles to stop continuing with troubled hearts (John 14:1, 27). It was unbecoming to them. They had work to do and a ministry to perform. His solution was trust. It is a simple five-lettered word that is often overused. Every person is a truster. The apostles were the wrong kind. They were to replace trust of self with trust in God and Christ (John 14:1-2). They were to replace their efforts to control by relying on God's control and acting accordingly.

Jesus was not depressed. He did not give in to feelings and give up on pleasing God. Believers are called to prove covenantally faithful but not for redemption sake. Christ has purchased redemption for His people. His people are to prove covenantally faithful as a means of imitating Christ. This process is called progressive sanctification – growth in Christlikeness. This activity is what the believer was saved and graced to do (Colossians 3:1-3; 1 John 3:1-3).

#### Application:

1. Consider Jesus' troubled heart: it was not pictured as long-lasting. What were the reasons?
2. Consider the content of Jesus' troubled heart, His focus, and His motivation. What were they and how was it possible for Him to continue to move to the cross?
3. What was the beyond the cross and what role did that play in Jesus counseling Himself?