

The Bible acknowledges the reality of human suffering of both believers and unbelievers, including the depths of despair. It also shows how God cares, providing guidance.

Psalm 77:1: “I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me.”

- **Grammatical Usage:** “**cry aloud**” or in the Hebrew, “wə·’eṣ·‘ā·qāh;” means, “shriek; distressed call”; “**he will hear me**” or “wə·ha·’ā·zîn” meaning, “listen; perceive”.
- **Literal Interpretation:** In distress I called out...called out...He will listen and perceive.
- **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. Most of us know what depression is; few can claim that they have never experienced depression of any kind. Certainly, the psalmist was depressed when he wrote **Psalm 77**. But out of his experience came insight and guidance:

1. NOTICE THAT DEPRESSION AFFECTS US IN AT LEAST FOUR WAYS

- A. It overwhelms our spirit. The psalmist tells us this in **v. 3**. One dictionary definition of depression is “a lowering of the spirit.” Many have experienced this - we have found ourselves down in the depths – our spirit is dejected and overwhelmed.
- B. It awakens our memory. In **v. 6** the psalmist tells us that in his time of depression he remembered the times when he had been able to sing, even in the night – but not now! When he compared that time with this time he longed that this time could be like that time – and the very memory of it made him more miserable!
- C. It robs us of sleep. In **v. 4**, he tells us that when he went to bed his eyelids refused to close. Depression does that, and so do its relatives – worry and anxiety. Depression is usually worse at night than in the day.
- D. It seals our lips. Also in **v. 4**, the psalmist says, “**I was too troubled to speak!**” Have you ever been in that condition? There are two causes: preoccupation and depression. We can easily rouse ourselves out of our preoccupation, but not out of our depression.

2. WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON CAUSES OF DEPRESSION?

- A. A morbid, pessimistic outlook on life. In **v. 2**, the psalmist “**refused to be comforted.**” Some people are full of pessimism, always thinking and speaking in a “minor key” – “enjoying bad health”! As Christians, we should cultivate a holy optimism and deliberately refuse to dwell upon the dark side of things. What right have we to be pessimists?
- B. An offending conscience. In **v. 3**, he tells us that in his depression he suddenly remembered God “**and was troubled.**” Evidently, he did not have a conscience “**clear before God**” (**Acts 24:16**). There was something between himself and

God. Is there anything between us and the Lord? Are we disobeying Him in any way (**Ephesians 4:30**)?

- C. A complaining spirit. In **v. 3**, the psalmist says, “**I remembered you, O God, and I moaned.**” The person who is always complaining is especially prone to depression. Avoid being one of those people!
- D. Too much unhealthy introspection. In **v. 6**, the psalmist says, “**my spirit made a diligent search.**” We have already said that we must make sure our depression has not been caused by sin; we do need to examine our ways (**Lamentations 3:40**), and to pray the prayer of **Psalm 139:23-24**, but we must at all costs avoid plunging into an unhealthy, unspiritual, morbid introspection that keeps looking inside and can see nothing but bad. The look we must cultivate is indicated in **Hebrews 12:2** and **Colossians 3:1-2**. Many of God’s people are spiritually, mentally and physically ill because they will keep looking at themselves!
- E. Leaving God out of our reckoning. Look at **vv. 7-9**. This is the all-inclusive reason we stay depressed; we fail to ‘do’ **v. 10**: realize the presence, power and provision of our wonderful Lord.

However, before we leave the causes of depression and pursue the cure, we must remember that there are many practical reasons why people (including Christians) may get depressed. The cause may be physical – e.g. a chemical imbalance in the body. Good health is a great enemy of depression, and bad health is a good friend of depression. Again, adverse circumstances and bad news can bring depression; the job we are engaged in may make us prone to depression; temperament has something to do with it...and even the weather can cause depression of the body and then of the mind! Also – a lack of necessary vitamins and proper nourishment can cause depression. Notice at the end of **v. 9** – “**Selah**” – which means, “Pause and think about it!”

3. WHAT IS THE CURE FOR DEPRESSION?

Try to lead a regular, healthy life, to get the right amount of sleep, relaxation, exercise, fresh air, food and fun – and plenty of work too! Seek to live an all-round balanced life to the glory of God. However, should depression descend upon you:

- A. Admit and confess it at once. Look again at **v. 10** - “**I will appeal this...**” Depression is not a sin, (though staying under it may be); it is a weakness, and we must not pretend it does not exist. If it comes, admit that it is there – as Paul did with his infirmity: **2 Corinthians 12:9-10**.
- B. Seek God “**in the sanctuary**” (**v. 13**, KJV: “**Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary**”) in the place of prayer, privately (**Mt. 6:6**) and corporately (**Acts 4:23**) with a friend (**Matthew 18:19-20**). And remember, His way is not only in the sanctuary; it is also in the midst of your difficult circumstances (**v. 19**: “**yet your footprints were unseen.**”) He is with you there!
- C. Encourage yourself in the Lord. Read **vv. 10-12; 14** and do what David did – **1 Samuel 30:6**: “**but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.**” (Also look up **Psalm 34:1-6**).
- D. Testify to others of the Lord’s doings (**v. 12**).

➤ **Conclusion:** In the midst of my challenge, will I turn to the Lord?