

The Remedy for Depression

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[0:00] If you would take your Bibles, please, and go to the book of Psalms. Find Psalm 43. And that black Bible in the chair in front of you, kind of start in the middle, and find page 410.

410. Psalm 43. Another favorite of mine in the Psalms, Psalm 43.

410 in that black Bible. I'm gonna read and we'll dive into our study of Psalm 43. There's no superscript on this one.

So it starts in Psalm 43. Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation. O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

For you are the God of my strength. Why have you rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? O send out your lights and your truth.

[1:21] Let them lead me. Let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling places. Then I will go to the altar of God.

To God, my exceeding joy. And upon the lair I shall praise you, O God, my God. Why are you in despair, O my soul?

And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God. For I shall again praise Him. The help of my countenance, my face, and my God.

It's called Trintelix. Trintelix from Wikipedia.

It says it's an antidepressant medication. It's prescribed to treat depression. It purportedly... That's an important word.

[2:20] You realize that. I'm serious. It purportedly relieves depression. I'm quoting. It purportedly relieves depression symptoms by increasing serotonin concentrations in the brain.

By inhibiting its reuptake in the synapse. And by modulating, activating certain receptors while blocking or antagonizing others. Certain serotonin receptors.

Trintelix. I listened to a commercial. It was just this past week, sometime. And they listed off the side effects. Why are you laughing?

Nausea, diarrhea, dry mouth, constipation, vomiting, sexual dysfunction, flatulence, and dizziness. Now, I'm being totally serious here.

You people are laughing. I'm not laughing. The most common side effects are nausea, diarrhea, and vomiting. And that struck me.

[3:26] And I'm not being flippant here. But those side effects could be depressing in and of themselves. Really. What is depression?

One definition. Quote, a mental health disorder characterized by persistently depressed mood or loss of interest. And activities causing significant impairment in daily life.

Now, you realize it's all based upon symptoms. Because to date, they cannot test the serotonin levels. They cannot open up your brain and test that.

It's strictly on symptoms. That's true. What are the causes of depression? Well, there's many factors.

For instance, someone's temperament. That plays a factor. Their physical conditions. If they're suffering or their health is poor.

[4:34] A major letdown in life. A major catastrophe or disaster. That can also play a factor. Guilt.

A certain sin. Somebody does something wrong. And they do it over and over again. And they feel so guilty about it. That could play a factor into that. And for us as Christians, we believe the devil does that too.

And his realm. It can affect sleep, appetite, energy, concentration, behavior. When it's all said and done, it's really about unbelief.

Not trusting. Or really, not loving God. So I title this message from Psalms 43, The Remedy for Depression.

God is my exceeding joy. Not my circumstances. Or as John Piper puts it, when God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him.

[6:04] The Remedy for Depression is, God is my exceeding joy. If you get anything out of this message, if you get anything out of Psalm 43, that's one of the reasons why we have that. And the banner as you walk out, that banner that's right there on your right hand side, as you go out, that's what that reads.

From Psalm 43, verse 4, I will go to the altar of God. God, my exceeding joy. If there's anything that you get this morning, get that. The Remedy for Depression is directing our whole heart, our mind, will, and affections to the Lord Jesus Christ, not our circumstances.

God is my exceeding joy. I take my pleasure, my joy, my delight, in Him, in Him alone. Now, it's not easy to make sense of depression.

And as a matter of fact, I give my disclaimer, in this message, that I don't want to pass this off as no big deal. Like in other words, oh, just listen to this message that I'm giving to you, and you'll be fine. I don't want to come across that way to you, and please, don't take it this way. I've counseled people in depression. I've known people who can't even get out of bed because they're so depressed.

[7:29] So I don't take this flippantly, nor do I abruptly say these things to you. Yet, Scripture speaks directly to depression, guiding those in its grip toward Jesus and towards pleasures forever.

I read this, I don't think it was, I think it was not last week, maybe the week before, maybe it was last week. I read a portion of this, a little quote. This is by Carol Trahan, Help, I am depressed. I encourage you to get this.

If you are facing depression or have faced depression or know someone who has faced depression, small little booklet, oh, what? Like 55 pages?

56 pages? The conclusion chapter is called God My Exceeding Joy. She said this, and I quoted this last time, quote, circumstances and people do not determine our destiny.

Rather, our responses to circumstances and people determine whom we will become. That's so true. A little bit about this psalm before we dive in.

[8:45] Actually, Psalm 42 and 43 possibly were originally together as one psalm. These two psalms are about depression.

Really about how to deal with depression. Remember, I told you this. Last week and the week before that, in reference to David, if this really was from David, I know it says, I'm a skill of the sons of Korah, but it's quite possible some think it originally was by David.

David understands. We can relate to David. People will say, you don't know what it's like to have gone through the things that I've gone through. It's fair.

David knows. I'll put it a different way. God knows. So he knows. You can't, you can't pass that off on God. Well, you don't understand.

He goes, really? So if this was by David, they actually think not just by David, but possibly it was during the time of Absalom's rebellion.

[9:56] Interesting. And just as you know too, a meskel, or maskel, what that means is instruction and genuine emotion.

that's just the nuance, the genre of the psalm. Poetic beauty and feeling.

Before we talk about the remedy in reference to depression, I do want to point some things out to you. A couple of things. First, first, I want to point out to you from the psalm the horrible circumstances that the psalmist, maybe it's David, finds himself in.

Verse 1 and 2, vindicate me, O God, plead my case against an ungodly nation. Clever me from the deceitful and unjust man.

The end of verse 2, because of the oppression of the enemy. These are the circumstances the psalmist finds himself.

[11:06] He's being attacked and devastated by his enemies. His enemies were coming after him to the point where they wanted to crush his bones. And if this was Absalom, oh, this makes sense. If you know the story.

Absalom was coming into Jerusalem. David had to hightail it out of Jerusalem. And interesting now, if this was David, he mentions an ungodly nation.

Why would he say that? Absalom won his throne and guess what most of Israel was doing? Following Absalom. They were following him.

So David was disavowed. The crowds are fickle and only a few stayed with David. As he had to flee from his own home, from his own throne.

You talk about depression. And so he has these circumstances in which he's been placed.

[12:12] But notice also the feelings from our circumstances. Notice I changed the pronoun, our. Verse 2 and verse 5.

You're the God of my strength. Why have you rejected me? Why do I go mourning? Verse 5. Why are you in despair, oh my soul?

Why are you disturbed? Notice the feelings that he's communicating. I'll put it up here for you. Turmoil, rejection, despair, he's disturbed. Do you ever feel that way? You're in turmoil? You feel rejected? You're in despair? You're disturbed? Notice there in verse 2, he starts out with, for you are the God of my strength.

[13:19] Well wait, but then he says, why have you rejected me? What's going on here? Is he being like, schizophrenic? No. His head knew, God had not forgotten him, but he didn't feel it.

You ever had that? You know it here, but you ain't feeling it here. David understands, if this was David.

The psalmist, I'll say the psalmist. And this led to feelings of rejection. It looked like Yahweh had abandoned him. That's why he says, why have you rejected me?

It felt like God wasn't listening to him. You're not coming to my aid. You're not helping me. You're the God of my strength, but where's the strength?

He loves God, longs for him, knowing who he is. He doesn't feel it, so his theology went out the window.

[14:30] So, here versus here. Here. And he talks about despair.

Despair means to bow oneself very low, sit upon the ground like a mourner. Why my dejection from these circumstances? What's going on?

And then he says, disturb. Disturb means deep groans of a pain, sorrowful heart. To utter a deep groan, to speak quietly, and mumbling to oneself.

You ever felt that? You ever known someone to feel that? The psalmist was facing depression. They call it now bipolar.

They used to call it manic depression or manic depressive. They used to call it extreme melancholy. That's what they called it in the 1700s. You're not listening to me.

[15:38] God, do you care? I feel horrible. And the sting was feeling distant from God himself. He was sure about God and yet he was battered by the experience of his life.

Do our circumstances bring us to the point where we get depressed? That is what the devil and our inner person inside will do. Use circumstances to bring us to the point of depression.

We cannot allow our circumstances to get the best of us letting it affect our communion with the Lord. But you see, the psalmist is battling through this.

He's allowing his circumstances to get the best of him. sometimes we say things that are just not theologically right because it's based upon feelings.

You know, it's good to ask why. And sometimes the answers or reasons, they're given. And yet, most times they're not given.

[17:05] And the times that they are, we don't like the answers. And many times that they are given the details that we want to have, they're not there. So this is, I want you to feel this part first.

So now you can see the positive end of things. What are specific ways we can respond to depression?

Here's four ways. The first one, in the midst of our depressing pain, first, number one, petition God's sovereign help. Ask him. Ask him to relieve you of the circumstances.

Notice the verbs here in verse one through three. Vindicate, plead, deliver. You see that? Verse one, vindicate me, O God.

In other words, clear me. Plead my case against an ungodly nation. Deliver me. Defend me. You're the God of my strength.

[18:12] Remember, he talked about his horrible circumstances and those feelings but yet he's asking God's sovereign help. Vindicate me. I'm pleading with you.

Deliver me from this. Friends, please don't think it's wrong to ask for God's help. If you face circumstances that are just crushing you, say, God, I need your help. God. That's why he says, you are the God of my strength. But it feels like you've rejected me. I'm mourning because I'm being oppressed. But notice what happens in verse three. The other request, O send out your light and your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling places. Light is a symbol for God's mercy.

[19:22] Light is a symbol for God's mercy. So darkness symbolizes being deprived of the assurance of God's mercy. So he says, let your mercy, send out your mercy and your truth.

Truth or faithfulness is another way to translate this. indicates that God will continue his steadfast love. God's mercy will only be found in his truth.

Let that lead me. Let your mercy and your truth lead me, not how I, what's the word? Feel. Not how I feel. Not my circumstances that brings me to the place where I, I'm feeling this way. No. It's your mercy, it's your truth, your faithfulness. And we know that for David, it was God's law that he knew was truth.

[20:28] Do I have it up on the screen? I think I do. Yeah. Psalm, you can write this down or even look at it. I'm going to read from these.

Psalm 119, verse 35. If this was in fact David writing the Psalm in Psalm 43, David said in Psalm 119, verse 35, make me walk in the path of your commandments for I delight in it verse 47 and 48, and I shall delight in your commandments which I love and I shall lift up my hence your commandments which I love and I will meditate on your statutes.

And then in verse 142, your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness and your law is truth. He wants the mercy of God and the truth of God to direct lead to guide him not his circumstances, not the feelings that come from those circumstances.

And remember, he's asking for God's help. He's asking God to change the circumstances and yet he's saying I want your help to be guided by your word, guided by your mercy, not my feelings. God's love and faithfulness leads him. Ask for God's help. Ask for God's help by helping us live according to his character, not your feelings.

[22:14] or rather the feelings that rule us because of our circumstances. I mean, it leads him into the very presence of God.

Notice he says let them bring me to your holy hill, your dwelling places where you dwell. He's assured that God's there with him. You see the progression too.

Hill, place, later on in verse 4. He says alter them into God. He's requesting that these attributes of God will bring back the reality of being and feeling close to God.

God, you're for me and you're powerful enough to get me out of this mess. I know you are. And yet it's not about me getting out of this mess.

It's about letting your mercy and your truth guide me. Remember who God is.

[23:23] The all-powerful sovereign God of the universe. And ask him to act upon what he's brought to your mind. His mercy and his truth. His faithfulness.

Remember that. Ask for that. So the first way. Petition for God's sovereign help. Number two, which is, probably should even make this the number one thing, but number two is pant for God's sovereign self.

Pant for, long for, yearn for, desire. God's sovereign self. Because he wasn't completely pleading for relief from his circumstances.

He's not saying, God, get me out of this and then I'll want you. He says, I want you, get me to want you. That's really what he's even asking.

I want to want you and I need you to help me want you. Or to put it another way, God is most glorified in us and we're most satisfied with him.

[24:43] Thank you, John Piper. Notice that these two Psalms never say that he received the help he was asking for.

No. Instead, he realized he had to hope in God. because he says, then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy.

You need to be the one I want. You need to be the one I desire. You need to be the one I long for. It's you. You're my exceeding joy. You're the one in whom I find my delight.

It's you. You. You. You. You. You. You. You. You. You. You. Our human hearts need to wean off of security, comfort, fame, money, sex, drugs, alcohol, control, and power, and instead be addicted to God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to want God. God. That's why they're seeking out pleasure. Which is why they're there in the bars drinking.

[26:07] It's why they're watching pornography. It's pleasure. And yet why, as C.S. Lewis said, our desires, our longings, our wants are very feeble.

They're weak because we settle for this stuff thinking that it's going to give us such great pleasure and yet that's why we read from Psalm 16. In your right hand there's pleasures forever.

Why do you settle for this meager stuff when you can have God? Help me to be hungry for you and be thirsty for you O God.

Help me to pursue you above all things. Then I will go to the altar of God. God, you are my exceeding joy. You're the one I want to desire. You're the one I want to delight in.

You're the one I want to take pleasure in. You're the one I want to enjoy. Like this. This is not very tactful.

[27:15] as a newly married husband and wife you enjoy each other for the very first time. Like that. That's how you enjoy God.

God, my exceeding joy, a superlative, it's like you're the joy of my exaltation. He knows no other joy like that which proceeds from God himself, which accounted for the very highest, the highest of joy. the true way through the difficulties of life to a happy outcome is not just to live in God's light and cherish his faithfulness, which is good.

It's really to live in desire of him and to cherish him above all. Is God the joy of your exaltation?

Is God the one who is your exceeding joy? is he the one about whom you are most thrilled? Oh, mind you, you don't get that quick buzz like you do when you drink the Smirnoff.

[28:27] You don't get that quick buzz when you smoke the joint. He ain't like that. But it's so much more fulfilling.

Is that not part of the gospel? I mean, if you're here and you don't know Jesus, you're missing out. And God who can fulfill you.

And the amazing part is, not only does he fulfill you, but he actually sent his son to die for you.

Wow. Amazing that he would do that.

And we've talked about this before. I've mentioned this many times. What do we really want? I struggle with this too. We all do.

Even as regenerate Christians, we still kind of have that little bent. Right? And do we pray for God to increase our desire for him?

[29:36] It's like you're saying, God, I want this, or I want that, but God, please help me to want you more. I mean, we should get angry over the fact that we don't want God more.

Do you get angry about that in yourself? You should. God, I want to want you more. And I get so mad that I want this other stuff which is stupid and doesn't fulfill me.

Why do I do this? Why do I do this? Are there dungeons beneath your castles of despair?

Hope in God. Pant for him. Let him be your exceeding joy. And just so that we understand that this is not just here from Psalm 43, we read from Psalm 16, you also see in Matthew chapter 10 verse 37 to 38.

I mean, Jesus says, he who loves father or mother, wife or children, is not worthy of me. That's a pretty audacious statement, right?

[30:51] He says, in other words, you should love me above everyone else. You should want me the most. Luke chapter 14 verse 26.

The antithesis, the hyperbole that Jesus uses is hate. He who does not hate father, mother, wife, children, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. In other words, you should love me above everyone and anything else.

That's part of the gospel. And even another one I thought of, I didn't put it up there, Jeremiah chapter 1 verse 12 and 13.

Jeremiah says, be appalled though I haven't said this and shudder, be very desolate, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils. They forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.

He's the fountain of living waters and yet we go after other things thinking that they'll satisfy us and yet they don't. God satisfies.

[32:08] If you're here and you're not a follower of Jesus, you need to understand this. God will satisfy you. May you repent and put your trust in Jesus alone who died for sinners.

sinner like you. They'll save you and they'll satisfy you. Petition for God's help.

Pant for God's self. Number three, you notice what he does. Praise God's sovereign love. The end of verse four, upon the layer I shall praise you, O God, my God.

He told himself that he will sing though he did not feel it. I'm going to sing. I'm going to sing him a praise for who God is. I ain't feeling it.

I'm going to sing it. I'm going to do it. He knew that God was with him always. Always is though he did not feel God's presence.

[33:08] God truly does love us in Christ. We cannot forget this. praise you for who you are because I know, I'm not feeling it right now, you love me.

Takes us back to the truth thing, remember? Let your truth guide me, not my feelings. But it's hard to sing when you're crushed. I want to be jubilant, but I'm not.

I want to sing for joy, but I don't feel it. I'm angry, I'm hurt, I'm bitter, I have resentment, but I'm going to do it. I mean, that's a practical thing we tell people when they're facing depression.

They say, I don't feel like getting up out of bed in the morning. And again, I don't want to be flippant with this, don't want to just kind of blow it off like this. We go through many different things and talk about many different things, et cetera, et cetera, but one of the things we do talk about is saying, get up in the morning and shower.

Go do it. You don't feel like it. But you go do it. You know, it's a good thing that God didn't act on his feelings.

[34:22] It's a good thing that God didn't act on his own feelings of not wanting to save us in the midst of our rebelling against him. Right? God didn't act on his feelings.

Praise his name. God saved us by his grace alone through faith alone. He decided to love people. I mean, what obligation does God have to us?

Nothing. I mean, when you really think about it, and don't you just, you know, I was thinking about this. Just yesterday, yesterday evening, I'm like, you know, what is my problem?

Why do I think that you are obligated to give me things? Doesn't that just drive you nuts that you think that way? It drives me nuts. It's like, why do I think this way?

It's like, makes me mad. Why do I think that you're obligated to give me things? That's our problem. I was talking to a guy in Jerome on Friday.

[35:24] I said, why is God obligated to give you anything? He says, why does God make people suffer and they go through suffering? I said, yeah, why does he do that? And yet, you know what? I'll call him Joe.

You know what, Joe? He's not obligated to give us anything. Nothing. He kind of looked to me. Is that not true?

But see, once we get the right perspective on desiring God, we will be able to see his great love, grace, mercy, and compassion for us, no matter our circumstances and be able to praise him for it because you know what?

Even though he's not obligated, we're totally obligated to him, he's not obligated to us, he still loves us in Jesus. Go figure that.

Praise his name that he loves you. Praise God for his sovereign love. Okay, so petition, we pant, we praise him, and now the last one, this is important.

[36:34] Preach God's sovereign grace. Go out in the streets corners and tell people, no, no, no, well, yeah, you do that too. Talk to yourself.

Preach this to yourself. Do you see this? He talked to his soul. Oh, it's kind of crazy.

He's like talking to himself. You ever walk in somebody and they're like talking to themselves? What are you doing? I'm just talking to myself. Are you answering yourself? I answer myself all the time. He's fighting for hope and joy and it's not working. Our self-talk can be very self-defeating. Don't listen to yourself.

Talk to yourself. We should preach the gospel to ourselves. Don't listen to yourself. Oh, you're such an idiot.

[37:32] You did that thing again. Don't talk to yourself. Don't listen to yourself. Talk to yourself. Tell yourself the gospel. Look at what he does. Verse five.

Why are you in despair, oh, my soul? Why are you in despair? Soul, why are you disturbed? hope in God.

Hope means to wait for, to expect. He commands himself of the God guarantee. He commands himself to put his hope in God.

You see that? He says to himself, God has not withdrawn from yourself. He has not abandoned you.

Talk to yourself. don't listen to yourself. He commanded himself to put his hope in God. Look at hope in God. He's talking to himself.

[38:31] Do you see this? Tell yourself of the God who guarantees the future because he planned the future. Bring God to your mind. Bring God's truth to your mind and almost scream at yourself the truth of who God is.

Notice he called his mind to override his emotions and feelings and the hope in God. We must talk to ourselves reminding ourselves of the steadfastness of God and our need to hope in him alone. We got to do that. I got to do that? You? Martin Lloyd-Jones, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, he wrote a book called Spiritual Depression.

He says this, instead of muttering in this depressed unhappy way, remind yourself of God, who God is, and what God is, and what God has done, and what God has pledged himself to do.

look, the evil one will speak to us, and our own selves will speak to us, but we must not listen.

[39:50] Talk to yourself, reminding yourself about the promises, the goodness, the faithfulness, the gentleness of God. He called his mind to supersede his emotions and feelings.

Put your strong confidence in God and his ability and his wisdom to handle, oh soul. Notice he says at the end of verse five, the help of my countenance and my God, the help of my face.

He lifts up my face. Why did he say that? Because if you're depressed, what are you doing? Your face is down. All right?

No, God is with his people. He personally comes to their aid. It is God himself who lifts up our face. Tell yourself who God is as to know and feel his blessing again.

God works for his good, perfect wisdom, plan, timing, and power. He does all things well. As the song goes from Chris Tomlin, he's a good, good father.

[41:00] Who you are. It's who you are. Perfect in all of your ways. The troubled soul's cure is and always will be to desire God.

Tell that to yourself. He will never fail. We need to almost scream this to ourselves because we're tempted towards man-made solutions. we turn to work, hobby, exercise, new things to buy, new things to pursue, alcohol, drugs, prescription drugs given to us by doctors, the opiates, prescription drugs for depression.

I'm not to say that a prescription for depression, I'm not saying it won't help people. For some people it does. But it's not dealing with the heart issue. You may get a prescription and may help things in your brain connect more.

But you still have to deal with your heart issue. because we must remember that lasting peace and contentment is found only in Christ.

Learn to preach this to yourself. He expressed pain, then he overcomes the pain by preaching to himself to praise God again. Remember his love.

[42:27] Petition his help. Pat for God alone. The remedy for depression is directing our whole heart, our will, mind, affections to the Lord Jesus Christ, not our circumstances.

God is my exceeding joy. You're going to be my exceeding joy. You're telling yourself that. I end with this.

I probably made mention of this before. Have you heard this song by Natalie Grant? Great song. The verse goes, I know if you wanted to, you could wave your hand.

Spare me this heartache and change your plan. And I know any second you can take my pain away, but even if you don't, I pray. Help me want the healer more than the healing.

Help me want the savior more than the saving. Help me want the giver more than the giving. Help me want you Jesus more than anything.

[43:39] You know more than anyone that my flesh is weak, and you know I give anything for a remedy. I ask you a thousand more times to set me free today.

Oh, but even if you don't, I pray. When I'm desperate and my heart's overcome, all that I need, you've already done, when I'm desperate, my heart's overcome, all that I need, you've already done, oh Jesus help me want you more than anything.

The healer more than the healing. The savior more than the saving. The giver more than the giving. Help me want you Jesus more than anything. I find myself wanting the healing.

I find myself wanting the saving. I find myself wanting to get the gifts. Just give me the gift.

Relationship whatever.

Really? That's not Christianity, friends. So God, we pray. Instead of the healing from the suffering and pain, help us to want you, the healer.

[44 : 57] Instead of saving us from a particular situation that we find ourselves, help us to want you, oh savior. We want you to bless us and give us these benefits, these blessings, and happy life, good health, this and that.

Help us to want you, the great giver. you who gave your son. And as Peter says, you did that so you can bring us to yourself.

Oh God, help us to want you. Take this time if you would.

think, ponder what we've seen from Psalm 43. Let's take a few moments of silence between you and the Lord for you to think what we've, the deep things that we've spoken about this morning. And after a few moments we'll worship in our giving. worship with singing, directing our hearts to Jesus again. And worship and praying.

[46 : 23] But this time, take a few moments if you would, you and the Lord, to think, to pray. how about you talk to yourself about the gospel?

How about you talk to yourself about the gospel? How about you