

Faith for living

There may be times in your life that become so difficult that you lose all hope and faith for living. I (Pete) went through such a season where for several months I was consistently struggling with depression. Daily life was such a struggle. Hopelessness, fear, anxiety, despair and despondency all played their part in shaping my days and weeks. At one point I drove to the seafront to consider how I might put an end to my life. Faith for living this life was at an all-time low. Prior to this period of time, the Lord had led Pip and I in significant ways over the years to advance his kingdom. We had seen many miracles of God in our lives and the lives of others, but now look at me. How was I to understand this time? How did I get to this place? And how did I come free?

Understanding dark times

Understanding what is happening in such times is important in order to begin to come free. Through Pip's help I began to see that my depression was a demonic assault. As time passed I began to see clearly that I had accepted a lie. At first I was blind to this and considered my situation to be entirely as a result of my personal failure. I soon discovered that my experience was not just an expression of some wrong thinking; there was strong spiritual power at work giving strength to the lie. If I was physically ill I would take some medicine. My mental illness was spiritual and only spiritual medicine could cure me.

How did I get to this negative place?

The difficult season mentioned above developed over a period of weeks as one negative thought about myself and my view of God built upon another; it was rather like a few streams joining together to make create a growing river of unbelief. In order to understand how I got to this place, I needed to see that my inner conflict over these months was rooted in lies that I had believed about myself and my situation. Here are some examples of the lies I believed and of the truths I began to realise which, if I took hold of, would enable me to come free.

Lie – the issue was all about me and my failure as a person.

Truth – I realised that at some point I had not taken these negative thoughts captive and this had given the devil a runway in my mind to land on. I also realised that the power of my depression was spiritual and demonic.

Lie – God is far away, he does not really care; you are on your own.

Truth – God was still with me. I was the one who had moved. His love for me was as strong as it always was.

Lie – I am drained and powerless to come free.

Truth – Yes, I was emotionally drained; but I realised that in spite of my feelings, I had the authority spiritually to come free.

Lie – Life is Hell. I hate life and would prefer to take the pills and end it.

Truth – Yes life can be very difficult. But there is nothing that God cannot fix if only I would let him.

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At this point of time we were in a period of waiting upon the Lord in order to understand his future direction for our lives. We were also in a season of spiritual warfare. I realised that I had dropped my guard at some point and failed to take the negative thoughts filling my mind captive and stop the lies dominating my thinking. I was suffering as a result. The enemy took advantage of my failure and built a runway in my mind for further lies to land. After all, he is called the 'father of lies'! This following verse outlines what was happening.

Romans 1:21

'...because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.'

This verse teaches us that thanklessness and failure to give honour to God leads to futile thinking and a darkened heart. Futility means pointlessness, perversion, aimlessness and emptiness. These were dominating my thought life and consequently my emotions. The meaning of foolishness in Greek is "lacking synthesis". It describes a person who is unable to structure information in a meaningful way and consequently, unable to reach the necessary conclusions. This was me. I was like a ship adrift on the sea with the winds of emotion directing my life. The light of God in my heart was minimal; the darkness was prominent.

How did I come free?

Pip's support and prayers for me over this time helped. Her strength and words of truth stirred me to see the spiritual nature of what was happening. The Lord only needed a little from me to start the process of '*working out my own salvation*' (**Philippians 2:12**). God was stirring me out of my spiritual passivity to take control of my life again. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is self-control. However the operation of this fruit within me was weak because I had believed and blocked out the work of the Holy Spirit.

After a while it seemed obvious to me that my failure to be thankful and to honour God had opened the door to demonic depression. I realised that doing the opposite might be the door for deliverance. This is what I chose to do.

I found both truth and lie contending for dominance within my heart. All it needed was for me to choose truth and then God could act on my behalf. The following verse was helpful in this regard.

Hebrews 3:1

'Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.'

One thing I understood from this verse is that when we make a good confession of truth, Jesus can act in an apostolic and priestly role over our lives. When we confess the opposite of the truth, he cannot act on our behalf. He does not agree with darkness.

I went for a walk over a field and began to agree with a growing conviction in my spirit. The conviction was that I needed to reject the pressure of my emotions and open my mouth and simply repent to God. I did this. The steps were small and the words were minimal - there

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was no emotion attached to those words, it was a sheer act of my will. Nevertheless, these small steps helped and I found some strength beginning to return and the power attached to the lies was beginning to diminish.

I began to thank the Lord and as I did, I became aware of another lift of darkness from me and the strength of my negative emotions reduced further. Encouraged, I started to verbally reject a demonic spirit of depression; I rejected the hopelessness and again, I experienced more deliverance. Now I was on the road to freedom. I was '*working out my own salvation*'. Over a period of perhaps a week or so, I continued to do this daily and I came free and I found faith for living begin to return to me.

Philippians 2:12

'Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.'

Through my disobedience I had given the devil a foothold. But now through obedience I was working out my salvation; I learnt to take back the ground I had given away to the enemy.

The following verses explain more the importance of thankfulness and giving honour to God.

Psalm 100:4

'Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.'

1 Samuel 2:30

'But now the LORD says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honour Me I will honour, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.'

2 Timothy 1:7

'For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.'

God has given us his Spirit. A Spirit of power, love and a sound mind but it is still up to us to rightly align our will. My story shows that as I aligned to the words of a lying spirit depression took hold of my life. But when I turned and gave faith an opportunity the depression left.

Faith is the operation of God's word empowered by his Spirit. His word then directs our thoughts and emotions and actions. All this threatens the devil's kingdom. Satan fears the life changing power of God's word in us and looks for doorways through which to bring confusion. Yet God's gift of faith in us is greater and stronger than the devil's lies. Faith will always win any battle over fear and unbelief as we stay aligned to God's word. You will have battles but through faith, God in you is much greater than the devil in the world.

1 John 4:4

'You are of God, little children, and have overcome them because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.'