

**Everyone at some point feels blue, sad, melancholy, depressed.**

**We do not want to fall into the trap of thinking that as Christians we should **not** get depressed, despite the apostle Paul's exhortation in Philippians to "Rejoice in the Lord always."**

**We people of faith have a history of being a gloomy bunch.**

**Consider:**

- **The lamentations of Jeremiah, that fill an **entire** book in the Bible;**
- **The **melancholy** of King Saul, soothed **only** by the music of David;**
- **The memoir of the great mystic John of the Cross, titled **Dark** Night of the Soul;**
- **The **depression** of the reformer Martin Luther, which led him to discover justification through faith;**
- **The melancholia that pops up in the writings of Wesley and Calvin, and in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, where the pilgrim must navigate a very melancholic sort of swamp before he can find salvation.**

**The bottom line is this: Believers are going to get blue; disciples will face depression.**

**We will sometimes encounter **the silence** of the Lamb, and as committed Christians we will sometimes find ourselves mucking our way through melancholy on our way to the kingdom of heaven.**

**Perhaps you have felt depressed, lost, sad.**

**Perhaps you have even said it out loud like David in today's psalm:**

<sup>1</sup> **Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God.  
Give me relief from my distress;  
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.**

**Or to quote the same verse in the Message:**

*4 When I call, give me answers. God, take my side!  
Once, in a tight place, you gave me room;  
Now I'm in trouble again: grace me! hear me!*

**A cry for help.**

**A passionate plea.**

**A prayer for deliverance.**

**"Answer me, God!"**

**And what is the answer?**

**Nothing.**

**The sound of silence.**

**So we say, like David, in verse 6 of our psalm,  
Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!"**

**Still nothing.**

**This is depressing, and the psalmists experienced depression.**

**Whether it is a poignant plea  
("Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer," v. 1)**

**or a desperate cry.  
("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Psalm 22:1)  
the psalmists know  
silence, sadness,  
and sorrow.**

**The same question faces us:**

**Can we fashion a life to accommodate soul-crushing gloom?**

**Can we deal with the depression that comes  
when God seems strangely silent?**

**Can we handle the spiritual dryness we feel when we face grief that  
does not seem to ease and our faith is not enough?**

**Can we deal with the spiritual uncertainty when chronic pain does  
not enable us to do what we wish and Paul's reminder that he lives  
with a health issue that is "a torn in his side," is **not** comforting?**

**Can we face the silence of God when dealing with a relationship that  
needs healing and our prayers for assistance are not providing  
helpful answers?**

**Or are you one like me, who must deal with MORE THAN a  
bout of sadness, grief, or melancholy?**

**You are a believer, like me, who must deal with chronic, clinical  
depression?**

**Roughly 20 percent of people suffering from depression get no  
help from anti-depressants.**

**Talk therapy is not enough.**

**AND CHRISTIAN PLATITUDES ARE NOT HELPFUL.**

**The depression will not go away.**

**We must live with it for the rest of our lives,  
the way some folks must live with arthritis or diabetes.**

**So, the issue is: What can we do to live a meaningful life with a  
problem that is with us for life?**

**We can holler for help, but when the reality check is cashed, we  
discover that sometimes we are **not** going to be healed.**

**About the best we can hope for is a sense of God's peace.**

**So how do we get there?**

**How do we control our cravings for a cure, and instead find meaning in the midst of melancholy?**

**Our text does give us some good news:**

**Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him. (v. 3).**

**We may not get the upbeat and reassuring divine answer we want, but at the end of the day "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety. (v. 8).**

**With God at the center of creation, we can sleep in peace.**

**We are not responsible for making sense of every tragedy in life;**

- we may not pass Joyful 101;
- we may not reasonably expect to bring order out of chaos in every troubling situation around us.

**When we find our proper place in God's world and faithfully play our role - no more, no less - we can lie down in safety.**

**We cry to God and become discouraged and depressed when he does not reply but think about it, we are central players in God's cosmic diorama, and if God puts wind under the wings of eagles, why would God do less for us?**

**If you think that smacks of New Age mysticism, think again.**

**It is the same observation Jesus made when he took a walk in Galilee,**

**"Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.**

**Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26).**

**It is also not likely that the apostle Paul could have found help for his problems by popping Prozac.**

**Three times he pounded the portals of heaven demanding release.**

**Only when he gave up his need to be healed did he hear Christ say to him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."**

**Some would call that a cop-out. It is not what we would say.**

**If we were talking with Paul we might have said:**

- Hang in there. You have to take the downs with the ups, the rough with the smooth;**
- Every cloud has a silver lining. Some good will come out of this;**
- Your suffering dignifies you, and bravely borne, it will strengthen your character;**
- This is a test of your faith to see if you really trust God.**

**God will have nothing to do with that sort of gobbledygook.**

**Paul is told: "Live with it, and I will be living there with you."**

**Fellow believers, we live in a broken world.**

**We are fallible human beings who will experience**

**illness,**

**grief,**

**sadness,**

**doubt,**

**despair,**

**depression that passes**

**and clinical depression with which we must live.**

**God in Christ loves and understands us.**

**Our faith,  
Scripture,  
fellow believers  
will enable us to endure and thrive.**

**However, it is ok to need the meds and the therapy.**

**I do believe God in Christ was behind the creating of these.**

**After all, who is identified as the “Great Physician?”**

**Go, friends in Christ.**

**Live as the Easter People you were meant to be.**

**Claim your new life, here and now.**

**God is in control.**

**God walks **WITH YOU** wherever you must journey.**

**\*HYMN      “He Leadeth Me”      In Blue Supplement/No. 618**

### **OUR RESPONSE TO THE WORD**

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (Traditional) The Apostles’ Creed**  
*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;  
he descended into hell;  
the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*  
*I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church;  
the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins;  
the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*