

Healing For The Broken-Hearted is a well-balanced book that presents an integration of theology and psychology. Though it contains some clinical terminologies, it is surprisingly easy to read for everyone. The intent is to help hurting people heal from a broken heart.

HEALING FOR THE BROKEN-HEARTED

by Ron Bankson

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HEALING FOR THE BROKENHEARTED

A silhouette of a person with long hair, seen from behind, looking out at a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with soft, orange and yellow clouds, and the water reflects the light. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

RON BANKSON

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Personal Failure



The subject matter tends to make us uncomfortable. Most people do not like to think or talk about personal failure. But the reality is all of us fail and, at times, miserably! Our failures can take on the form of being deliberate or unintentional through weakness and ignorance. Regardless of the nature of

it, failure can be damaging to ourselves and others, even people we love most.

There are those, because of their personality type, who tend to feel like failures most of the time. They may not be failures at all, but it is imagined so. Multiple factors encourage this, especially having parents or guardians who failed to nurture them as a child. When a person is told he/she is a failure and treated the same, the consequences can last a lifetime. Other factors range from a failed marriage, divorce, financial reversal, and a list of things.

Many people have difficulty getting beyond personal failure because of a self-imposed standard that is too high to reach and maintain. While all of us should strive for excellence, the reality is, everyone fails. Perhaps some because of pride of accomplishment cannot accept the idea of failure. Others may be afraid to face and admit personal

failure because they have spent much time trying to prove to themselves and others they have self-worth. And there is no place for failure in that mind-set.

What is the biblical position on human failure? First, while all our failures are not classified as sin, such as failing an exam or hurting someone unintentionally, because of the introduction of original sin into the world, life without some failure is no longer possible. More strictly speaking, all of us inherited the fallen nature of our first parents (Adam and Eve) and we are sinners and failures by nature. *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12).

Additionally, the Word of God provides a solution to this dilemma of a flawed human nature, a nature that is susceptible to continual failure. A person can receive a new nature, perfect nature, a nature not

subject to failure, in Christ Jesus. This is a spiritual matter altogether, even supernatural. It is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in regeneration of heart and impartation of the very life and nature of God. *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost”* (Titus 3:5).

With the understanding that believers in Christ have a new nature, a perfect nature, how do we account for failure in the life of a Christian? This is not an easy question to answer. The great apostle Paul struggled with this dilemma in Romans, chapters 6-7. In verses 18-19 of chapter 7, he addressed this by stating, *“For I know that in me(that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do”*.

Without going into an extended theological discussion, Paul struggles with two natures within his being. One is the very nature of God, sinless, and incapable of failure. The other nature is Paul's old sinful nature that remains potentially active, therefore causing Paul to sin and fail. If you take time to read both chapters you will notice Paul takes full responsibility for his sins and failures during the occasions he allows his sinful nature to control his life. According to chapter 6:11, we are to "reckon" ourselves dead to our sinful nature and alive unto God.

Since all of us as believers are personally responsible of sin and failure in our lives, what can be done about it? Where does that leave us who have been saved and know better than to sin, yet we sin and fail on a regular basis. If I may quote Dr. Adrian Rogers, "Seems like we are better at sinning than anything else."

To keep with the title of this book and the chapter heading regarding personal failure and what can be done about it, I think a biblical illustration would serve us well. In Luke, chapter 22, we find a classical example of personal failure and divine restoration. Simon Peter is a saved man who, not only fails God miserably, but does so after being warned by Jesus about the potential of it. Jesus said in vv: 31-32, *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you , that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for you that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”*

There are some broad observations that are easily seen in this incident in the life of Peter as it relates to personal failure. First, it should be pointed out, Peter was the leader of the twelve disciples. He was a good man who loved the Lord. Therefore, good people can do some bad things. What Simon did was inexcusable and wounded the heart of Jesus. Additionally, we

must not be critical or judgmental toward Peter because all the disciples failed the Lord miserably when he was arrested, brought to trial, and crucified. All of us are subject to failure. Finally, Simon Peter was forgiven, restored, and recommissioned (v:32) *And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*” What an illustration of personal failure, forgiveness, and restoration!

It has been established in Scripture that all of us fail and forgiveness along with restoration can be experienced. This begs the question, why are so many of God’s children in a dilemma about personal failure? If I may share a personal note, I have met literally hundreds of Christians who struggle with what to do about their failures. That is sad and I say it in a tender and respectful way. The last thing one needs who struggles beneath the burden of guilt and shame because of some failure is to be criticized by another.

If I may refer to Simon Peter and his personal failure, once again; In reference to his faith, it was a lapse in faith, not a collapse of his belief-system. While Peter failed miserably, and lost his focus, it was a temporary condition. And Jesus viewed it as such. The word “when” in verse 32 of Luke 22 supports that. Jesus understood Simon Peter’s failure, loss of focus, and lapse of faith as a temporary condition. My repetition of this is deliberate.

There are some truths about Jesus’ attitude and treatment of Peter, after his lapse of faith, that should be encouraging to those who struggle with personal failure. For example, Jesus did not judge Peter’s life by a single failure. He knew Simon’s heart and that he loved his Lord (John 2:25) *“And needed not that any should testify of man; for he (Jesus) knew what was in man.”* If a single failure, even if it is great, disqualifies a Christian, then all of us are in jeopardy!

It was noted previously, that Jesus commissioned Peter to continue in ministry for Him after his failure.

I think a personal illustration of failure, forgiveness, and restoration would be well placed here: When I was pastor of a church years ago, a man came to my office to share a burden. His story was about a serious incident involving a 13-year-old girl. He looked away and dropped his head while telling about getting the girl pregnant and her family having the baby aborted. He stated that now he understood that abortion is condemned in the Scriptures. The man shared he was a saved person at the time and now must live with the guilt and shame the rest of his life and that God was punishing him for such a terrible act of sin. I shared that was impossible because God punished Jesus on the cross for that terrible failure in his life. I saw a light come on in that man's eyes and a release of a great burden he carried for years. Today

he is a deacon in a church and a joyful individual with a beautiful family.

Regarding personal failure, all of us have failed at times. However, failure should not be final in our lives. There is forgiveness through the blood of Christ, restoration, and a recommissioning in the ministry of helping others. Apply the finished work of Christ to your personal failure and move forward.

DEPRESSION



This subject is so broad in its scope and universal in application that it becomes challenging to give ge treatment to this malady. Never-the-less, because of the damaging nature of depression, it must be approached prayerfully and professionally. I say prayerfully because this writer has struggled with Major Depressive Disorder for years and has gone on

to live a normal, happy life. I say professionally because of earning a degree in the field of human behavior.

I will not give space to the standing controversy concerning the labeling and nature of depression. Many good men argue about depression being a spiritual malady or it being a mental disorder inherited genetically. Actually, neither consideration can be ignored. I would recommend the book, *Spiritual Depression, Its Causes And Its Cure* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Lloyd Jones was a medical doctor and a church pastor who was respected in both fields of service. He integrated both theology and psychology in a well-balanced manner.

Is depression discussed as a subject in the Bible? Yes, it is. The book of Psalms has numerous chapters that address this subject (see Psalm 42;51;71;73;77 and 143). Also, many Bible characters struggled with

depressive episodes. Eligah, David, and Job are some in the Old Testament. Timothy and Paul are two outstanding characters in the New Testament who experienced times of depression. The Apostle Paul stated in II Corinthians, chapter 1 that he was, *“pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired of life”*(v:8).

The Apostle was, no doubt, having a depressive episode rather than contending with living in a state of depression. And there is a difference. Some Christians have a personality type that lends to a depressive disorder. For instance, the melancholy. Paul had no such personality type. Does this mean the melancholy personality is disadvantaged in life? Not at all. In fact, this person has a capacity to love more deeply and be more devoted than some other personality types. But such a personality must be guarded and developed by the Holy Spirit or sad moods and depression can be experienced.

One area of controversy asks the question, is getting depressed a sin? Without evading the issue, a common sense approach would be, if it is, then Paul was sinning in the previously mentioned text! And what about our Savior? Was He not depressed in Gethsemane? It follows that Jesus was a sinner if getting depressed is a sin. And such a consideration is blasphemy.

Dear reader, you should be encouraged that experiencing depression is not sinful. In fact, the last thing a depressed person needs is for someone to make he/she feel guilty. It is true, that while in a depressed state of mind one becomes more susceptible to the attacks of Satan, still, depression within itself, is not a sin.

Major Depressive Disorder is a serious mental disease that is experienced by multitudes of God's children. Whether the cause is genetic (family history)

or is the result of trauma, it is a reality and can be tormenting. The great church pastor Charles Spurgeon who was responsible for the spiritual well-being of 6,000 members who made up the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London during the 1800's said, *"I have suffered such wretched bouts of depression that I could wish none of my parishioners would ever know the experience."* Spurgeon would be out of his pulpit for months at a time trying to recover from a depressed mood. For a person who was the most famous preacher of his time to be so transparent is noteworthy.

For every believer who acknowledges he/she is struggling with depression, there are many who will not ask for help because of church affiliation. They would be told to simply stay in church, spend more time in prayer and Bible reading. This is not a criticism to anyone, but sadly, it is the truth. It is sad because in many cases the person who is depressed

has no cognitive ability to process truth and apply it to life's struggles. Depression has caused the individual to have a certain inability to think properly and make necessary adjustments in thoughts and behavior. Again, there is to be no fault or criticism to the person who is depressed.

What is the nature of depression and how does it affect the person who suffers from it? If I may quote Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones from his previously mentioned book, *"Spiritual Depression is the disease of the soul."* That is a thought-provoking statement. Lloyd-Jones called depression a spiritual matter. I have read his book and happen to be familiar with his terminology. It infers that depression is included in the realm of the spiritual with its causes and cure. Also, it suggests that only God through His Holy Spirit can provide proper help, including transformation, to the depressed Christian.

Spiritual depression (same as clinical depression) effects the total person. The heart, mind, soul, and even physical body of the person can become victimized by this disorder. A Christian can become emotionally unstable, spiritual weak, and physically sick in some instances. David is an example of this in Psalm 6. Also, Proverbs 13:12 states, “*Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.*” The heart in the verse is a reference to the total emotional make-up of a person. The person becomes distraught in a holistic manner. A word of encouragement would be the Holy Spirit can provide transformation of life, supernaturally.

If it can be rightfully called *spiritual depression* does that do away with the possibility of God using human means to bring hope and help? Of course not. It should be remembered that Luke was a medical doctor and traveled with Jesus in His ministry. In His dealings with men and women in the Bible, our Lord, at times included human intervention in the remedy of

the malady and so did the Apostle Paul. A good example of this is found in I Timothy 5:23 where Paul said to Timothy, “*Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities*”. Notice the language in the verse making reference to Timothy’s stomach and infirmities. There is nothing spiritual about that. And while Timothy may not have been depressed, human interventions were suggested to help the man.

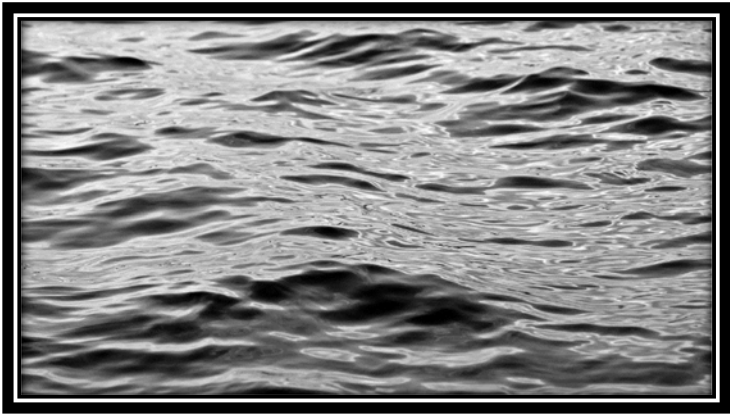
The life of this writer has been transformed by the Holy Spirit from years of despair, discouragement, and major depression. However, God used qualified people to help bring about transformation. I do not mean to imply there is no more struggling with depressive disorder. My experience with Major Depression could be compared to a person treated for cancer who is in remission. It is controlled and lies dormant but has the potential of reoccurring. And like cancer, it can return and cause great harm. Thankfully,

the Holy Spirit is a constant companion providing a maintenance program of intimacy with Jesus Christ.

Since this is a devotional book on healing for the broken-hearted, time and space will not allow for all that should be said about depression. However, I felt some discussion about this malady had to be included. After all, multitudes of Christian's suffer from this disorder and the numbers continue to increase. At the time of this writing a close friend became so desperate for help and understanding that she made a public statement about her depressed condition. She is a career lady with a good family and one who attends church regularly. During her struggles with depression she became vulnerable in her emotions and had an affair with a co-worker. The lady felt such guilt that she told her husband and made things right with all involved, including God. Hopefully, she can find someone who is qualified to help without being judgmental.

There are so many who suffer from Major Depressive Disorder in the Christian community. My heart bleeds for them. They go about their daily lives hiding their true feelings behind a smile. Depression does not go away on its own. And if not treated, it can destroy a person's life, including harming one's self and possibly others. Dear reader, it is never the will of God for you to be depressed. Depression does not come from God. *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; And I pray your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved"* (I Thess. 5:23)

FORSAKEN BY GOD



It may seem to the reader the chapter before us should not follow the previous one. Especially, when one considers the great victory by Jesus in overcoming the trauma of Gethsemane. After all, our Savior was in such agony that His sweat became as

great drops of blood.” And that language is not hyperbole but literally true of Jesus’ suffering.

This chapter explores an area of personal suffering, both in the life of Christ, and in the lives of many Christians that requires careful consideration. Jesus walked out of Gethsemane experiencing personal victory over all the elements sweeping over His soul and body trying to destroy Him. It was the single worst trauma He had ever felt and known. Again, He was victorious. However, in just a short while, He would face Calvary that would eclipse Gethsemane.

The Passion Week of Christ records the events that led to His crucifixion on the cross. After the betrayal and subsequent arrest and trial, which was illegal for many reasons, Jesus was led to Calvary (Luke 23:33). Mark’s Gospel gives the only hour by

hour schedule of events on that dreadful morning. The time-line is found in verses 25-34 of chapter 15.

It is noteworthy that while Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He was never alone or abandoned. He had assurance from God the Father and holy angels. He received some consolation from His disciples, even though they fell asleep. But at Calvary, He found Himself alone and abandoned. Jesus cried out in Matthew 27:46, *“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”*

This observation of the events leading to the cross provides a foundation for the remaining part of the chapter. And it must be stated that as we explore Jesus’ abandonment by His Father, it will be difficult to comprehend. Martin Luther said of this event, “Mystery of mysteries, God forsaken of God.” In other words, Jesus being God and God forsaking Jesus.

Some have thought the forsaking of Jesus by His father while on the cross was more of a symbolic experience than a true reality. However, there is nothing in all of Holy Scripture to support such a position. To suggest what Jesus felt was less than a terrifying reality makes His cry, asking why He was abandoned, senseless. He was alone and forsaken by His Heavenly Father in the mid-day mid-night of Calvary. Jesus told His disciples in John 16:32 that He would never be alone because His Father was with Him. But, at the cross, Jesus was totally alone!

The physical, emotional, and mental anguish Christ felt in His being while forsaken by God defies explanation. To say it was a mental hell would not be an exaggeration. After Jesus cried out asking why His father had forsaken Him, we are told in verse 48 of Matthew 27, that one of the soldiers gave Jesus a drink. That could have been an act of mercy or a gesture to simply prolong His suffering. Regardless, it

draws attention to the agonizing condition of the Son of God.

Before an application is made about God's children feeling alone and abandoned by their Heavenly Father, the reader must be reminded of the sequence of events in the life of Jesus. First, He made it through His Gethsemane with all the fear and agony. Suffering with such intensity until His *sweat became as great drops of blood* (Luke 22:44). Then, He walked out of the garden victorious and in control of the situation at hand. Jesus faced Judas and the mob with complete assurance from His Father.

Dear reader, have you recently gone through a personal Gethsemane, with all its fears and agony? The experience exhausted all your energy and resources. But thankfully, you survived and recovered. The recovery did not come suddenly, but progressively. You bear scars from the deep wounds

but they are reminders of God's grace in your life. You told others of God's faithfulness and how He kept His promises. Now, the unthinkable. Something even worse than before has taken place in your life! How can that be? And you cry out as Jacob of old and say, "*All these things are against me*" (Genesis 42:36).

When something so horrific happens in life that it eclipses a personal Gethsemane, everything one believes is shaken. During that kind of trauma nothing works. All the prayers and claiming of God's promises become redundant. Even a temporary insanity may be experienced. Reality and the unreal become undiscernible. Granted, this is extreme, but nonetheless the condition of some believers. The Psalmist stated in Psalm 71:20, "*Thou, which hast shown me great and sore troubles*." Then he said God brought him down into the depths of the earth. That is graphic, descriptive language. Thankfully, the

Psalmist added that God brought him up again from the depths of the earth.

While the language of the verse is metaphorical, the reality of such trauma in life is literal. Spurgeon's insight on the verse is helpful. According to him, the Psalmist was actually saying, "God has almost killed me, He will speedily revive me; and though I have been almost dead and buried, He will give me a resurrection." Some might argue that could not happen to a child of God, but to the reader who is experiencing such trauma, there is no argument. For the time, one feels abandoned by God.

When Jesus was abandoned and forsaken by His Father while on the cross, it was a literal experience. At Calvary there were no angels to strengthen Him. And worse, the Son of God's Heavenly Father had forsaken Him. Jesus reached for Him, cried out for Him, and He was not there to care for His own Son.

The physical suffering of Jesus was excruciating, but the mental anguish and emotional trauma cannot be compared to the physical pain of Jesus. It was far worse. Isaiah 53 is an Old Testament prophecy of the crucifixion of Christ. The language of the chapter focuses more on the mental, emotional anguish of Jesus than the physical suffering. For example, verses 10-11 use terms like *“Put Him to grief”*—*“Make His soul an offering”*—*“The travail of His soul”*.

The honest person would have to admit Jesus was actually forsaken by His Heavenly Father. And dear reader, the horrific event that you are experiencing could not be worse because it seems God is nowhere to be found. He has abandoned you or so it seems. Nothing could hurt a child of God more. What are you to do?

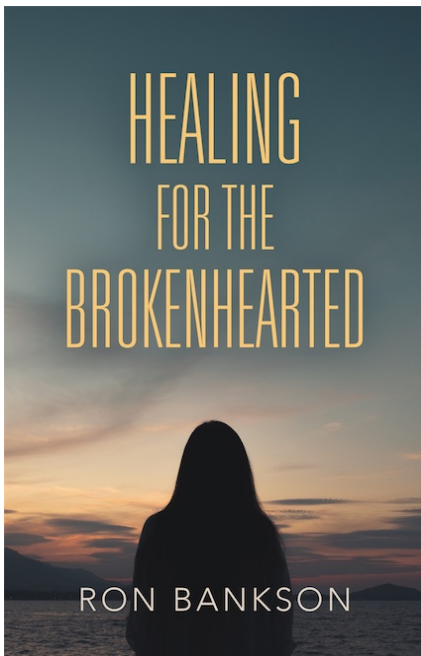
While Jesus was enduring the dark night of Calvary, He had only His spiritual resources to draw

from. These were faith and prayer. His Father had promised in Scripture that He would not forsake Jesus, ultimately. In Psalm 16:10, it is stated, *“For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption”*. Again, in Isaiah 53:10 the Scripture states, *“He (The Father) shall prolong His days (The Son) and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand”*. The resurrection of Christ proves His Father did not forsake Him, ultimately.

Spiritual interventions are not only the greatest source of help in time of great trauma, they are the only real source. Sharing with trusted friends who will keep your confidentiality can be a good source of encouragement, but again, prayer and the Word of God is what the Holy Spirit uses more than anything else. I think of Psalm 107:20, *“He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them out of their destructions”*. Relying on spiritual resources brought

Jesus safely through His dark night at Calvary and they will work for you, dear one.

The remarkable difference between Jesus' traumatic experience and one you may encounter is that He was actually abandoned and forsaken by God, but that can never be true of you. Jesus took our place on the cross and bare all the consequences of our sin so that we would never be forsaken by God! The writer to the Hebrews stated in chapter 13 verse 5 that *"He would never leave us or forsake us"*. In the Greek language the verse contains double negatives. The purpose is to convince us of the impossibility of ever being forsaken of God!



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