

12605U

GLENLOCK BIBLE CAMP - 2002

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JEREMIAH

Speaker: Bro. Ron Cowie

Study #5: Baruch - his sadness and depression

Reading: Jeremiah 25 and 45

Thank you brother Gregg. My apologies for sister Lynn who's a bit unwell today, but will try and be with us tonight.

Well, brethren and sisters, we're going to talk tonight about a cousin's son of Jeremiah. Here's Jeremiah in the family tree! Son of Hilkiah the high priest, grandson of Huldah the prophetess, and he had a cousin called Neriah, who had two sons, Seraiah and Baruch, and it's this cousin's son of Jeremiah, Baruch, that we're going to talk about tonight. We're talking about the 4th year of Jehoiakim; if ever there was a year in which a person could be justifiably depressed and saddened, it was the 4th year of Jehoiakim.

You see, Jeremiah had been prophesying now, 18 years in the reign of Josiah and 4 years in the reign of Jehoiakim, that captivity would come from the north and that Babylon would be the great world power and not Egypt. That there was no point trusting in Egypt because the new power of Babylon would come down and take them captive from Jerusalem. Up to this point, everything that Jeremiah had said about the national scene, seemed to be most unlikely. **Egypt was the world power** once Assyria had declined off the scene, but the Babylonians won the battle at Carchemish quite unexpectedly; Jeremiah who had been mocked and scourged and persecuted for his words, had been derided with the statement, 'where is the word of Yahweh, let it come now'? Right through that 22 years, Jeremiah had suffered all the problems of the false prophets, all the derision and the mocking, and very sadly he and the remnant now have to watch in the 4th year of Jehoiakim as it all began to come to pass!

Just cast your eye across to Jeremiah 46 verses 1 and 2, 'The word of Yahweh which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles: Against Egypt (and notice at the end of verse 2 it's in the 4th year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah). So we're talking tonight then, about everything that happened in the 4th year of Jehoiakim; you might have noticed in chapter 45 that the message to Baruch was in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. The bible is very specific in linking these things together, but the great movement on the national scene, was in verse 2, 'against the army of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon smote in the 4th year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah the king of Judah. The prophecy was that

Egypt was absolutely useless to be relied upon; you cannot trust in Egypt. Down in verse 10, God says what He's going to do to Egypt, 'This is the day of Yahweh God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Him of His adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates', and Egypt was going to be a sacrifice to God! and the Babylonians would be victorious. Everybody that trusted in Egypt would suddenly be afraid of the new world power.

Just have a look at verse 5 and see how good your mind is for bible echoes; 'Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down and are fled apace and look not back; for **fear was round about**, saith Yahweh'. Ring any bells? remember chapter 20 and Pashur; 'Pashur, your name means 'liberated', I'm telling you that your name in the future will be called 'fear round about' (Magor-missabib) and there it is again! Now everybody's afraid because this unknown power of Babylon has come and defeated Egypt. 20 years later Nebuchadnezzar went down to Egypt and pulverize the Egyptians and destroyed their country, and everybody was now frightened of the Babylonians. Fear round about was coming upon them and Jeremiah's words are starting to come home!

In Jerusalem the climate began to change, you see, they can't afford now to ignore Jeremiah any more. We're going to find when we get to the 5th year, even Elnathan the son of Acbor, Jehoiakim's father-in-law is starting to think that they should probably listen to the words of Jeremiah, and he remonstrates with Jehoiakim, not to burn the Word. So even people like Elnathan, who had been right in there with Jehoiakim killing off the prophets, begins to think that they should start to listen to Jeremiah. There's only one person now who's not listening to Jeremiah, and that's Jehoiakim; not interested! and through these first 5 years of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah is kept under house arrest; he is shut up, he cannot go to the house of Yahweh, he's locked away so he cannot be in contact with the people. So in that 4th year of Jehoiakim, the king of Babylon came down to Jerusalem, put Jehoiakim under tribute (now to Babylon, not to Egypt any more) and he took away the first captivity, including Daniel and his friends and most of the Sunday School class, that Jeremiah and Josiah had sponsored. The first captivity was in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and Jeremiah's prophecies are coming to pass with great accuracy; everyone is starting to realize that the things which Jeremiah's been saying are worth listening to! Jeremiah again has lost now, not only Josiah but now he's lost his Sunday School class taken away to Babylon, and God provides another loyal friend; perhaps an answer to Jeremiah's prayer after the death of Josiah, God now gave him another companion, Baruch the son of Neriah.

Now we know quite a few things about Baruch which are an index to his character. Baruch, whose name means 'the blessed' (1263) I want you to remember that, 'the blessed' that's what the name 'Baruch' means; 'the son of Neriah, and Neriah means 'the light of Yah' (5374). His brother, Seraiah, showing again the good family training and upbringing, he was sent by Zedekiah with a delegation to Babylon some 15 years later; Zedekiah sent a delegation to Babylon and the quartermaster, or the one who was

responsible for all the provision, was the brother of Baruch, so they were a responsible family. Baruch was perceived to be a strong influence on Jeremiah; chapter 43, after the city is fallen and those that were left in the city, they come along and they say, 'Jeremiah, do you know what your problem is? you listen to Baruch too much, that's your problem! 'Baruch son of Neriah sets you on against us', so he was obviously perceived by the people to be a man of some influence, because they said, Jeremiah he influences you! and you wouldn't say that likely to a man like Jeremiah, so he was a man of some influence, some standing. The Babylonians when they destroyed the city and they left the remnant of the people in the Land, put in charge Gedaliah the son of Ahiakim, the grandson of Shaphan to be ruler over the Land and he ruled along with Jeremiah and Baruch, so again showing his capability as a ruler. He was Jeremiah's faithful scribe and companion, but Baruch had a problem! and his problem was **ambition**. 'Seeketh thou great things for thyself' (45:5) and God had to deal with that ambition and the depression which came from it. So that's who he was, a very capable and courageous friend to Jeremiah.

Without any doubt, the greatest claim to fame that Baruch had was in his writing the words of Jeremiah, he was a faithful scribe. In fact, most of the book of Jeremiah, we believe, was written by the hand of Baruch; he began in the 4th year of Jehoiakim to write the book down, after that time it takes the form of a biography, it takes the form of a close observer of Jeremiah. You see, all the early chapters that he wrote down in the book in the 4th year of Jehoiakim are historically from Jeremiah's memory. But from the 4th year onwards, the record changes quite considerably, it takes the view of a close observer of Jeremiah, somebody with him day by day. There are details that only a close friend would know about Jeremiah, but to his credit he also includes in the book of Jeremiah, the message that came from God directly to him by way of rebuke as well as in encouragement. So Baruch's moment had come, we know nothing of him before the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and there was now a need to write the words.

Now let's just get this in perspective, b&s, in those days there were no television cameras following Jeremiah around to get a 10 second grab for the evening news; there were no newspapers to report the text of his speech; you think about it, Jeremiah had been told to go and talk in the valley of Tophet, in the potter's house, in the gate of the temple, down by the gate of the king's house, interrupt the coronation ceremony, go through the land, all over the place Jeremiah had given various prophecies, but no one had written them down. There were no tape recordings so that you could go back over them to get the sense that he meant, you see, there was no record of the words of Jeremiah. There might have been 20 or 30 people that heard him speak here, or 50 that heard him speak there, or maybe a 100 heard him speak there, but nobody had heard all the speeches of Jeremiah. You know what happens when things are passed on by word of mouth; you remember the game that's often played at kitchen teas, you know, you start off a rumour at this end of the room and when it gets around here, you wouldn't recognize the story. You see, Jeremiah was being misquoted everywhere; God said, 'I want it all written down, we've got to have a record, we've got to have a testimony, because there are some that might repent!' So He gave him Baruch! so let's

go back to chapter 36 and start off the event of the writing of the words of Jeremiah. Notice in verse 1 it's in the 4th year of Jehoiakim. You know, all these dates are not given without reason, the bible's expecting us to put together the picture. God comes to Jeremiah and says, 'Take a scroll (roll should be scroll) of a book and write therein all the words that I have spoken **against** (and notice that everything at this stage is against) against Israel, against Judah, and against all nations; all the evil that I've said from the days of Josiah to this day'. I want everything recorded that you've said to this point, Jeremiah; I want it in a book! Why? Well, verse 3 and verse 7 both start with the phrase, **it may be**, which tells us at this point that God was still hoping that some would repent, that the house of Judah might hear the evil I purpose to do unto them. Of course, God's hoping that the house of the king and all the nobles will listen to the appeal of Jeremiah. 'That I may forgive their iniquity and their sin', so you see there was still some hope! Verse 3 and verse 7 are very similar in what God intended from this writing, and you can imagine what God hoped, that when people saw what combined with the words of Jeremiah, that they would be shaken up and devastated and some of them were! Now you read later on about the reaction, look at verse 11. You know we haven't got time to do the family of Shaphan, but here's a grandson of Shaphan a young fellow called Michaiah, he's probably about 17, he couldn't be much older than that, given the genealogy: 'When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan had heard from the book, all the words of Yahweh, he went down to the king's house (now you just picture this) You know, when Baruch read the book eventually he went into the temple and there were all the people assembled beneath him, and he's standing up in the chamber of the scribes on the balcony, and he reads the words of Jeremiah. There's a young man down in the back of the crowd and hears the assembled words of Jeremiah, and he rushes in and breaks into the cabinet meeting.

Now the group he breaks into in verse 12, 'he went down to the king's house', so he rushes into the palace, into the scribes' chamber (he's going right into the inside of the palace and all the princes are sitting there, debating what to do about the Babylonian siege). How are we going to handle the Babylonian negotiations? as this very intense cabinet meeting is going on. In bursts a young man through the door and says, 'you should hear what I've just heard! what have you heard, young man? I've just heard all the words of Jeremiah! and the cabinet meeting breaks up immediately and they said, 'go and get us the book!' You see, he was so motivated by the Word, that he was prepared to go and break up the cabinet meeting where his father was. You see in verse 12 that, 'Gemariah the son of Shaphan', that's his father, was actually in the meeting, so he wanted to go and get his father and say, 'dad we've got to listen to this! you've got to read this book'. But just imagine the impression of all the assembled words of Jeremiah and there were many others through this chapter that were impressed. Verse 25, even Elnathan the man who lured Jeremiah the prophet and dragged him back from Egypt, even Elnathan says, 'I don't think, Jehoiakim, that we should actually burn this book, I think we should perhaps read it!' There was only one person that wasn't impressed and that was Jehoiakim! 'Give me the book', rip, another page gone! and he's throwing it in the fire; everybody was in awe of the words of Jeremiah when they were recorded. So let's just remember, they didn't have any record other than what

the people could remember.

So he took the scroll and he wrote it down and the chapters that he wrote in the 4th year of Jehoiakim are these (it would be all of Jeremiah's words to that point): verse 4, 'all the words of Jeremiah which he had spoken unto him, in a roll of the book'. He wrote out chapters 1 to 12, chapters 14 to 20, (and the reason chapter 13 is not, it's the visit to Babylon that took place a little later on, again, the chapters being out of order, you have to be aware of that), also chapter 23 and chapter 46. Later on, in verse 28, after Jehoiakim had burnt the scroll, 'take thee again, another scroll and write in it all the former words that were in it', and we're told later on that he added a lot more as well. At the end of the chapter, 'he added many more words to it on the second writing'. So he had to write it all again, and we might say, 'Ah, well, a couple of hours on the word processor and I had problems', but that wasn't the way they did it in those days. They sat there with probably a leather scroll, and a quill and it was a very slow process, and being a scribe they were **meticulous** for accuracy. You know, you couldn't afford to make a mistake, you couldn't get out the white out, and start again. It had to be done very, very painstakingly, to write out the words of Jeremiah in the Hebrew as it would have been. So he writes it all out and then Jeremiah says, we've got a postscript to add to it! We're going to add to it, chapter 25. I want you to come to chapter 25, because this is what sent Baruch into a tailspin. It was bad enough to have all the condemnations that Jeremiah had previously given, but to add chapter 25, is what really sent Baruch over the edge!

Now the proof that this was added to the book is in verse 13, it says, 'God said, I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book' (and the book of Jeremiah didn't exist when chapter 25 was written) the book he's talking about is the one that Baruch has just finished. He'd written all those chapters and God says, 'you add this one!' To all those words, you add chapter 25, so we know this is in the book because chapter 25 tells us that this was added to the book as a postscript. Well, what does this chapter say? Verse 1, 'The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the 4th year of Jehoiakim'. So again, there was another proof that it was added to the book in the time of writing, 'which was the first year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon', and it's a very typical Jeremiah chapter. I want you to just notice, and I'm just going to select a few verses that give you the tone of this chapter, just read verses 8 and 9: 'Therefore thus saith Yahweh of hosts; Because ye have not heard My words, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith Yahweh, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and the inhabitants and the nations round about; and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment and a hissing, and a perpetual desolations. I will take from them the voice of mirth and of gladness, the voice of the bride and the sound of millstones and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment; and this nation shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years'. Do you get the drift? Doom, doom and more doom!

Now we know, of course, that wrapped up in the doom was the promise of restoration at

the end of 70 years in verse 12, they would come back. Babylon would be punished, but then he goes on from verse 15 with the parable of the cup of fury that passes from king to king. So God says, 'I've got a cup here and in it are my judgments and my fury and my anger and I'm going to give it to all the nations'. Verse 17, Jeremiah's involved in this, 'I took the cup at Yahweh's hand, and made the nations to drink, unto whom He had sent me'. What nations? Well, Jerusalem first and its kings, verse 18; verse 19, Egypt; verse 20, the mingled peoples, the Philistines; verse 22, Tyre and Zidon and the kings beyond the sea; Dedan, Tema, Buz and all in the utmost corners; the kings of Arabia, the kings of Zimri, the kings of the Medes, the kings of the north'. God's saying very simply what verse 29 says, 'If I'm going to start with My city, if judgments are to be sent on My city and My people, the rest of you are certainly going to get a taste of the cup! 'For, lo, when I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, do you think you're going to go unpunished all ye kings?' If I'm doing this to My city, the rest of you haven't got a hope!' Verse 29, 'ye shall not be unpunished; for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith Yahweh'. The prophecy is just outstandingly devastating! you know, we quote these words, verse 33, about Armageddon, 'The slain of the LORD shall be from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth and they shall not be lamented'; and it's true that it applies to Armageddon but it first applied to the devastation of the Babylonians and you've got to read what happened when Nebuchadnezzar went into Egypt and the land of the Philistines, and see how accurately it was fulfilled!

Then it ends up, let's just take verses 37 and 38 to get the tone of chapter 25: 'The peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of Yahweh. He hath forsaken His covert, as the lion; for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of His fierce anger'. God is just unleashing His passion against Judah and Jerusalem and everybody else! and Baruch is writing this down as Jeremiah speaks this in the 4th year of Jehoiakim; this is the postscript, a dreadful prophecy. You see, what it did for Baruch is that it brought home beyond any shadow of a doubt, **that there was no hope for Judah!** there was absolutely no hope of a revival, there would be 70 years of desolation. It was all coming! What that did for Baruch was to precipitate for him a personal crisis.

Let's just come now to chapter 45, but on the way, let's just stop in chapter 36, we need to notice that in verse 4, Baruch wrote all the words of Jeremiah, then you might add after verse 4, then he added chapter 25. But between verse 4 and verse 5 comes chapter 45 also. You see, in verse 9 it says, 'that he read the book in the house of Yahweh in the 5th year of Jehoiakim in the 9th month'. That was possibly, b&s, over 12 months from when he wrote it! What happened in that 12 months? he never got to read it. He wrote it in the 4th year, he did not get to read it until the 9th month of the 5th year. In that time, the captives were taken away; in that time, **Baruch went into a terrible depression!** He didn't have the courage to read for perhaps 12 months. Let's just go to chapter 45 and see what happened to Baruch.

It says in verse 1 of chapter 45, 'The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch

the son of Neriah, when he had written these words'. Now the Hebrew there should be better translated, 'in the writing of the words', it's actually in the present tense in the Hebrew; 'these are the words that Jeremiah spake to Baruch **during the time of writing or in the writing of the words** of the book, and you can see, can't you? Baruch writing the words out from Jeremiah's mouth as Jeremiah speaks the words. When he finishes chapter 25, there are tears dropping on the page and Baruch just goes off on his own and has a very major crisis. At some stage, Jeremiah comes to him in the 4th year with a message from God. It was quite fitting that Jeremiah was sent because of all people that were left in the Land, Jeremiah understood what it was to be depressed, he'd been through it a couple of times himself. 'For thy sake have I suffered rebuke; I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced. I sat alone because of thine hand, but Thou hast filled me with indignation' (Jer.15:15-17). You see, Jeremiah had gone through long periods of not only feeling bitter against God, but bitter against the people because they wouldn't respond. He knew what it was to be bitter of spirit, so God sent him to speak to Baruch.

This would have been an embarrassing message for Baruch, but it also was an encouraging message because it showed that God cared for him. Verse 2, 'Thus saith Yahweh the God of Israel unto thee, O Baruch'; now you imagine, here's a man who has been happily writing out the words of Jeremiah. Jeremiah comes back and says, 'Baruch, I know you're miserable, but God's asked me to add something for you personally'. Imagine how he felt! so we're going to talk a little bit about depression. I want to be clear, I'm not medically trained, but for various reasons we have researched the subject a little bit. What I want to try and give you is a biblical view of handling depression. You know, depression is an increasingly common issue for the world and for the brotherhood; I think perhaps because it's become a more accepted social problem than it once was. You know, people who once had a nervous breakdown, as we called them, or were depressed, were looked down on.

But today there's a lot more data about this phenomenon we use to call 'nervous breakdown', which is now called '**depression**', and it's become a more acceptable illness in society. It is not uncommon, b&s, there are currently today, 800,000+ Australians being treated for depression. That's 1 in every 24 of the people you see walking around out there, being treated for it, let alone those that were not being treated for it and should be! It's a common problem, it's no wonder also we find it in the brotherhood, in fact, I'm going to say later on, it's surprising we don't find more of it in the brotherhood! It's quite amazing, isn't it? in the world where we have all the things to make life easy; we don't work very long days, we have all the weekends off, we have all the comforts of life, labour saving devices, air conditioning, compared to past generations we have a very easy life physically. What we have to contend with is a mentally confusing world. A world that is stressful, a world that is time critical, a world that is besieged with the information and the media, with constant change in new technology, advertising where they say that if a person sits on a bus, reads a newspaper, listens to an hour of the radio, they've actually been exposed to 60,000 adverts a day. You see, everybody is trying to get into your brain. When you go to work

there's more pressure being put on people. Part of the spirit of madness of the age, is constant change and you're either always trying to find a job or keep a job. Where I work, we're constantly being restructured, downsized, transformed, right sized, flat structures, biographical structures, every new whimsical thing that they can find in the United States they bring here; try it for a couple of years and then they restructure us again! You get sick of it, it's the spirit of madness and they say to us that if we're not constantly changing, then we're going backwards. What happened to the days that we could just be content, that we were doing things well? But it's the nature of the spirit of change!

It's also an age of unreal expectations! Well, if we haven't got the best and the latest of everything, we somehow think we're failures and we tend to forget that our grandparents, or my grandparents at least, lived in a home with no electricity, no running water and mud floors and brought up families in the truth. We complain if the air conditioning doesn't work efficiently; you see, we've got unreal expectations and false images of what makes people happy.

So let's just define what depression is! Now I want to say at the outset that some depressive illnesses have a physical basis, there are chemical deficiencies that some people have, the technical term is neurotransmitters; they are little chemical elements of the brain that can be in short supply for various reasons. Sometimes that can be mended by proper medication. So don't just think that I'm saying here that depression isn't a physical thing-it is sometimes a physical illness. Depression also sometimes runs in families, it can be inherited; but many cases of depression is totally unexpected and the cause is unknown.

What it says about depression is that it can come to anybody; it doesn't come to any one particular personality type, it can be to the meek or the confident; to the dynamic or the introspective, to the highly active or the creative; anyone can be subject to depression, it plays no favourites. What we do know is that it often has a trigger, it often follows a personal loss (grief and loss of a partner) can bring depression. It often follows job loss. We all know people don't we? that have been retrenched and go through a couple of years quite often of really miserable times, and really lack of self confidence and self esteem till nobody wants them. So a major **loss**, can bring on depression; it quite often follows a major crisis, you know, where you had to be strong for everybody else and to really get up there and to make a great stand. Then when the pressure is off, people can crash. It can come upon us very suddenly and very unexpectedly. When we're talking about depression, we're not just talking about sad times, we all have sad moments in our lives, we're talking about the long episodes of sadness and the spirit of negativity that comes upon people who are depressed.

Now let me just put up some of the manifestations of depression and sadness. Now people who are depressed go through a variety of these: they don't have them all, and you see that some of them are totally opposite to each other. But to define depression, you normally have a combination of these particular manifestations: the most common

one is **morose**, sadness or gloom, and described by those who've been there as the 'black hole experience'. You know, the sense of 'I just can't get out of this, I'm just slipping away, I'm falling into it'. If you want to see that brilliantly described in the bible, you read the first couple of verses of Psalm 73; 'my feet had slipped, my steps were almost gone', sliding into the abyss' says Asaph. There's a man who was depressed! so the 'black hole experience', knowing there's no pleasure in life, not able to rejoice or hope, and we're going to see tonight that that's the worse thing that depression does, is it destroys hope! People don't think there's any point in going on. Feelings of agitation or conversely lassitude and apathy; some people get very agitated, others just don't want to do anything, sit in a chair, read a book, close off from the world, they're always feeling very tired, but at the same time they can't sleep properly. Some over eat, some lose weight!

Another common factor is **sense of uselessness and worthlessness**: I'm no good, I'm a failure, nobody wants me! Can't concentrate, poor memory, avoids pressure, 'when the sun goes, I'm out of here!' Can't even pick up the phone, there might be a decision I'll have to make! 'I can't do it, leave me alone'. **Introversion and shaky self opinion**, they start to get very, very consumed with themselves; want to see that? verse 3 chapter 45, 'Woe is me!' you see, that's depression, isn't it? woe is me! a self evaluation made by emotions rather than by reasoning and you can't go to a depressed person and say, 'now look, you shouldn't be depressed because 1,2,3, and 4,5,6 and these are the reasons you shouldn't be depressed now come on!' It doesn't work like that, you see, they're **feelings driven**, they're not responding to logic. This is a very common one, they desperately want love, but it's hard to get close because they will tend to push you away and they'll say, 'I want to be alone!' Don't believe them! they want to be loved but the manifestation will be, 'leave me alone!'

..... and followed by psychosomatic illness that is physical consequences caught off and Well, b&s, let me just say this about depression, I want to say two things: 1. it's not a new phenomenon, I'm going to talk about several bible characters who went through depression, but the main thing I want to say about depression is that it's not an evidence of a lack of faith. It is not a sin to be depressed! You know, God who knows our frame and He knows our minds, He's put into this bible a whole lot of characters who went through depression because He knows that most of us, somewhere in our life, will have to go through the same thing. His own Son had to go through it, many great men had to go through it, God who knows that probably most of us will go through it at some stage. He's put these characters here to encourage us, that you can get through it!

Just think of these, and you know the stories, we won't turn them up, you think of Hannah, who had a great faith; she was doing her duty, they went up every year to keep the feasts, she supported her husband; a godly woman but she's falling apart inside. She can't stop **crying**, remember it said that? She was always crying when she went up to Jerusalem; they're all families, and there's her adversary provoking her sore and she can't stop crying! So there's that manifestation of the tremendous sadness, isn't it? What else did it say about Hannah that was a manifestation of this? **She couldn't eat**,

remember, she wasn't hungry, she'd lost her appetite. **She also wanted to be alone**, she refused the loving help of Elkanah, the well intentioned help of Elkanah, but I might just say this, that Elkanah wasn't particularly tactful! because you don't go to a woman who can't have children and say, 'Am not I better than 10 sons?' I mean, you're not going to solve the problem! (I've got a bit of male vanity there) but it wasn't the right thing to say to a woman in that condition. But he was well meaning, he loved her, he didn't want to see her sad; she said, 'I want to be alone'. She even cut him out of the picture, **she withdrew**; and when you read her prayer, there was a total focus on herself and her problem, and she said when she was questioned by Eli, 'I am bitter of soul'. I am bitter of soul, and refused to be comforted. Now that's depression, b&s, and Hannah went through that; you read the record yourself some time with those factors in mind and you'll see it come through!

Another one we know well was Job. You know, Job went through the whole range of experience; 'you've heard of the patience of Job', said James as recorded the other day in Job, 'I go forward, I can't find God, He's not there! I go back, and He's not there either; where's God in my life? On the left hand? no, He's not there! He hides Himself on the right hand, 'I can't see Him', and Job went through the experience, didn't he? of the great struggle. Remember what happened when he first got smitten with the leprosy? 7 days with no words. His wife's comfort wasn't much good, his friends just sat there for 7 days and didn't know what to say and he's totally focussed; when he starts off he says, 'Cursed be the day that I was born!' and he's gone into **that consuming self pity** and he spoke the words that Jeremiah later quoted in Jeremiah 20, 'why was I ever born?' and a sense of hopelessness descended upon Job. But, you see, his faith got him through; he says, 'I know that I shall come out as tried gold' and because of that he did!

Think of David, you know, all the emotions, the cycles of David's emotions are recorded in the Psalms. The heights of glory, the depths of despair, the guilt, the loneliness, but think of David when he was hiding the sin with Bath-sheba. You know, he tells us in Psalm 32, of the physical consequences that came, he says, 'my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth, my bones are dried and burnt; I've got a roaring inside my bones', and he hated himself. There are times in David's life that he doubled up **the persecution complex**; think of how many songs we have where David is saying, 'I want mine enemies chopped up in little bits', is that a right attitude? But you see, he's got a persecution complex, he's got depression and hatred and bitterness and all those things are there in the Psalms, about the wrong attitudes that people had to work through.

The most classic struggle, of course, is Asaph, sliding away in depression: why do the wicked prosper? why does everything go wrong for me and they have a glorious life? I'm going to give up the truth, I'm going to walk out, I've had enough, why should I cleanse my hands, it's a waste of time serving God. I might as well go and join the wicked! Then he claws his way back, he finds a toe-hold, the toe-hold is, 'there are people depending on me', 'I can't let them down', and he climbs back out of the hole. So

you see, there are lots of others!

We could look at Jonah, John Mark, Paul, king Saul, but let's just take a classic case! I want to look at one case, just come to 1 Kings 19, here's how depression works. This character is really interesting because he's one of a sort of people that are most inclined to be depressed, the high achiever! You know, we always find it incredibly difficult to understand when people who are capable crash into depression. The story of Elijah-highly motivated, dynamic, but there was one thing that Elijah had a problem with, he was close to no one! He didn't have anyone to lean on in a time of crisis. Here was a man who could rise to great heights and then crash to the depths; remember him on Carmel, taken on all the prophets, you know, just magnificent, alone in front of the whole crowd, to take on and to stand up for God. Running before the chariot of Ahab, all the way back to Jezreel in the power of the Spirit. He gets to Jezreel and he thinks, 'well, that's it, God's now going to change the whole thing around', and a bit of paper comes to him, 'Elijah, you're dead meat! Jezebel!' and he crashes! You see, he's used all his nervous energy upon Mount Carmel and running down Jezreel; he's got nothing left to give. Now I want you to notice verse 3, b&s, (if you've got a pencil there, just colour this in) you know, the bible's telling us what depression is; you see, he's got no resources left, he's emotionally drained, verse 3, 'And when **he** (colour in the he's through this section) 'when he saw that, **he** arose, and went for **his** life, and left **his** servant there'. So there is the beginning of the self consuming pity; my life's in danger, I've got to run away, and I don't want any help; my servant, you stay here!' and verse 4 emphasizes it beyond doubt. 'But **he himself**' (you know we make a big play of Hebrews 2 verse 14, don't we? but you see, he's become totally absorbed with himself) **He himself** went a day's journey into the wilderness, and sat down: and **he** requested for **himself** that **he** might die', do you see the total consuming self pity coming here? and he's utterly depressed, a sense of worthlessness.

What did he pray for? 'I want to die, I can't see any point in living; let me die, God! It's enough, take away **my** life, for **I** am no better than my fathers.' Totally consumed with himself. 'And **he** lay down and slept under a juniper tree'. Now this is the man that's just been running before a chariot, and all of a sudden he's got all these symptoms of depression, you know, that's a tremendous lassitude! tremendous tiredness, he's got no strength left, he just wants to lie down; and he's not eating, because you see, he's already gone a day's journey into the wilderness, as it says in verse 4. He's gone at least 24 hours and he hasn't eaten a thing. So those are the symptoms of depression, aren't they? You know verse 5 tells us that he's not only withdrawn from his servant, he's got nobody to help him, there's no one to feed him except the angel. You know, 6 weeks later he was still in the same frame of mind! We know that he went 40 days and 40 nights down to Horeb, this was a process that took 6 or 7 weeks to work through; this is a long depression. In fact, he took 6 weeks to do what most people could do in a couple of days, it was only a couple of days journey for one man to get down to Horeb; it took him 6 weeks to get there, and he's a man that run in front of a chariot. If he had gone at the pace of a chariot, he would have been there in a couple of hours, why did it take 6 weeks to get to Horeb?

Then, the angel says 'what are you doing here, Elijah?' Now I want you to notice his reply,

(get out your pencil again) 'I have been very jealous for Yahweh God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain the prophets with the sword; and I even **I only** am left; and they seek **my** life, to take it away'.

So you see, he's totally absorbed with himself; he's a failure; God's not fair; God doesn't care; God hasn't noticed what's going on and he's blaming everybody else. You don't care! You see, Elijah didn't say to God, 'I've been thinking about the wonderful years I had with the widow of Sarepta; I've been thinking about the ravens; I've been thinking about how you answered my prayer on Mount Carmel, I never got to thank you for that, did I? I've been thinking about the response of Ahab, I've been thinking about that lovely chap, Obadiah, that I met, and the rain that's now blessing the Land, I've been thinking of all those things!' But NO, he's saying, I'm miserable and you don't care! You see, that's the difference in perceptions, isn't it? he's totally absorbed with himself.

Now we know what happens, how God shows him the earthquake and fire and how God was not in it. God was trying to teach him that the teaching, the small voice of teaching, is better than all the great miracles. I want you to notice what happened for the first six weeks: when he woke up in verse 6, when the angel gently woke him up. The angel touched him, Elijah wakes up and looked, it says in verse 6, 'and behold there was a cake baked, a cruse of water and the angel had prepared him a meal. He went back to sleep, the angel wakes him up in verse 7, 'you need to eat', so he eats again. Now it says in verse 8, 'He arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat 40 days and 40 nights' (I don't believe that Elijah had two meals and that was enough for 6 weeks; I believe every time he woke up, the angel was there with a meal ready, and in the strength of that sort of meal, he went down to Horeb). So the angel very carefully cared for him during that time; just remember that! B&S, when we see Elijah depressed like this, we could understand that in his case it was based on some misconceptions, but it's not a sin to fall into times of depression.

Even the Lord Jesus Christ, we're told, began to be very heavy; even the Lord Jesus Christ began to focus on the cross; even the Lord Jesus Christ when John was killed, He withdrew apart into a wilderness place, to mourn and to go through His sadness. We must never think that it will never happen to us. In some ways, b&s, our lives are more susceptible to depression than even the world should be! You know, we have to live up to things like, 'through much tribulation or pressure we shall enter the kingdom of God.' We're going to be put under pressure, we're going to have pressure in our lives. We are not to be content with our natural instincts! 'people out in the world are just happy'-wow! 'who cares, if I like it I do it!' But we can't be content with our natural instincts, we've got to keep questioning ourselves, why we do things and every day we fight a world that says, 'just do it if you feel like it!' We set ourselves high objectives, we try and reach up to great heights spiritually, for ourselves and our families, and we don't always get there! We have to move in a hostile world, you can't get too friendly with the people you work

with or that you see every day, because you've got different values and you have to be on your guard, lest they catch you out.

Our witness is either ignored or derided; the world doesn't like **fundamentalists** any more, and in ecclesial life we end up trying to carry the burdens of others in many cases when we don't have the skills to do that! I was talking to a brother not long ago who got unwell and depressed and went to his doctor, and the doctor asked him what he did with his time? and this was a brother who held down a responsible job, and had been an arranging brother for over 20 years in a big ecclesia, and the doctor said, 'let's just run through the last 2 or 3 weeks, what have you been doing with your evenings?' Because they had been through a few ecclesial problems and people problems, the doctor said, 'well, if you go on living 2 jobs you're going to kill yourself'. Because many of us are running 2 careers, we try to balance home and work responsibilities, and ecclesial responsibilities, and some of the things we end up dealing with are extremely distressing. Also because we know so many people, we come in contact with far more tragedies and troubles and sickness and family heartaches than most people ever would hear of! I mean, if someone in our ecclesia had a heart attack you would know about it before I got home! wouldn't you? the phones would be buzzing. Because we know a lot of people, we feel for a lot of people, so we've got a lot of reasons out there, for things going through our mind. I might just say from my observation, one of the very depressing things in the last few years which is a new phenomenon for us here in South Australia, there are a lot of parents who are hurting very, very deeply because their children are not walking in the way of the truth. That's a new phenomenon that we haven't had to deal with too much in previous generations; you go to most ecclesias now, there are a number of families who are struggling with the fact that their children are not walking in the truth. So we will not be surprised that there will be times that the pressures and burdens overwhelm people; as we said, the Lord was overwhelmed when John the Baptist died; Paul had very low moments in the prison in Rome, he had low moments in Athens when he was alone. It's not a sin, b&s, to be depressed, it ought to be perhaps a little more expected than it is. What is important is that we find our way through it, that like Job we come out refined as gold!

I just want to give you probably the best piece of advice that I read outside of the bible about depression. It was from a sister who had been through a depression, she wrote a beautiful article about it and she said this in advising other people, she said, 'There will be no coming out of the depths as long as we prefer to stay in them'. So there has to be a recognition that, yes, I'm not enjoying this and I want to get out of it; till a person comes to that point, they will not get out of it. Nobody can cure them, people have to come to the point where they say, I want to climb out! I don't know how but I want to get out!

So let's go back now to Baruch in chapter 45 and see how God treated his depression. This is really helpful, b&s, because we're hearing a lot today, even in the brotherhood, about how depression ought to be handled. I'm just going to give to you, the divine way that depression was handled. Most instructive! You can check the pattern of how God

handles the depression, you can check it in the case of Job, Elijah, Jonah, the disciples in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaeus and with Jeremiah. In all of those cases where God handled depression, some of the same principles came through; God who knows our mind and knows our frame, who's a loving heavenly Father, says this is the only way that it ought to be handled.

Let's say something about psychiatrists! Psychiatrists like all professions vary enormously in their quality. I'm not saying, don't go to psychiatrists, I'm saying if you do, be very cautious; some of them are humanistic, some will blame religion as the cause of the depression; some will just prescribe medications without thought. But one of the most common things that psychiatrists will say to people who are depressed is that you have the right to avoid responsibility. You have time, you have to make time, make space for yourself, go to the clinic, get away from the pressure! I never find that in the bible. I just make that point of caution, you see, they don't have a spiritual component to offer!

So let's just see how God handles it. Well, the first thing in verse 3, is **careful listening and feedback!** You see, what God says to Baruch is this, 'thou didst say', you see, God was listening and God feeds back the thoughts of Baruch to him. 'Baruch, I heard you say this, 'Woe is me', (so if you've got a pencil there) 'thou didst say, woe is me, for Yahweh added grief to my sorrow, I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest'. There's that typical self pity! I, I, I, I referred to as depression. Look what he's doing! sorrow, grief, fainting, sighing, no rest - you see, that's the self pity that comes, isn't it? the focus on self. He doesn't say anything about God's feelings, how God might feel at this time that the nation is going to be wiped out; and he can't get to sleep-'I find no rest'. God says, 'Baruch, I want you to hear, I want **you** to hear, Baruch, what I'm hearing'; and of course, Baruch hadn't been going around preaching this, he'd only been saying this in his own bedroom and in his own head, but God now feeds it back to him. 'Baruch, this is what I hear you saying', is that true Baruch? yes, it's true! You see, it's very useful to the depressed, b&s, to hear what they're actually saying. Remember Elijah was twice asked, 'what are you doing here, Elijah?' and he never learned from the demonstration of the still small voice; he came out with the same message, 'they seek my life, and you don't care!' Same message! but you see, God was feeding it back to him, 'this is what I hear you saying, Elijah'. It's the same for Baruch, 'Baruch, this is what I hear you saying, is that correct?' and sometimes hearing what we're saying is the start of the solution.

God provides in verse 4 a reality check. So verse 3, it's **listen and feed back;** (we'll come back to these in a minute and see them in practical outworking). Verse 4 is the **reality check!** 'Baruch, some things will not change, it's all going to go. There will be no saving Judah! You see, God didn't lie to him and say, 'Look, Baruch, just, just get yourself drunk and in the morning it will be okay!' Baruch, it's not going to change - reality check; 'That which I have built is going to break down, what I planted I'm going to pluck up, the whole land is going to go.' Very likely Baruch had possessions, he certainly had ambitions of a important career; very likely when he started writing Jeremiah's words, he was hoping that there would be a national revival, that they would

all repent and that life would go on and the Jews would survive. God says, 'No, Baruch, it's all going to go! you've read chapter 25, I mean what I say, 'fierce anger, destruction, desolation'; reality check - it's not going to change!

Then in verse 5, Baruch, part of your problem is your **false expectations**; Baruch, you're seeking great things for yourself. You see, very likely he wanted to be a great teacher or prophet. You can imagine becoming famous as Jeremiah's scribe, or maybe even becoming the high priest. You know, later on the high priest was shopped around to all Jeremiah's cousins. He was hoping that by taking on this job, that he'd get a position out of it, and when he read the prophecy, he knew there would be no positions, there would be no nation left. God picks on the false expectation, and you know, one of the major causes of depression in the world is false expectations. People are exposed to the false images they see on television and adverts and they think happiness is in owning things; you know, have you got the latest brush that goes whirl, whirl, whirl and cleans your upstairs windows? It will make you a happy man! and you buy the silly brush and it breaks on the second time you use it and you see them in the garbage cans all down the street; you know, the thing just didn't work, but they thought they'd get happy by having the thing. The world tells you if you've got the things you'll be happy! We get the impression in this world that we can have everything and be happy; well life's not like that, there's always a struggle to achieve anything in this life. You make money and the faster it goes out the door; the world finds they're frustrated because their expectations are all wrong, they're looking in the wrong directions for happiness. So we need a reality check, don't we? It's the last days, we're going to be lucky to survive, it's not a time for worldly success, it's a time to focus on **saving a few!** That's what we want to be thinking about, b&s, saving our families and saving those we can influence; don't seek great things in this life - it won't happen!

Verse 5, Well, the other thing we need to do in depression is to **focus on gratitude!** 'But thy life I will give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest'. Baruch you remember what I have promised, you know, the phrase that we read at the end of verse 5, 'I will give thee thy life for a prey', it occurs 4 times in Jeremiah, in chapter 21 verse 9, chapter 38 verse 2, chapter 39 verse 18 and here. The people that it's addressed to are, Baruch, Ebed-melech, Jeremiah, and the remnant. So all the friends of Jeremiah had that said about them; and God said, 'Baruch, forget about honour and power and all those things, forget about the nation, Baruch, I'm giving to you the promise that you will be preserved! Now, I just want to explain the Hebrew metaphor, 'I will give your life for a prey', you know, the Hebrew language is very, very expressive. We don't understand these things because we don't see this every day, but if you watch any Richard Attenborough's, or read the Reader's Digest you'll understand what I'm talking about. The picture in the Hebrew is a little antelope being chased by this ravenous lion (probably some of you have seen these chases where the antelope is bounding along, jumping all over the place and the lion is gaining on him all the time; then all of a sudden, the lion just about gets hold of him, and he knocks him off his feet and the little antelope rolls over and he gets up running, and before the lion's got a chance to grab him, he's off and running again bounding this way and that; and he only survives by

twisting and turning. He'd never defeat the lion in a straight run. All of a sudden, he gets into the brush wood and the trees, and the lion can't keep up, and he goes into the bush and is panting heavily and the poor little thing is shaking and shivering and puffing and panting, but **he's alive!** He's got scars where the lion hit him, but he's alive! and that's the Hebrew metaphor, 'I will give you your life for a prey'; you were going to be eaten but you'll just get away'. That's the Hebrew metaphor and 4 people were told that, the remnant, Baruch, Ebed-melech and Jeremiah, 'I'll preserve you Baruch, but it won't be without many frightening experiences. Baruch had to see that life this side of the kingdom is very largely a time of evil, evil around us but the love of God to preserve us!

So let's just summarize some of the thoughts of overcoming sadness and depression.

1. Firstly, b&s, don't despise it, don't say to people, 'just get off your backside and do something! just snap out of it. You shouldn't be depressed in the truth'.
2. It's a complex illness and it needs a long cure.
3. It will not just go away by an exercise of will power.
4. It needs refocusing of the spiritual mind. So don't despise it and don't say to them they shouldn't be depressed.
5. Supply support and patient understanding.
6. It will take a long time to work through depression. There will be relapses, there will be progress made and retrogression. Look at the angel with Elijah, for 6 weeks, every time Elijah woke up, 'ah, Elijah, you're awake; dinner's ready! Did the angel preach to him? Did the angel lecture him by saying, 'Elijah, you're going in the wrong direction, you should be back there preaching!' He didn't say that! he said, 'are you hungry? Eat!' and he stayed with him. Never left him all the way.

You know I heard of a case in Sydney where a brother got very depressed (he was a single brother); another brother in the meeting said to him, 'you shouldn't be alone'. He said, I don't want to talk to you. He said, I won't talk to you, I'm a long way behind with my readings and I've got a couple of books I haven't read for a long time, I'll just come and sit in your room and I'll just read. I promise I won't say anything'. So he did, and this brother sat alongside the other brother every day for six weeks. In the end, the brother who was depressed said, what are you reading? and that was the turning point. It took a long time for him to get through his depression, but the fact that the brother was there every day, was what he needed. So support and patience is what the angel did for Elijah.

7. Listening and feedback! I just want to say one bit of advice about helping those that are depressed, the worst thing you can do is to say, 'I know how you feel, I went through it and to give your own experience. People who are depressed they don't want to hear

about your experience; what you've got to do is to encourage them to talk about themselves. Have you worked out what is really troubling you! What do you think? and don't be horrified, they will say some amazingly inaccurate things, but they've got to get it out. They won't grow while they're holding in these terrible thoughts that are going through their minds, and they're black thoughts many of them! That's why God said to Baruch, 'Is this what I hear you saying?' and no doubt Baruch would have been ashamed to know that God had read his mind. But you see, that's why God kept asking Elijah, 'what are you doing here, Elijah?'

8. The process of self correction is important, so provide feedback; this is what I hear you saying, let's go over this again, this is what you're really saying and people will begin to correct themselves, often you'll find that they'll say things like, 'well, that's not really what I mean, I suppose that's not quite right'. That will do 10 times more than you giving them a lecture about what's wrong with their attitude. So feedback is really important, it's exactly what God did with Elijah; think of the Lord Jesus Christ with those two on the road to Emmaeus. You know, they were depressed and they were sad, that the One they had put so much faith in, was now dead, and Jesus said, 'why are you so sad?' and out it all came, and the Lord waited for it all to come out, all the feelings to come out, and then He began to slowly feed in the Word.

9. Empathize but don't indulge! So here's where God and modern psychology tend to diverge a little bit. Realities have to be faced; 'I know you feel bad, you're probably right to feel bad because some terrible things have happened to you. But we have to keep going'. Think of all the times that Jeremiah was told, 'get back to work, get back to work, Jeremiah. There's work to be done!' So realities have to be faced, improvements in life will be gradual. So the world says you have the right to stay depressed, if other people don't change you can stay depressed. That's not what God says; the world says 'look after yourself-take a holiday, go into the clinic, get away from all the problems. God says, 'there's work to be done, there's a remnant that need help! We also have to open the scriptures and feed in the spirit mind; sometimes when we're depressed we don't want to read the bible and it sounds platitudinous to say, 'we've got to get into the bible', 'we've got to open the bible and read it'. Asaph went into the sanctuary and he said, when I got into that sanctuary and I thought about God I understood that the wicked weren't prospering in the long term; there's got to be an intake of spiritual thinking; you've got to keep trying to find God. Jesus knew how to speak a word to him, a word in season for one who is weary. We've got to know that we've got to know the right thing to say to direct their minds to the spiritual thoughts of the bible.

10. We should not make hasty judgments. You know, Job's friends had made wrong judgments about Job; they were loyal, they came, they sat, they listened, then they dug the boots in! Don't do that! that wasn't the least bit helpful; miserable comforters are you all, said Job; and God said you didn't speak that which is right concerning Job. Never fall into the trap of interpreting providence for other people who are depressed; I know why your depressed, I know why you've been through these things, it's because you did this and this 50 years ago. Never interpret providence for other people. You see, Elihu

in the case of Job-he listened, he listened to Job and he listened to his friends he listened more and he held his peace and listened to everybody, and then he feed in the divine viewpoint. 'Job, look at the bigger picture; I hear what you're saying about how sad and miserable and how cheated you feel, how you can't understand God, I hear all that Job! But Job, there's a great big picture here about God', and he got Job outside of himself thinking about the wonders and the expanse of the creation. He prepared Job for Yahweh's intervention, because he listened carefully to what Job was saying and picked up on the problem.

If we are depressed, b&s, remember it could happen to anyone of us. We've got to think that if we ever get into this situation that we've got some idea of how we'll handle it; we've got to have some pre-convictions of what we might try to get out of our depression. Firstly, express the feelings, don't keep it locked up inside; it is better to rage even against God. remember Jeremiah? 'You deceived me and I was deceived'. It's better to get it out and say to God, 'I don't understand what you're doing to me?' rather than to go down, down, and down and never get a chance to talk to Him! If you can find a careful listener, somebody who caringly and sensitively listens, tell somebody that you've got these terrible thoughts going through your mind; terrible feelings of bitterness and anger, and I can't even talk to God about it! but tell somebody, get it out. You've got to get these feelings out, that's something that we do know must happen. Continue in prayer, even though your thoughts are not perfectly balanced; 'if any are sad, let them pray' says James. Paul in his great depression over his illness said, 'I sought the Lord 3 times', Christ in Gethsemane, 'Father, I don't know what to pray for; what shall I pray for?' He didn't have any idea how to start, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ, because He was sad and depressed and bogged down by the responsibility of it all! Prayer isn't easy when you're depressed, that's why we've got to decide that if we ever get depressed, that we're going to keep praying or get someone else to pray with us. But prayer is important.

Just come to Lamentations 3, again if you've got a pencil, I'd just like to show you something in Lamentations. We often quote Lamentations to say isn't Jeremiah a wonderfully spiritual man? Bear in mind, he had another depression when the city fell. The whole book of Lamentations is a depressed, bitter man and he puts his thoughts down to say how bad he felt about the city's falling, and his own failure to achieve anything! But in Lamentations 3 you have the transformation that Jeremiah goes through; now it's so obvious, b&s, when you've seen the quotes we've looked at, from verse 1 to verse 20, (you have and I think I counted them) 35 times the words 'I, me and my' occur; if you've got a coloured pencil and colour them in. 'I am the man', 'He hath lead me, and brought me', 'surely against me', 'His hand against me', 'my flesh, my skin, my bones, builded against me, compassed me with gall, He hath set me in dark places, He has hedged me about, I can't get out, my chain is heavy, I cry, my prayer, my ways, my paths'. Do you see the self absorption? This is the lowest that Jeremiah ever got!

'I was a derision, in verse 14, to all my people; and their song all the day long. He filled me with bitterness, He hath me drunken with wormwood', and he's blaming God for

everything!

So where does he get a turning point? Well, verse 19 is the turning point. He'd given up on God in verse 18, 'my hope is perished from Yahweh', and that's an important verse; he got to the point of saying, there's no point in hoping in God. He says, when I think about how low I got in verse 20, I'm absolutely humiliated by the fact that I thought like that. That's how Asaph felt in Psalm 73, absolutely humiliated; Asaph says, 'I was like a mule and a stupid animal to think like that, but that's how low I got!' But he says in verse 21, 'When I think about how low I got, this I recall to my mind, therefore **I have hope**'. What does he recall to mind? **Yahweh's mercies!** so you see, he gets back to that sense of gratitude! We're still here, the city's fallen, they've all gone into captivity, the kings have all gone, but I'm still alive and so are my friends. We're not consumed because His compassions fail not; and they are new every morning, great is Thy faithfulness. Yahweh is my portion, saith my soul; therefore I will hope in Him'. You see, he's come back, he'd given up on God in verse 18 and now he's got hope in verse 21, verse 24, he's waiting in verse 25, in verse 26 he's hoping and waiting, in verse 29 he's got back to hope. So you see, he's gone from utter gloom and doom and selfishness, to hoping in God.

Verses 22 to 29 are all about God and Yahweh and what God has done, not about what he's feeling inside himself. So you see, prayer is a self instructing thing, and we have to learn to count our blessings and express our gratitude to God for what we do have. We've got to think of other people! You know, Asaph, in his toe-hole slide into oblivion, was that he thought of the responsibility to others. He said, if I leave the truth, says Asaph in Psalm 73 verse 15, if I leave the truth, then all the children of my people will be so disappointed and so discouraged because they're looking to me for an example. I'm the leader of the singers, people depend upon me, I can't do it to them'. So you see, thinking of others is often the point where we see that others need us to be strong. Also keep active and keep involved! You know, when you go to the Hebron bible camp, you probably notice up there that there are lots of improvements in the grounds and in the rooms; the sister that does those, some of you may know, went through a very great tragedy of losing a child in teen years. In her sadness, she decided to do something positive! She went up there every week, one or two days every week, and started to do the gardens at Hebron, clean the rooms, cleaned the kitchen, put out the garbage that people forgot. That's become a life passion for her now and the fruits are obvious to everybody who goes there! But you see, that was the way to cope with depression, was to do something, to get outside of your own framework. There's great benefit in activity and then we come to focus on God as Jeremiah did, 'It's of Yahweh's mercies that we're not consumed'.

So, b&s, there are a lot of things we can learn about handling depression. Jeremiah's conclusion in Lamentations was absolutely amazing, 'For Yahweh will not cast off forever, but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men'. God lets us go through sufferings and depression and sadness because **He knows that in the end we'll come out as God!??** But He's with us all the way, b&s, though we

walk through the valley of the shadow of death, our God is with us there!

Just come to chapter 36 of Jeremiah and see what happened to Baruch. You imagine how humiliated he was, that God had to give him a personal message. It took him a long time to work through in his own life, to refocus that he could go on, that he could face what was coming, the persecution that must be his. Verse 8, 'Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words in the house of Yahweh. It came to pass in the 5th year in the 9th month that he got up and read, verse 10, Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of Yahweh'. The end result of all that, b&s? verse 26, 'The king Jehoiakim commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet', and it's only the fact that Yahweh **hid them** that their lives were spared. The king would have put them into the fire as surely as he put the bible into the fire. Baruch knew what he was getting into; he now got up and courageously read that Word, as God required him to do. He gave up all hopes of personal prestige, he now put his trust in the fact that God would hide him and God **did hide him** and his life was given him for a prey. What is interesting, b&s, is that Baruch did achieve great things, not great things for himself, he achieved great things for God! and he lived right through the captivity, right through the fall of the city, he went down into Egypt to comfort the aged Jeremiah. Ever since, he's given encouragement to many people in the truth, who have gone through times of sadness and depression.

I want to leave you with some very beautiful words that came from that same sister who wrote the article about depression. She said this, 'Depression is not a sign that God has abandon us; it is more likely a sign that God is getting to work on us for our ultimate good'. Let us, b&s, remember how to get through depression! let's take the encouragement of Baruch that we can refocus, and let us be able to help each other get through those sad times.