

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION
JEREMIAH 20:7-18¹

Dr. Tim LaHaye claims to have asked over one hundred thousand people among his audiences if there were any who have never been depressed. Among one hundred thousand people so questioned not one has ever responded to his query by stating “I have never been depressed.” It would actually appear that those who live in pleasant surroundings are most susceptible to being depressed. Someone has said that a pessimist is someone who has to live with a constant optimist.

Depression is both ancient and universal. The Psalmist implored:

“Why are you downcast, O my soul?
and why are you in turmoil within me?”²

[PSALM 42:5]

Hippocrates, the ancient physician, wrote a treatise on melancholy. Winston Churchill, during the Battle of Britain, was a bastion of strength, but at the same time he underwent severe bouts of depression. Edgar Allan Poe is said to have been depressed for four days after writing “The Pit and the Pendulum.” Svetlana Alliluyeva, the daughter of Joseph Stalin, recalls that the bloodthirsty dictator was the victim of deep and dark depression. Charles Spurgeon, arguably the greatest preacher in Christendom since apostolic days, knew weeks on end of darkness and melancholy. Depression knows neither moral boundaries nor social distinction; all alike are subject to bouts of melancholy.

Some years back we heard a great deal about the Moral Majority in the media. When you leaf through the Bible you meet the “Miserable Majority.” So many of God’s greatest servants were, at critical moments in their lives, depressed. Moses asked God to take his life. Job pleaded with the Lord, “Kill me!” Elijah desired death by God’s hand. Jonah wanted God to do away with him. And Saul, king of Israel, did destroy himself and many of those around him by reason of his fits of depression.

I suggest that in **JEREMIAH TWENTY** is found the most miserable description of all of the effects of depression. Jeremiah had hit rock bottom. His experience should be helpful to each of us who must deal intermittently and periodically with depression. I am encouraged by the very degree of Jeremiah’s discouragement. The very fact that Jeremiah’s experience is unveiled in the Bible and that God could accept him and use him in spite of his depression, is a redemptive encouragement to anyone experiencing depression. I testify that this account has encouraged me at critical moments.

REASONS WHY GOD’S PEOPLE MAY EXPERIENCE DEPRESSION — I shall not exhaustively explore reasons for depression as this is not a psychological treatise; but from the text we see that depression results when we *IMAGINE OURSELVES VICTIMS OF DIVINE DECEIT*. In **VERSE SEVEN**, Jeremiah reveals unremitting pain and deep disappointment by crying out:

¹ The Sermon is modelled on a sermon by Joel C. Gregory, “When God’s Servant is Depressed,” in R. Earl Allen and Joel Gregory (ed.), **Southern Baptist Preaching Today** (Broadman Press, Nashville, TN 1987) 125-133. The opening paragraphs were lifted from Doctor Gregory’s sermon.

² Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

“O LORD, you have deceived me,
and I was deceived;
you are stronger than I,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all the day;
everyone mocks me.”

What could have happened to bring Jeremiah to this point that he believed himself a victim of divine deceit?

We learn that he had just spent time in the stocks for the crime of preaching the mind of God; he had just been punished as result of righteous teaching. He had experienced yet another confrontation with the power structure of the nation who refused to do right and who refused to heed the warnings of God.

Psychologists tell us that one element in virtually all types of depression is a sense of disappointment. Jeremiah had certainly experienced one of the greatest disappointments of all. He looked up to Heaven and cried out: “God, You Yourself have deceived me!” He was so disappointed that he used incredibly strong language, some of the most exceptional language to be found in the entire Old Testament. His literal words could be understood to charge God: “You raped me.” In another place he pointed his finger to heaven and charged God with deceit in his call and assignment:

“Why is my pain unceasing,
my wound incurable,
refusing to be healed?
Will You be to me like a deceptive brook,
like waters that fail?”

[JEREMIAH 15:18]

Jeremiah lived in Judah, a semiarid land dotted with watercourses which from a distance promise refreshment and relief to the weary traveller. Upon closer inspection, however, many of these brooks and streams would prove to be waterless ... mere wadis which though gushing with water periodically were usually dry and dusty, arid and parched. Such conditions are difficult for us to imagine, living as we do in a land blessed with an abundance of water as is true for Canada. The weary prophet charges God with being like such a wadi, promising much from afar but proving a disappointment nearby.

When God called Jeremiah He had informed him:

“My people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken Me,
the fountain of living water,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water.”

[JEREMIAH 2:13]

Now, Jeremiah charges that he has invested two decades preaching—and to no avail; the people are no nearer God than when he started and God is no nearer than when Jeremiah began. The Babylonians are still on the march. The people are still playing church. The politicians and religionists were still in control of daily life and conspiring to exclude God from that life. Jeremiah is himself hurting, the butt of ridicule and cruel calumny.

This last matter points to another reason God's people may experience depression: *THEY EXPERIENCE REPEATED REJECTION*. Hear his plaintive cry.

“O LORD, you have deceived me,
and I was deceived;
you are stronger than I,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all the day;
everyone mocks me.
For whenever I speak, I cry out,
I shout, ‘Violence and destruction!’
For the word of the LORD has become for me
a reproach and derision all day long.

“I hear many whispering.
Terror is on every side!
‘Denounce him! Let us denounce him!’
say all my close friends,
watching for my fall.
‘Perhaps he will be deceived;
then we can overcome him
and take our revenge on him.’”

[VERSES SEVEN, EIGHT and TEN].

Jeremiah had experienced the cruellest form of rejection—mockery and ridicule. He had preached with a heart of love and the people had rejected him with biting mockery and with cruel vindictiveness. The old saw says, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” *It is a lie!*

Too often have I comforted the child cruelly taunted by playmates or classmates to ever repeat such foolishness. We know the cruelty of the taunts and ridicule of children. The suicides of teens such as Phoebe Prince³ and Megan Meier⁴ who were teased and taunted have become so commonplace as to forever banish such foolish thinking. Indeed, their deaths highlight the fact that teen suicide has become epidemic, and now there are reports that children as young as five are killing themselves! It is estimated that 500,000 teens attempt suicide each year, and about 5,000 succeed.⁵

³ Ros Krasny, “Suicide of Irish teen in U.S. leads to felony charges,” Montreal Gazette, April 9, 2010, <http://www.montrealgazette.com/life/Suicide+Irish+teen+leads+felony+charges/2783792/story.html>, accessed 2010-06-12

⁴ “MySpace Mom Linked to Missouri Teen’s Suicide Being Cyber-Bullied Herself,” Fox News, December 6, 2007, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,315684,00.html>, accessed 2010-06-12

⁵ Brenda High, “Suicide is a Teenage Epidemic,” http://www.jaredstory.com/teen_epidemic.html, accessed 2010-06-12

Too often in my role as a pastor I have comforted the spouse left torn and emotionally bruised for life by unkind remarks, whether thoughtless or deliberate. Too often have I personally been on the receiving end of such injurious statements from angry parishioners to ever dismiss in a cavalier fashion the lasting pain that can result from words. Sticks and stones may break my bones ... and words can wound more deeply still, crippling an individual for a lifetime.

More difficult and debilitating than imprisonment or deprivation was the rejection and ridicule which Jeremiah had experienced. Because his message was one of confrontation and because he was a prophet dispatched to warn of impending judgement, Jeremiah was ridiculed by those who heard him. He could hear them whispering mockingly as he passed by: "Terror on every side." The warnings were turned into taunts and jeers and he received the painful nickname: "Terror on every side." Unknown people pointed behind his back and scoffed at his message. Few can ever know the pain of the pastor's heart when the message he brings is scorned and when those who have heard his pleas rush headlong toward disaster and confrontation with divine judgement. I have too often left the pulpit crushed and broken in spirit because of the angry gestures and the hard looks on the faces of those who heard but refused to heed.

Even those whom Jeremiah had called friends were now waiting for him to slip. Those friends, called "men of peace" by the prophet of God [see **JEREMIAH 38:22** (Hebrew)], were the very men whom the prophet had greeted by name when he met them in the streets, his greeting being the traditional wish for their peace. It is painful enough when those we do not know laugh at us and when those with whom we are unacquainted ridicule us for our message and for our identification with righteousness; but when even our close friends mock us and deride our words we are wounded more deeply than any mere visual inspection could ever reveal. When friends reject our pleas and refuse our warnings, entering into the contemptuous and disdainful mockery, we experience a pain unlike anything we might ever have imagined.

RESPONSES OF GOD'S PEOPLE TO DEPRESSION — How do God's people respond to depression? I suppose there are as many responses as there are members of the Body of Christ. Nevertheless, certain repeated strains appear when God's people are depressed. First appears a **RETREAT FROM SERVICE**. Jeremiah spoke of this response in **VERSE NINE** when he determined: "I will not mention Him or speak any more in His name." However, the prophet soon discovered God's Word in his heart burned like a fire, a fire consuming his bones. In fact, Jeremiah complained, "I am weary with holding it in, and, I cannot." His cry was, "How can I speak of God, how can I speak of His mercy, how can I speak of His grace, when I hurt so deeply that I cannot even express my pain?" The first response to depression is to distance ourselves from God, the one source to lift us from depression.

Depressed people are seized with **BLACK BITTERNESS**. The dark words vomiting forth in the midst of his depression may sound like words you have spoken at one time.

"Cursed be the day
on which I was born!
The day my mother bore me,
let it not be blessed!"

[**JEREMIAH 20:14**].

Have any of us never said, "I wish I'd never been born!" It was a grave sin and a capital crime for a Jew to curse his parents; and Jeremiah treads as close to the unseen line as he possibly can with this cry. In cursing the day of his birth, Jeremiah cruses the call of God on his life. I daresay that every conscientious servant of Christ has at one time of another approached perilously close to this line.

Nor is this the only time Jeremiah wishes he were dead. **JEREMIAH 15:10** records another occasion when this same prophet of God cried out in blackest depression: "Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me." There is more than a touch of humour in the final complaint: "have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me." If you wish to be cursed, lend to another. If you wish to be cursed, borrow from another. Lending and borrowing are subject to misunderstanding and tend to strain relationships. Jeremiah says, "I never loaned anything. I never borrowed anything. Nevertheless, everyone curses *me*! What have I done?"

The Christian is approaching a dark pit when she begins to wish herself dead. She has taken her eyes off God and is focused on the situation; she no longer believes that God rules over all, much less that God can overrule all. Pity the poor saint who despairs.

Added to retreat and bitter blackness is *IRRATIONAL UNFAIRNESS*. The prophet makes the statement: "Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father,

‘A son is born to you,’
making him very glad.
Let that man be like the cities
that the LORD overthrew without pity.”

[**JEREMIAH 20:15, 16a**].

The statement is astonishing for its display of irrationality. All that hapless man had done was to inform Jeremiah's father that he had a son! Jeremiah was so irrationally unfair that he wished the man could be like Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone raining down on him from heaven! Had that poor man been there, he would no doubt have said, "But all I said was, 'You have a boy!'" The prophet of God has ceased to be rational at this point. Neither are you or I rational when gripped by depression, because we speak out of our anger and surrender to the overwhelming emotion of the moment. We do not speak wisely when angry and anger boils to the surface in depression.

Jeremiah had travelled so far along the road of depression that he had passed beyond isolation and black bitterness and irrational unfairness, arriving finally at a position of *SUICIDAL DESPAIR*. He wails out the logical conclusion of his depressed state:

“[God] did not kill me in the womb;
so my mother would have been my grave,
and her womb forever great.
Why did I come out from the womb
to see toil and sorrow,
and spend my days in shame?”

[**JEREMIAH 20:17, 18**].

Not in all of Scripture will you discover more vehement words!

One of God's greatest servants had just experienced a total eclipse of faith. What would you have said to Jeremiah when he wailed, "I wish I had been slain from the womb, my mother's womb forever my grave!" Do you suppose he would have responded in his depression to a chirpy "Cheer up? Things will get better." What *do* you say to a man like Jeremiah? How *do* you encourage a fellow believer who has slid to the bottom and is ready to give up? How *do* you counsel a friend who is in mental agony because of deep depression? What *do* you say to yourself when black bitterness, dark despair, and despondence become your lot—even though you are doing the Lord's work?

THE RESOURCE AVAILABLE TO GOD'S PEOPLE DURING DEPRESSION — In the midst of despair Jeremiah revealed something of the prophetic heart as he looked to the great resource ever available to God's people during depression. It is dangerous for evil people to beat the child of God to the ground, making it seem that God is no longer receiving his calls. When beaten down, the child of God discovers that when flat on his back, there is but one direction to look. That is ever true for the child of God, and it was true for Jeremiah.

Jeremiah had two great resources which are available to each child of the King. His first resource was the *CONFIDENCE THAT EVEN IN THE SILENCE GOD IS WORKING*. Modern evangelicals strangely operate under the assumption that if God is at work we will be in constant communication—that there will be a constant dialogue between God and us. However, when Jeremiah begged for intervention there was only silence.

How many of the Psalms have you read lately? As you read the Psalms, especially the prayers offered when in greatest desperation the Psalmist sought God's face, did you notice how very frequently the Psalmist cries out to God only to be met by silence? Listen to a few of the Psalms which speak of this eerie and frightening silence.

"O my God, I cry by day, *but you do not answer,*

[PSALM 22:2]

"To you, O LORD, I call;
my rock, *be not deaf to me,*
lest, if you be silent to me,
I become like those who go down to the pit."

[PSALM 28:1]

"O God, *do not keep silence;*
do not hold your peace or be still, O God!"

[PSALM 83:1]

"*Be not silent,* O God of my praise!"

[PSALM 109:1]

Among the particular Psalms to which I direct your attention is one which I find especially poignant. The Psalm is essentially a plea for God to take up David's cause against supposed friends who secretly sought to harm him!

“Let not those rejoice over me
 who are wrongfully my foes,
and let not those wink the eye
 who hate me without cause.
For they do not speak peace,
 but against those who are quiet in the land
 they devise words of deceit.
They open wide their mouths against me;
 they say, ‘Aha, Aha!
 Our eyes have seen it!’

You have seen, O LORD; *be not silent!*
 O Lord, be not far from me!”

[PSALM 35:19-22]

You will note that the LORD frequently appears unmoved by the Psalmist's pleas—God is silent! As you continue reading those Psalms that speak of heaven's silence, be especially cognizant that in every instance the Psalmist concludes with the victorious note that God has been at work all along? The lesson which I urge God's people to take home is this: *God works in silence!* It is precisely when it seems that God is deaf to our pleas or that He is uncaring about our plight that He is at work for the benefit of His child and that He works to bring glory to His Name.

I am amused and encouraged whenever I read of Elijah when he fled from Jezebel—amused because each of us delights to see that even a great man of God like Elijah is capable of learning a new lesson and encouraged because I know what it is to be threatened and to feel intimidated. Discouraged and defeated, dejected and depressed—the prophet was ready to end it all. You will no doubt recall the account of his flight and the description of his feelings which is given us in **1 KINGS 19:3-5**. The Bible spares no words, the prophet “was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.” The prophet was fearful for his life—so fearful that he was prepared to do whatever was necessary to get away from the wrath of the queen.

We are permitted a brief glimpse into the prophet's mindset when we read that Elijah “went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And *he asked that he might die*, saying, ‘It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.’ And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, ‘Arise and eat.’” Elijah is fearful, and in his fear he permits himself to become fatigued and famished. Before doing anything else, God addressed his physical state—his need for food and nourishment. There is no need to address the spiritual and the mental state if the physical state is left unaddressed.

After ensuring that Elijah was rested and fed, God revealed Himself to the spiritually fatigued prophet. God sent a wind powerful enough to tear mountains and shatter rocks; but God was not in the wind. Then He sent an earthquake which caused the mountains to skip like lambs; but God was not in the earthquake. Finally God sent fire which lapped up even the stones in the intensity of heat; but God was not in the fire. God rides on the storm; God commands the earthquake; God rules over the fire, but God is not in the fire.

The last sentence in the **TWELFTH VERSE** instructs us in God's way to work: "After the fire the sound of a low whisper," and the **THIRTEENTH VERSE** gives Elijah's response: "When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave." God came round to see the prophet, and the presence of God was announced in the sound of a low whisper. It does not say that God spoke in low tones, but that His presence was compared to the sound of a low whisper.

God works in the quiet time. We seem to have convinced ourselves that only in the spectacular and only in the noisy can God's presence be known, when all along we learn that "in repentance and rest you will be saved," and "in quietness and in trust is your strength" [ISAIAH 30:15 NASB]. We forget the divine admonition to "Be still, and know that I am God" [PSALM 46:10]. We neglect the command given Israel when Pharaoh and his armies threatened the people of God as they were departing Egypt. Moses said, "The Lord will fight for you; you must be quiet" [EXODUS 14:14, HCSB].

Musicians carefully observe the rest signs. It has been sagely stated that there is no music in a rest; but there is the making of music in that rest. Without the rest there is but a constant din, a cacophony of sound merging into discordant restlessness, like a sea of vuvuzelas in the hands of South Africans at a football game.

Never think that because God does not thunder from heaven that He is incapable of working or that He is unconcerned about His child. Jesus, God's own Son, while hanging on the cross, cried out in unimaginable agony, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me' [MARK 15:34]? God was utterly silent even as His Son cried out in lonely agony. Was God unable to work? Did the Father not care that His Son was tasting death for fallen man? You must never forget that in the silence of those six hours, God provided for mankind's redemption.

Jeremiah drew upon yet upon another precious resource that is available to every child of God—*EVEN WHILE AT THE BOTTOM HE KEPT ON TALKING TO GOD*. I will admit that his prayers were not especially pretty, nor were they delicately worded prayers designed to make anyone overhearing his entreaties comfortable. What is important for us to remember is that *he did keep on talking*. He bombarded heaven with pleas and with cries for merciful relief.

Child of God, ask yourself: Is God so feeble that He cannot tolerate sobs of anguish and cries of bitter invective arising from the wounded heart? My God is too great to be toppled by the raging cries of a wounded heart, and He loves His child too deeply to ever permit the strong words which grow out of that child's pain to diminish His love. My God is too merciful to ever dismiss His child's painful plea for intervention. God hears the cry of His child; and He is at work to bring relief. What else can the promise mean, "We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose" [ROMANS 8:28].

Jeremiah found the greatest relief from depression when he discovered something in the midst of darkness to express as an act of praise to God. In fact, the only relief seen in the whole of this passage is the praise found between two bouts of darkest depression. Jeremiah found something verbally with which to express his praise to God. When Jeremiah began overt, open praise of God, he began the journey up out of the pit of despair and the slough of despondency.

Jeremiah praised God *for His vindicating power*;

“The LORD is with me as a dread warrior;
therefore my persecutors will stumble;
they will not overcome me.
They will be greatly shamed,
for they will not succeed.
Their eternal dishonour
will never be forgotten.”

[VERSE ELEVEN],

Jeremiah praised God *for His discerning power*;

“O LORD of hosts, who tests the righteous,
who sees the heart and the mind,
let me see your vengeance upon them,
for to you have I committed my cause.”

[VERSE TWELVE],

And Jeremiah praised God *for His rescuing power*;

“Sing to the LORD;
praise the LORD!
For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hand of evildoers.”

[VERSE THIRTEEN].

Nevertheless, Jeremiah was not yet rescued; and though he hurt more deeply than words could ever express, he was confident that God would yet rescue him. Some of you have been in just such straits. Though you could not say when God would deliver you, you knew that He would rescue you. You knew in your heart that there was no hope except for His intervention. In despair and desperation, you seized upon the Psalmist's words, “Hope in God” [PSALM 42:5].

I am not suggesting that voicing praise is the cure for pathologic depression, but I do contend that there is power in remembering God's mercy and in praising His Name. I do know that God's people are subject to depression, to despondency, to discouragement, to dejection, to despair. Nevertheless, none of us want to dishonour God through speaking against Him or through saying something inappropriate in our sorrow which would wound another. Nevertheless, we are sensitive and ever alert to the disquieting knowledge that we are liable to do precisely that because we are depressed.

May I make simple application of the message, seeking to provide you with that which will benefit you when the dark days come? I am speaking to people who have at one time or another experienced the dark pit of depression. If among us is one who says such an experience is utterly foreign, I suggest that that person is either lying or that individual is seriously emotionally impaired. The greater tragedy than that we should have experienced depression is the knowledge that we are each likely to again experience times of depression. Though the dark days may be brief and the depression may not be severe, it is likely that some among us, and perhaps each of us eventually, will find it necessary to struggle against the downward pull of dark depression.

When depressed, turn again to Jeremiah's experience and the resources which he demonstrated; they are your resources as God's beloved child. Jeremiah learned that God works even though He is silent. You, also, will learn that ***God is at work in the silence***. Don't despair and draw the conclusion that because God does not immediately answer He does not care or that He is incapable of intervening. He may even at the moment of your greatest distress be in the process of sending relief. We may be confident that our Father is too good to ever needlessly hurt us and too wise to ever make a mistake. Though Daniel prayed for three weeks and all heaven seemed unconcerned with his cries, God had from the moment of his first cry dispatched an angel with the answer he sought [DANIEL 10:12-14].

Keep on talking to God. Your prayers may not be models for the pulpit, but keep on talking to God. Cry out your pain and your sorrow, but keep on talking to God. As you sob out your sorrow you will make a startling discovery—your cries of anguish will shortly turn to songs of praise. Surely, this is the encouragement found in Jesus' words, "Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you" [MATTHEW 7:7 HCSB].

If you have known God and if you have seen Him work in days gone by, ***you will find solace and comfort and strength in the knowledge that He has intervened before and that He will do it again***. Do you maintain a diary? That is a discipline all but lost in our day of restless searching and desperate seeking. Should you be one who keeps a diary, recording in that journal of life the accounts of those special times when God intervenes, you will have a record of the ongoing acts of God. While I do not discourage reading the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, I do encourage believers to recognise that that particular book is a continuing record and that it is we who are disciples who now provide the accounts for the continuing saga of the work of God in the world. A diary will reveal the many and continuing ways in which God works in your own life. Reading such accounts will encourage you in the dark days to remember that God has intervened before and that He will soon intervene to deliver you again. Thus encouraged, you will be impelled to pray by the deep desire to call out to God yet one more time.

Jesus spoke hard truths causing "wannabe Christians" to desert en masse. Turning to the Twelve, Jesus asked: "Do you want to go away as well?" Perhaps you recall Peter's answer: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" [JOHN 6:67, 68]. Peter truly answered for each of us. Where will we turn but to the One who loves us? Regardless of how difficult the trial we experience, to whom shall we go, if not God? Where shall we turn if not to our Father? To Him we turn again and again, sobbing out our sorrow and crying out our discouragement, until He provides the answer. We turn to Him because it is our nature as twice-born children of the king; and we turn to Him because we know intuitively there is no answer to be found in the world about us.

Facing the wrath of an enraged king and his sarcastic question of who had power to rescue them from his hand, three young Hebrew men confidently and calmly asserted: "If our God whom we are serving exists, He is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He will rescue us, O king, from your power as well. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we don't serve your gods, and we will not pay homage to the golden statue that you have erected" [DANIEL 3:17, 18 NET BIBLE]. God has rescued His people before, and God can do it again; but if not ... He is still God.

I have spoken at length of depression—the dark camel that visits every tent—and of the resources available to gain a victory over depression. The message is not theory; I have spoken out of personal experience. I would not want any to know the depths to which this pastor can descend nor would I wish on any the despair I have known. All that I have said by way of obtaining relief is founded upon the Word of God and has been tested in the laboratory of my own experience. However, these two simple steps to relief are worthless if you are not related to the Father. If you have never experienced the second birth, if you are not born from above into the Family of God, if you are unsaved, if you are an outsider to the grace of God, if you are not a Christian, you have no promise either of relief and respite.

To you who have yet to be born into this family, may I present to you the promise of life in Christ? I invite you to receive the life offered in Him. If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” believing in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For it is with the heart that one believes and is justified, and it is with your mouth that one confesses and is saved.” The Word of God boldly promises, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].⁶ Receive His grace today. Be saved as you surrender to Him. Amen.⁷

⁶ Author's translation

⁷ HCSB designates the **Holman Christian Standard Bible** published by Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN 2003. The designation NET BIBLE refers to **The NET Bible First Edition** published by Biblical Studies Press, 1996-2006. NASB designates the **New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update** published by The Lockman Foundation, LaHabra, CA 1995.