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Frank W. Nelte

## **DEPRESSION IS NOT A DISEASE**

A few months ago a well-known Hollywood actor in his early 60's committed suicide by hanging himself. Then it came out that this person had in fact for many years suffered from depression, something many people in the general public would never have suspected. So while all people look upon suicide as a terrible tragedy, which it is, the depression was then presented by some as a rationale for the man committing suicide. After all, since depression is supposedly a disease, therefore we are inclined to hold a person less responsible for actions resulting from this supposed disease.

As far as suicide is concerned: of the around two million deaths in the United States every year 35,000 are reported as suicides. That amounts to almost **100 suicides per day** every day of the year. These suicide figures represent only the tip of the iceberg for depression, since the overwhelming majority of people who experience depression never commit suicide. Depression is in fact a major problem not only here in America, but in many other countries as well. And suicide is the ultimate expression of depression.

All of us in God's Church surely understand that suicide is wrong in the sight of God. After all, God has very clearly said "**all souls are mine**" (Ezekiel 18:4). And during the years of Israel's wandering in the desert God had already said: "I even I am He, and there is no god with Me: **I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal ...**" (Deuteronomy 32:39). Suicide takes away something that belongs to God and not to us. We simply have no right to take our own lives, anymore than we have the right to take someone else's life.

Committing suicide involves accountability before Almighty God. Now accountability before God is a major clue regarding the classification of the actions for which we will have to give account. Any actions for which we will later have to give account to God are never inevitable, because they are supposedly thrust upon us by some or other disease or by our genes. With all actions that require accountability we are never the helpless victims who were powerless to do otherwise. Accountability demands that **we had a choice** as to what we did or did not do.

**Depression is a state of mind, and it causes immense grief and pain and suffering to those who have it; but depression is not a sickness or a disease!**

## **THE SOURCE OF DEPRESSION**

Since the time of Adam and Eve all of us have spontaneously accepted a mindset that is in opposition to God. That is why the Apostle Paul could tell us that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God" (Romans 8:7). That mindset which is enmity against God and His laws is what is meant by "**the spirit of the world**" (see 1 Corinthians 2:12). The spirit of the world manifests in a certain mindset.

From early childhood onwards all human beings have this "spirit of the world". This is the spirit that is influenced, manipulated and to a greater or lesser degree controlled by Satan. And therefore Satan is called "the god of this age" in 2 Corinthians 4:4. The spirit of the world is the mindset that **originates with Satan**; it expresses Satan's perspective. And Satan is "the god of this age" because to some or

other degree he manipulates and controls almost all people alive. In Ephesians 2:2 Paul referred to Satan as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience".

With the expression "the power of the air" the Apostle Paul was distinguishing Satan's power from physical sources of power, i.e. from muscle power and mechanical power. Satan's power doesn't rely on forcing us physically to do his will. Satan cannot actually force us to do anything. Rather, Satan's power relies on **pressuring our minds** to do his will. By this I am referring to Satan's ability to broadcast his thoughts and attitudes, which can be picked up by our minds. In that way Satan has the ability to pressure **what** we think **and how** we think. Satan has the power to reach our minds and to attempt to influence how we will use our minds.

In a manner of speaking Satan has hypnotized all of humanity to do his will, without us actually realizing that we have been hypnotized by Satan. This condition prevents us from seeing what is really happening in our lives. It takes God's Spirit to help us snap out of that hypnotic trance.

**The power of the air refers to trying to influence and to control the thoughts we think, the premises and values we accept, the priorities we establish for our lives, the way we use our minds to reason and to think, the commitments and convictions we accept. In short, the power of the air refers to the ability to influence the shaping and molding of our entire personality and identity as individuals. And that unseen influence from Satan is what is meant by "the spirit of the world".**

That represents a profound power!

Yes, there are limitations on that power of the air that Satan can exert on human beings. God has given us human beings a free mind that can think and reason and analyze information, and grasp consequences of conduct and behavior. With our minds we have the power to resist the influence Satan attempts to impose on our lives; **our minds have the power to resist the spirit of the world**. Our minds give us the power to potentially build restraints against Satan's ungodly pressures. But it would be a mistake to underestimate the mental pressure Satan is able to exert on humanity as a whole. Ephesians 2:2 shows that Satan exerts a very profound influence on the vast majority of all human beings. And we in God's Church are not immune to that pressure.

Simply stated: the focus of Satan's attack on humanity is always an attack on our minds!

The real source of depression lies in the mind. That real source has to do with **how we use our minds**, how we think and reason, and how we respond to the pressures that Satan attempts to impose on our minds. The ultimate source of all depression is Satan.

**Depression is an expression of Satan's view of the value of life.**

Depression is anti-God, and anti everything that God stands for. Depression is a rejection of God's plan and purposes. It denies the incredible value that God has incorporated into His gift of life. Depression is a very emphatic rejection of God's way of life. **Depression is Satan's way of thinking**, because Satan himself is the most morosely depressed individual in existence. Knowing his destiny, Satan craves to have his miserable existence blotted out by God; but that isn't going to happen.

And so Satan is deeply depressed, because he is fully aware of his future eternal destiny. You wouldn't have suspected that Satan suffers from depression, would you, any more than suspecting that one of the funniest actors in Hollywood was profoundly depressed most of the time? Satan can put on a facade, just like we human beings can put on a facade. How many other famous people have over the years committed suicide, or attempted to commit suicide? That is not a coincidence.

We must recognize that **all depression originates with Satan!** It does not originate with an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain. Consider also this point: the very fact that depression is such a forceful rejection of God and God's ways should all by itself tell us that depression cannot possibly be a sickness or disease. There is no sickness that automatically produces a rejection of God and God's ways. A lack or surplus of neurotransmitters cannot possibly cause a person to be anti-God! **Anything that causes a person to be anti-God can always without fail be led back to Satan.**

## **A MANIFESTATION OF FEAR**

Notice what Paul wrote in Romans 8:15.

For ye have not received **the spirit of bondage** (slavery) **again to fear**; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Romans 8:15)

The spirit of the world is in fact a spirit of slavery (i.e. bondage). Notice the word "again"! Paul is saying that these Roman Christians, like all other human beings, had previously been controlled by a spirit of slavery. In coming into God's Church these people, with the help of God's Spirit, had done their part by putting forth active effort to break Satan's slave-hold over their lives, lest they would "again" end up in exactly the same slavery to Satan. Paul states that Satan's way of imposing his slavery on people is by instilling fears in human minds. **A fearful mind is an enslaved mind.** A fearful mind is irrefutable evidence of mental and emotional slavery.

Satan spelled out his approach to dealing with human beings quite openly in the Book of Job. Satan said to God:

"... Skin for skin, yea, **all that a man hath will he give for his life.**" (Job 2:4)

This statement reveals the tactic Satan would always use against human beings ... he always seeks to instill fear! If Satan can get us to fear, then we will be his slaves, because we will do his bidding to avoid the things we fear. Fear is a relentless, ruthless, restless, rigorous and repulsive slave-master.

We need to understand that **it is impossible to reason with fears!** A fearful mind cannot think rationally, because fear drives out reason and logic. So if Satan can enslave us with fears, then he knows that our minds will not work logically and rationally; our minds will then twist logic and reason to accommodate our fears. For any human mind to be capable of understanding God's way of thinking **that mind must first be unshackled** from the spirit of fear. Keep this in mind when you deal with your unconverted friends and relatives.

**[COMMENT:** Half a century ago we had many people who came into the Church because of fear! They feared the soon-to-come great tribulation, etc. And because their minds continued to be shackled to that attitude of fear, therefore they also never got the real picture. They never really understood. And so it is no surprise that in due time they all left the Church again. The spirit of fear cannot be the foundation for a real relationship with God. Part of the problem back then was that **we were in many cases simply too aggressive** in wanting to baptize as many people as possible, an approach which dulled our discernment of real repentance. Vast numbers of baptized people who have left God's Church over the past 50 years were in fact never repentant in the first place. **A fearful mind is not a repentant mind,** because a fearful mind is an expression of the spirit of the world. And while there is an excuse for people in the world having a spirit of fear, **there is never an excuse for people in God's Church having a spirit of fear.** The reason for this is simple: anyone who attends God's Church but still has a spirit of fear very obviously does not have God's Spirit, because God's Spirit will never co-exist with a spirit of

fear. It is one or the other, but never both simultaneously.]

Satan believes that we human beings will do whatever it takes to avoid dying, and that is indeed true for the vast majority of people. Satan believes that if our very lives are threatened, then we will compromise our commitments to God, because our fears cause us to believe that "God will surely understand that we really had no choice", because after all our lives were at stake. Isn't that how we reason when we are motivated by fears?

But Jesus Christ was quite clear when He said:

Greater love hath no man than this, **that a man lay down his life** for his friends. (John 15:13)

The Apostle John stated this in very direct terms:

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren**. (1 John 3:16)

These statements obviously assume that we have overcome the spirit of fear from Satan.

Notice also what Paul explained in Hebrews chapter 2.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver **them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage** (i.e. slavery). (Hebrews 2:14-15)

Jesus Christ neutralized Satan's power by being willing to die for us. Christ's sacrifice for us has shattered Satan's slave-hold over our lives. Now, once we are a part of God's people, we need to be sure that we never again allow Satan to instill in us the fear of death, because if Satan can do that, then we will once again be his slaves. It is **the fear of death** that enslaves us, that makes us irrational, illogical and incapable of grasping God's perspective. We must overcome the fear of death in order to be truly free of Satan's power to sway our minds.

As Paul told Timothy:

For God hath **not** given us **the spirit of fear**; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

If after repentance and becoming a part of God's Church we still fear death, then we clearly still have a spirit of fear. But God's Spirit is a spirit of power within us. And we can't have both, a spirit of fear and a spirit of power, at the same time. And that is why those who still have a spirit of fear will ultimately be thrown into the lake of fire (see Revelation 21:8), because their spirit of fear is proof that they don't have God's Spirit of power, and that they are therefore incapable of understanding God's way of thinking (1 Corinthians 2:11). **A fearful mind cannot understand God's ways.**

To come back to the subject of depression:

Depression is nothing other than one particular manifestation of a spirit of fear. A spirit of fear can manifest in many different ways. **Stark terror** is perhaps the most vivid expression of fear. But fear can also manifest as **despondency** and as **discouragement** and as **hopelessness**. It can manifest as **anxiety** and as **timidity**. And it can also manifest as **apathy** and as **depression**. These are all different ways people deal with different degrees of fear.

To state this quite clearly:

Depression is one particular response to the spirit of fear that Satan seeks to impose on all human beings. Let's now take some time to look at what our modern medical authorities tell us about depression.

## **HOW MODERN MEDICINE VIEWS DEPRESSION**

There is a vast amount of information about the subject of depression that is readily available on the internet. I myself collected information from numerous websites. The following information is largely based on what I found on the website for the Mayo Clinic, as well as on a website called "WebMD", and another one called "upliftprogram.com", as well as the "wikipedia" website.

Here is a definition for depression from the Mayo Clinic website:

**"Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest.** Also called major depression, major depressive disorder or clinical depression, **it affects how you feel, think and behave** and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems. You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities, and depression **may make you feel** as if life isn't worth living." (Mayo Clinic website, my emphasis)

Other authorities basically agree with this definition. Later we will take some exception with this definition. But for now note: first and foremost depression involves "a feeling"! Feelings have to do with **how we use our minds**. Our feelings are something that God expects us to have fully under our own control. We ourselves can control whether we are happy or sad, whether we are confident or despondent, whether we are optimistic or pessimistic, whether we are thankful or demanding, whether we are cooperative or contrary. We ourselves control our responses to all external influences. Our responses are not forced upon us by hormones, drugs and neurotransmitters, as Satan would want us to believe.

Now external circumstances may exert some pressure for us to feel one way or the other. But when those external circumstances pressure us to engage in negative feelings, then we are not compelled to embrace those negative feelings. Yet that is exactly what we do most of the time, isn't it?

Consider the final game in a major tennis tournament. The outcome of the match has a profound influence on the feelings which the two players will have. Typically the winner is jubilant, frequently hardly able to contain his feelings of joy and happiness. The loser, on the other hand, in most cases has a somber look on his face, with no joy or happiness whatsoever.

You may say: "well, obviously; what else would you possibly expect?" The point I want to make is that **our feelings are very easily manipulated by external factors** like winning and losing, rather than by hormones or by neurotransmitters. Outside factors can cause us to switch from great happiness to profound resentment within a split-second, as was the case with Haman in Esther 5:9.

Yes, it is understandable that we are happy when we win. Happiness is a good and positive emotion. But we don't really have to be sad or upset or resentful when we lose. **Why** are we unhappy when we lose a game? Why are we not just as happy when we lose as we are when we win?

We allow utterly insignificant outside factors to powerfully manipulate our feelings and emotions. Why do we allow that? We allow that because Satan, the author of the spirit of competition, is manipulating all

our feelings by utilizing these (winning or losing) and thousands of other insignificant external factors.

Most people respond most of the time like helpless pawns to these outside factors; i.e. you can accurately predict that they will be unhappy when they lose, angry when insulted, envious when others are advanced, resentful when things don't work out for them, etc. Movie directors predict such emotional responses all the time when they cast the characters for their plots.

These types of emotional responses are almost expected for the things that affect us. And people are puzzled when we don't respond with the feelings and emotions they feel are appropriate for the things that confront us, as was the case, for example, with David's servants not understanding David's response after Bathsheba's child had died (see 2 Samuel 12:20-23).

We are not pre-programmed so that we simply have to respond with negative feelings when things go wrong for us, though **we are mentally pressured to do so**. We have a free will to reject any and all negative feelings that seek to impose themselves on our minds when things go wrong for us. We have control, and we will be accountable for how we respond when things don't go well for us. Remember this the next time things go wrong for you.

That's included in Jesus Christ's statement that we will have to give account for "every idle word" that we speak (see Matthew 12:36). We are accountable for the feelings and emotions that we embrace. "Natural responses" to losing and to other unfavorable circumstances aren't really "natural" at all! They are imposed on an unsuspecting humanity by "the prince of the power of the air" to such a degree that we all accept unquestioningly that it is "natural" to be upset and disappointed when we lose, etc.

We have to learn to control our feelings by resisting Satan's pressure to respond negatively when things don't go well for us. That is part of resisting the slavery that Satan seeks to impose on us. It is good to have positive feelings, but we are also expected to control our moods and emotions when things don't go well. That is what Paul explained to the Philippians.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for **I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content**. (Philippians 4:11)

Paul had learned to exercise control over his feelings; he did not allow feelings to control and manipulate him. Paul was in control, and that was something that he had learned. He elaborated:

I know both how **to be abased**, and I know how to abound: every where and **in all things I am instructed** both to be full and **to be hungry**, both to abound and **to suffer need**. (Philippians 4:12)

Paul did not allow adverse external circumstances to control his responses to those circumstances. Paul had learned to control his feelings and emotions. And we must do likewise. Paul never allowed any external circumstances to cause him to embrace "persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest"; Paul never allowed himself to get depressed, in spite of the large amount of adversity that he had to deal with (see 2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

A few verses earlier in Philippians 4 Paul had said:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are **true**, whatsoever things are **honest**, whatsoever things are **just**, whatsoever things are **pure**, whatsoever things are **lovely**, whatsoever things are **of good report**; if *there be* any **virtue**, and if *there be* any **praise**, think on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

Paul is talking about **mind control**!

Now obviously, these are not the only things that will confront us in our daily lives. We are invariably confronted by things that are true and also by things that are **not true**; by things that are honest and also by things that are **not honest**; by things that are just and also by things that are **unjust**; by things that are pure and also by things that are **not pure**; by things that are lovely and also by things that are **anything but lovely**; by things that are of good report and also by things that are **evil gossip**; by things that demonstrate virtue and also by things that are **wicked**; by things worthy of praise and also by things **worthy of condemnation**.

We are exposed to both good and bad things around us. Paul is telling us that in order to control our minds we need to be sure that **we don't dwell on the negative things around us**. We have to reject dwelling on such negative things in order to resolutely reject depression and other negative feelings. If we don't do that, then we open ourselves up to a host of negative feelings and emotions, which those negative external factors will pressure us to embrace. If we think about negative things, then we'll also have negative feelings.

### **THE DEFINITION OF "DEPRESSION" REVISITED**

Earlier we saw that the Mayo Clinic defines depression as follows: "depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest". That sounds like a pretty reasonable definition, right? But it is in fact very devious!

Do you see what the Mayo Clinic has done with this definition?

With this innocuous wording **they have removed all responsibility** from the person for his or her depression. That is very perverse! Look at that definition again.

According to that definition it is depression that causes sadness and loss of interest, and it is depression that causes people to feel that life is not worth living. But they don't attempt to tell us what actually causes the depression itself! No, according to them, depression is simply a mood disorder that happens to some people. The people who have depression are thus cast in the roles of the innocent victims of things beyond their control. The depression supposedly comes first, and then the sadness and loss of interest follow. And then you are not responsible for your depression. You are just an innocent victim.

This is a reverse of the truth!

The truth is that the sadness and other related negative feelings and emotions come first! And then the depression follows those negative feelings and emotions. It is not depression that causes negative feelings; initially it is negative feelings that cause depression, and that sequence then sets up a vicious circle through a feedback loop.

But the Mayo Clinic cannot acknowledge that, because that would place responsibility for the depression on the depressed person himself. And in our modern society we pay people to absolve us of guilt and responsibility. We pay people to tell us what we want to hear. In biblical language this is called having "itching ears" (see 2 Timothy 4:3) and wanting to hear "smooth things" (see Isaiah 30:10).

Now when we understand that it is persistent negative feelings that lead to depression, then the solution is for us to **cast out of our minds all negative feelings**. We are responsible for practicing Philippians 4:8; and when we do that, then depression becomes an impossibility, because we refuse to think in ways that could lead to depression. Putting Philippians 4:8 into practice and experiencing depression are mutually exclusive; we can't have both simultaneously.

## **RESISTING NEGATIVE INFLUENCES TAKES EFFORT**

Yes, it is easy to believe that people who suffer depression are only innocent victims of things beyond their control. Nobody said that it would be easy to resist Satan's endless pressures on our minds.

Unless we very actively and deliberately refuse to entertain negative feelings like self-pity, envy, doubts, sadness, feelings of insecurity, anger, etc. by deliberately rejecting them when they do enter our minds, we will be sucked into the spirit of the world. And **that spirit will make us susceptible** to all the mental and emotional problems to which all the people who have the spirit of the world are susceptible. Potentially that includes depression.

Resisting such mental pressures takes great effort. Notice what the Apostle James tells us:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. **Resist the devil**, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

It is the "fiery darts" (see Ephesians 6:16) which Satan directs at our minds that we have to resist. It is Satan's effort to get us to use our minds negatively that we have to resist. When we do resolutely resist those attacks on our minds, then **Satan flees because his way of thinking has not been able to take over our minds**. Satan flees when he cannot make any inroads into our minds.

The Apostle Peter made the same point.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom **resist steadfast in the faith**, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in (i.e. throughout) the world. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

It takes great effort to resist dwelling on negative thoughts and feelings. Consider what Solomon said:

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but **by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken**. (Proverbs 15:13)

This shows us the correct sequence in the development of depression. Notice that **the "sorrow of the heart" comes first!** It is the "sorrow" (i.e. fearful negative feelings) that leads to the spirit being "broken". And once the spirit is "broken", then the person is a potential candidate for things like depression. It is not the broken spirit that leads to sorrow (as the Mayo Clinic definition implies), but the sorrow that leads to the broken spirit.

Solomon also provided **the antidote** to negative emotions and to depression. It is **a merry heart** that leads to the cheerful countenance, not the cheerful countenance that leads to a merry heart. This should be very apparent when we consider the well-known Hollywood actor who committed suicide. He had "the cheerful countenance" in lots of his movies; he was renowned as a funny man, but that still never produced a merry heart in himself, and so he eventually committed suicide.

Proverbs 15:13 clearly lays out the correct sequence of events for both situations. And both situations have to do with how we use our minds. Two verses later Solomon elaborated some more.

All the days of the afflicted *are* evil: but **he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast**. (Proverbs 15:15)

In presenting the contrast in this statement, Solomon's point is that the way to effectively cope with



affliction is to establish and maintain a positive, cheerful attitude. The "merry heart" does not depend on external factors; we need to learn to have a merry heart even when we lose or when we are criticized. We need to have the attitude of Proverbs 9:8 ("**rebuke** a wise man and **he will love you**"), but very few of us do. But we must learn to have that kind of control over our feelings. That is what God expects from us.

This same point from Proverbs 15:15 is reiterated a little later in Proverbs.

**A merry heart does good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit dries the bones. (Proverbs 17:22)**

This verse is about how we use our minds. It is the way we think and use our minds that will determine whether we end up cheerful or depressed. **The way we think is the cause for the way we will feel.**

But let's consider how the Mayo Clinic looks at the supposed causes of depression.

### **THE MEDICAL VIEW OF THE CAUSES**

Under the subheading "CAUSES" the Mayo Clinic's opening statement reads:

**"It's not known exactly what causes depression."**

Yes! The truth is that modern medical science doesn't really know what causes depression. And without a knowledge of the cause of a problem it is extremely difficult to find a cure. They don't know the cause of depression because **they are looking in the wrong places** for the causes.

As far as depression is concerned, modern medical science is like a poor golfer who has sliced his tee shot into the rough on **the right side** of the fairway ... and then he goes and searches for his golf ball in the rough on **the left side** of the fairway. With that approach there is no way that he is going to find his golf ball. And with this approach medical science will likewise never find the correct answers, because the medical authorities are looking for answers in the wrong places.

The Mayo Clinic follows this statement up with the following:

"As with many mental disorders, **a variety of factors may be involved**, such as ...", and then they make five possible suggestions.

Anyone should be able to see from this statement that they are totally clueless, that **they are guessing** by groping in the dark. Many a wrong answer can sound very plausible; but it is still the wrong answer. Let's look at their five suggestions (the emphasis throughout these quotations is mine):

1) "**Biological differences**: People with depression appear to have physical changes in their brains. The significance of these changes is **still uncertain**, but **may eventually help** pinpoint causes."

They are guessing and speculating. The "physical changes" that can be observed didn't cause the depression. The physical changes in the brain were caused by the wrong ways of thinking. The wrong ways of thinking came first, and the depression came as a consequence; and the "physical changes" are simply evidence of the consequences of the wrong ways of thinking. Changes in our thinking produce changes in the synaptic connections within our brains.

2) "**Brain chemistry**: Neurotransmitters are naturally occurring brain chemicals that **likely** play a role in

depression. When these chemicals are out of balance, **it may be associated with** depressive symptoms."

This is another guess. The out of balance chemicals in the brain are a consequence of the wrong ways of thinking, not a cause of the depression.

**NOTE! The great majority of antidepressant drugs are based on this unfounded premise, that the neurotransmitters (specially serotonin) in the brain are out of balance. And so the medications tamper with that balance, which is rather risky. More on this later.**

3) "**Hormones**: Changes in the body's balance of hormones **may be involved** in causing or triggering depression. Hormone changes can result from thyroid problems, menopause or a number of other conditions."

This is nothing other than **fishing in a barren lake**, with no answers to be found. Hormonal changes are simply not the answer to Satan's spirit of fear producing negative feelings in many people.

4) "**Inherited traits**: Depression is **more common in people** whose biological (blood) relatives also have this condition. Researchers are **trying to find genes** that may be involved in **causing** depression."

What do you mean ... "more common"? That is a very vague claim, which we are supposed to accept as "yes, that's plausible" without any proof whatsoever being presented. Trying to find **genes** that supposedly cause depression is looking for your lost golf ball on the wrong side of the fairway! Blaming depression (and a host of other health problems, for that matter) on our genes is in many cases targeted at "itching ears"; all too often it is medical science, for a fat fee, trying to absolve us of any responsibility for the things that afflict us.

Nobody is born predisposed to suffer from depression. There is no gene that causes depression. If you want the correct answer, you need to look in the rough on the other side of the fairway. You need to look at **how people use their minds**, and the feelings they allow themselves to embrace. Don't try to make out the consequences of depression to be the supposed causes of depression, because **the consequences are not the causes**.

5) "**Life events**: Traumatic events such as the death or loss of a loved one, financial problems, high stress, or childhood trauma **can trigger** depression in some people."

This is their last fishing expedition. It can sound so reasonable. However, it doesn't have anything to do with "inherited traits", does it? This point is a final grasping at straws. When you think this last point through, then it should be quite clear that **how we use our minds** is really indicted here as the cause of depression. We decide how we will respond to high stress and to trauma.

We surely all know that different people respond in different ways to all these stressful situations. What is stressful to one person is a challenge to another person. It is our own mind that determines whether we will allow adversity to make us negative and depressed, or whether we will maintain a positive outlook in spite of outward circumstances. Philippians 4:13 wasn't intended for when things go well for us; no, this verse ("I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me") is intended **for the difficult times**, when things don't seem to be going well for us. And Philippians 4:13 is an expression of how Paul used his mind during his trials.

The Mayo Clinic then lists a number of "risk factors" for depression.

## **RISK FACTORS**

The real purpose of listing risk factors is to intimidate us. We are supposed to read these lists and then say: "hey, wait a minute; that point also applies to me". And then we are supposed to be scared, and motivated to do what they tell us to do. The next time you read any list of "risk factors" for some major health problem, just think about the spirit of fear.

In our case here the list of risk factors provided by the Mayo Clinic is nonsense. It is vague enough so that everybody can find at least one point that applies to them. Reading between the lines, by their standards **just being human is a risk factor for depression**. But the truth is that **there is really only one risk factor**.

That one risk factor is: **how we use our minds!**

If our lives are still controlled by the spirit of fear that Satan has spread over almost all of mankind, then we are indeed potentially at risk of developing depression. Things can change from one moment to the next, and a mind controlled by a spirit of fear can go into depression from one moment to the next, because a fearful mind is not a rational mind.

One simple example, taken from today's (i.e. August 19, 2014, the day on which I wrote this part of the article) U.K. newspaper "**Mail Online**" edition has a headline which reads:

**"Banker, 28, kills himself in ELEVENTH finance suicide this year"**, and the next line reads: **"Kenneth Bellando jumped to his death on March 12"**. A few lines down the article says: **"At 28, Bellando is the youngest of the string of suicides by finance professionals who have killed themselves this year."**

Why are highly intelligent people jumping off buildings to commit suicide? It has nothing to do with "bad genes" or with "neurotransmitters being out of balance". When things go wrong, then anyone who has a spirit of fear is a potential candidate for depression. In less than three months 11 financial people committed suicide in one of the finance capitals of the world. That is what a spirit of fear will pressure otherwise healthy and intelligent people to do when things go wrong.

The one risk factor for depression involves **how we choose to use our minds**. Those who have a spirit of fear are at risk. All the so-called other risk factors are nothing more than things or circumstances that we **may** sometimes allow to influence the way we will use our minds. And in that process **virtually anything** could be the catalyst that pressures us to think in negative ways. In most cases those "things or circumstances" that we focus on as supposed causes of someone's depression are nothing more than excuses to absolve the individual involved from any responsibility for the way he chooses to use his mind.

Pressuring circumstances are not the cause of depression. The cause is giving in to those pressuring circumstances.

Understand:

**We always have the power to say "NO" to any pressures that pressure us to adopt negative feelings and emotions. That is a power that God has given us! And when we do say "NO" to those pressures, then God will always help us!**

If we in faith accept this premise of resisting negative feelings and emotions, then God will surely always help us in times of trial. And don't ever be intimidated by so-called "risk factors" for depression. You

have full control over your mind, and never let anyone talk you out of that control.

## **THE TREATMENTS THEY OFFER YOU**

Let's continue with the information presented on the Mayo Clinic website, because it fairly accurately represents the current medical thinking regarding the treatment of depression.

Here is their opening statement under "Treatments": "**Numerous depression treatments are available. Medications and psychological counseling** (psychotherapy) are very effective for most people."

Thus the two main treatment options are: **drugs** and **talking to a shrink**. Two lesser used treatment options presented later in the article are "electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)" and "transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS)".

As far as ECT is concerned:

**ECT is what used to be commonly known as "electroshock therapy". In ECT they intentionally bring on a brief seizure in the brain. In Wikipedia it is acknowledged that "despite decades of research, the exact mechanism of action of ECT remains elusive". Scientific articles regarding the effectiveness of ECT have reached conflicting conclusions. A 2010 paper by Dr. John Reed and Dr. Richard Bentall concluded that "the use of ECT cannot be scientifically justified". Proponents of ECT have gone out of their way to try persuade the public that ECT doesn't cause structural damage in the brain (i.e. that the electric current doesn't fry a small number of brain cells because modern ECT uses much weaker currents than were used 50 years ago). Anyway, the use of ECT remains highly controversial, and we need not consider it in our context here.**

In the other form of treatment known as **TMS** they send brief magnetic pulses to certain areas of the brain, typically 5 treatments a week for 6 weeks, with the hope that those areas of the brain will no longer generate thoughts of depression. This treatment option we also need not consider.

Getting back to the two main treatment options:

The first one, **drug therapy**, is totally and completely useless; but it happens to be a highly lucrative multi-billion dollar business. The second one, **talking to a psychologist or a psychiatrist**, in most cases usually doesn't do much good either, though saying the right things to the depressed person may theoretically sometimes motivate them to take control of their feelings and moods. Psychiatric counseling obviously didn't do much good for the Hollywood actor who committed suicide. (COMMENT: In one of his movies he actually played the role of a shrink.)

Now notice something about the **antidepressant drugs**, the largest sector amongst treatments for depression. Most of them fall into one of three categories. They are known as "**SSRIs, SNRIs and NDRIs**", which between them include most of the better-known antidepressants (i.e. Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Celexa, Lexapro, Cymbalta, Pristiq, Wellbutrin, etc.). Notice that all three groups end with the letters "RI". Here is what these letters mean:

- **SSRIs = Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors**
- **SNRIs = Serotonin and Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors**
- **NDRIs = Norepinephrine and Dopamine Reuptake Inhibitors**

The key is that all three groups of drugs are **reuptake inhibitors!**

In the process of normal brain functioning the neurotransmitters are released into the brain tissue, and then they are immediately "taken up again", to be available for repeating the whole process all over again.

Think of these neurotransmitters as a group of excited small children in a playground, who eagerly go down a slide and then immediately run around the side and up the steps to go down the slide again, and again, and again, endlessly continuing this exciting activity with boundless energy. That's somewhat like the neurotransmitters in the brain. That is the way God designed the brain to function, that the chemicals that are released in the brain are immediately taken up again, to be used over and over again. The small children are not supposed to "stick around" at the bottom of the slide in deep thought about what to do next; they are supposed to get out of the way of other kids coming down the slide; and they should continue to come down the slide repeatedly.

Now some researchers figured out that depressed people don't seem to have enough kids hanging around at the bottom of the slide. And so they created drugs to make the kids a little groggy at the bottom of the slide, causing them to stick around a bit longer. In that way a congestion develops at the bottom of the slide. What doesn't seem to have occurred to them is that if the kids are all somewhat sluggish at the bottom of the slide, then **other problems may develop**, and some of these kids may even get hurt.

Basically these drugs disrupt the normal functioning of the brain. And the thinking is that if you can disrupt the brain's normal functioning for a long enough period, then the depression will somehow go away. What these drugs really do is to some degree **disrupt the brain's ability to think!**

These "reuptake inhibitors" cause huge problems! And so they all list "major side effects". In some cases even worse side effects have been observed, and so a number of the producers of these drugs are now dealing with major lawsuits.

The "WebMD" website says: "**if your symptoms don't improve after 4 to 6 weeks**, tell your doctor. You may need **a higher dose** or **a different medicine**."

We need to understand that none of these drugs are supposed to heal anything! The explicit purpose of all these drugs is to in some way disrupt the normal functioning of the brain ... that's what "reuptake inhibitors" are supposed to do.

The authors of WebMD are just guessing at what it will take to disrupt the normal functioning of your brain. WebMD continues to state: "it can take **up to 3 months** to feel the full benefit of an antidepressant." A few sentences later WebMD says: "a successful course of treatment **usually lasts several months to a year**. Don't quit, even if you feel better sooner. **If you do (quit), it's likely your depression will come back.**" Do you detect "a spirit of fear" in this last statement?

And if your side effects don't go away after a week or two, WebMD suggests: "it's probably best to **switch to another drug**". They don't understand the real causes of depression, and so all these drugs are groping in the dark, looking on the wrong side of the fairway for their lost golf ball. Switching to another drug is all they can offer you. And if none of the drugs disrupt your brain enough to make your depression go away, then they'll send you to the psychiatrist to try to reason the depression out of your system.

Consider this theoretical situation:

1) **IF** serotonin is the problem, **THEN** SSRIs should be the solution, and then SNRIs and NDRIs are bad and only create problems because they prevent the needed uptake of norepinephrine and dopamine.

2) **IF** norepinephrine alone is the problem, **THEN** SSRIs and SNRIs and NDRIs are all a problem, because all of them also inhibit either serotonin or dopamine, which should not be inhibited.

3) **IF** dopamine alone is the problem, **THEN** again SSRIs and SNRIs and NDRIs are all a problem, because all of them also inhibit either serotonin or norepinephrine, which should not be inhibited.

4) **IF** a combination of two neurotransmitters is the problem, **THEN** ... you can figure the rest out for yourself, right?

Have I confused you sufficiently? It certainly can be quite confusing.

The point is: these different drugs prove that they really have no idea what the causes of depression are. And they don't care if they happen to inhibit some neurotransmitters that should not be inhibited, as evidenced by **the long list of major side effects** these drugs produce. These drugs are all about making money, that's all.

To summarize: reuptake inhibitor drugs interfere with the normal functioning of the brain, because these "experts" decided that in depression the brain is supposedly not really functioning "normally". However, **with depression the problem is not the brain**; the problem is with the way of thinking that the person has accepted; the problem is that the person has allowed a spirit of fear to take over their mind. And the only answers that modern medicine has for depression are:

1) We'll use drugs to disrupt your depressed thinking.

2) We'll try to psychoanalyze you out of your depression.

3) We'll kill those brain cells that are responsible for your depression.

And that is in spite of admitting up front that they don't actually understand the real causes of depression. So they are trying to offer a cure for something without any idea regarding the causes of the problem they are trying to cure.

In fairness to the Mayo Clinic website I should mention that they then do actually mention a few good points. Under "Lifestyle & Home Remedies" they open as follows: "Depression generally isn't a disorder that you can treat on your own. But in addition to professional treatment, **these self-care steps can help.**"

Then they list a few points. But they still open with a threat of dire consequences if you don't follow a treatment plan designed by the experts. They threaten: "**if you stop** (going to your shrink), **depression symptoms may come back**". You need that shrink, even if you have to talk to him an hour a week for a year or longer.

Anyway, the positive useful points they then mention are:

- Educate yourself about depression (which this article is all about),
- Get exercise,
- Get plenty of sleep,
- Get a well-balanced diet,

- Music or art therapy (think of David playing the harp for Saul),
- Meditation (i.e. in our case: primarily prayer to God),
- Simplify your life, cut back on commitments,
- Don't be a loner, be socially active,
- Structure your time, make a list of daily tasks,
- Reach out to friends and family for help,
- Changing negative thoughts and behavior (= from WebMD).

They then conclude with another warning to not rely on all these things too much, because big pharma and big medicine would lose a large group of income-generating customers. So they say:

**"Relying solely on these (i.e. non-medical) therapies is generally not enough."**

And Mayo Clinic concludes by saying **"There's no sure way to prevent depression"**, another little plug for that spirit of fear.

Let's face it: **fear is good for business**. Without that spirit of fear large sectors of our economies would come to a grinding halt. So we shouldn't begrudge Mayo Clinic a little plug here and there for that spirit of fear. But now let's once again focus on the solution for depression.

## **THE SOLUTION**

The above list of "positive useful points" is certainly helpful. Aerobic exercise, for example, releases endorphins in the brain, natural chemicals that tend to make us feel good. That is like a reward for the effort we put out in exercising.

But the most important point with depression is to understand that this condition does not originate in our genes, and that it is not due to an imbalance of chemicals in the brain. **Depression is first and foremost one particular manifestation of the spirit of fear**, which Satan seeks to instill in all human beings. This spirit seeks to influence our minds, to influence what we think and how we think.

Therefore the most important key on this topic is what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10.

**Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)**

People who suffer from depression do not bring every thought "into captivity". They don't control the thoughts they think. No, **their thoughts control them**. And that is the primary problem with depression.

If a depressed person is a member of God's Church or is associated in some way with God's Church, then that person will exhibit an unwillingness to pray regularly, or to pray at all for that matter. They don't want to study the Bible and they don't want to fast. **They deliberately avoid all attempts to make contact with God**. That is another clue that they have accepted Satan's spirit of fear. Instead of bringing every thought into captivity, they themselves are held captive by the spirit of fear.

Now **one of the main problems in going to a psychiatrist** is that you cannot really overcome depression "one little bit every week". Coming from the assumed premise that depression is a physical disease, it may sound intellectually plausible to make gradual steady progress in overcoming depression. But that simply doesn't work in real life! Here is why.

Getting rid of depression is a little bit like getting rid of a demon. Note! I do not mean to imply that depression is necessarily the same as demon possession. But there are clear parallels. In most cases demon possession is an even stronger pressure on our minds than depression. But the point is this: **nobody can get rid of demon possession "a little bit every week"!** That just doesn't work! Even if you could theoretically cast out 90% of a demon, so that the person was then only 10% demon possessed, the problem would still be there. And obviously, we can't cast out 90% of a demon. The demon is either cast out or it is not cast out, and **there is no middle ground.**

Because depression is primarily about a spirit of fear, therefore it is a spiritual problem, meaning that there is a spirit we have to deal with. And **the spirit of fear either leaves our minds or it doesn't leave our minds.** But that spirit of fear can never leave halfway; it can never be "half gone". And so likewise, there is no such thing as a person's depression theoretically being 50% healed.

Starting out from the premise that it will take a year of counseling to overcome depression is an exercise that is doomed to fail. That doesn't mean that some of the topics that might be covered in such counseling might not be quite useful. But presenting useful and helpful information doesn't get rid of depression. If it did, then our Hollywood actor would not have committed suicide.

A demon is cast out all at once, at one specific occasion. And depression likewise has to be overcome all at once, at one specific occasion. And that has to do with the word "repent".

This word "repent" simply means **"to change the way we think, the way we use our minds"**. In that change of mind sins may or may not be involved. When God repents, sins are **never** involved! Likewise, when Paul initially "did repent" for sending the Corinthians a pretty strong letter (see 2 Corinthians 7:8), that also had nothing at all to do with any sins on Paul's part. The word "repent" does not automatically imply sins or sinning. What the word "repent" does not only "imply" but in fact mean unequivocally is: **"to change one's mind"**.

The only way a depressed person can overcome depression is to change the way he uses his mind, **to change his way of thinking**, away from a spirit of fear, in addition to changing what he thinks about. And these things are a perfect definition for the word "repent". So in this sense the only real solution for depression is for the depressed person to repent, to reject the spirit of fear, and to practice Philippians 4:8 very conscientiously.

Frank W Nelte