

Born For The Broken
How The Gospel Inoculates Nonclinical Depression
Ephesians 1:3-12

Introduction: In Luke's account of the Christmas story, the night Jesus was born, an Angel appeared to some Shepherds in the same region of Bethlehem. Luke writes,

8 And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. 10 And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.12 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" 15 When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:8-14)

Leon Morris wrote, "**Peace, of course, means peace between God and people, the healing of the estrangement caused by human evil.**"¹

The primary disease in our life, the disease that causes all other diseases, is our separation from God. That separation is death, and its cause is sin. Sin is why the world is broken because sin has separated us and the entire Universe from life! When Adam sinned in Genesis 3, the Universe was broken, torn away from life itself. Therefore, the human condition is not defined by life but rather by death, first and foremost in its effect on our relationship with God. As long as we are separated from God, we are separated from life itself, but as long as we are sinners, we will remain separated from God! There is no peace from God because, as sinners, we stand against Him, and He is against us! To be a sinner is to resist Him, to rebel, to say no to The One who will not, nor cannot, allow it!

This war in our souls against God, where we demand the right to live as God over ourselves and our circumstances, where we require our will instead of His, and even fight for our perspective and desires based on our infinitesimally microscopic knowledge of all things and inescapably flawed motives to be the authority and truth; leads us not simply to live in opposition to God but ironically in opposition to ourselves. This war between us and God viscerally affects us. There is nothing beautiful or peaceful in a war zone; therefore, as long as we are at war with God, peace and all its fruits cannot exist.

So, God sent His Son to do what we could not do. We, who by nature rebel and continue the war as sinful sinners who know how to do nothing but resist God, are rescued from our

¹ Morris, L. (1988). [*Luke: an introduction and commentary*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 102-103). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

condition through Jesus. The purpose of the coming of Christ was to establish peace between us and God, and thus peace in our life by defeating its cause—sin!

26 But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:26b)

Jesus putting away sin is the most relevant act in human history! In all the other incredible things Jesus did and taught while He walked this earth, had He not put away sin, He would have accomplished nothing! Sin is the cause of the human condition, and thus putting away sin is the inoculation against the human condition.

So this Christmas season, we want to show how the peace that Jesus brought us is the HEALING for the brokenness in our life and world! We want to show you how all that Christ accomplished and gave us as a gift from God is not simply something to entertain our thirst for knowledge, but to quench our thirst for life. Nothing is more practical and relevant to life than the Gospel of Jesus Christ! There is an endless list of what we could talk about this month, but given the unfortunate side effects of our Christmas traditions, we decided to focus on some of the prominent testimonies of our brokenness that seem to surface during the Christmas season.

In a season where joy and cheer rise, studies show it is contrasted by a rise in depression, anxiety, and broken relationships. For some, these things are a direct result of chemical imbalances that, if not addressed, cannot be overcome. For instance, a person who has clinical depression wakes up in the morning feeling as if their spouse just left them for their best friend, that their children all hate them, and they got fired from their job! With clinical depression, a person feels totally hopeless and worthless because their mind is literally causing their body to release hormones that make them feel that way. Feelings are a result of the hormones our brain tells our body to release. In this way our thoughts produce feelings, but consequently, those feelings then produce thoughts.

For a person suffering from clinical depression, their brain tells their body to release the hormones that make them feel depressed, even though no thought or reality makes any sense for their brain to release those hormones. As a result, over time, a person who suffers from clinical depression will begin to see and interpret the world by how they feel, and as such, their thoughts and feelings will align. The mental snowball that develops when this happens can quickly get out of control unless a person gets medical help. Their feelings have retrained their mind to embrace and feed the problem rather than cure it. Without supernatural healing or the use of drugs that counteract the hormonal snowball, it's almost an impossible thing to stop. A person can't simply decide to get over it because there are almost no tools left in their mental toolbox to do it!

However, once a doctor can get a person's medications properly dialed in to lessen the hormonal imbalance, the treatment for a person with clinical depression and a person with nonclinical depression becomes the same thing—they have to learn to think differently so that their brain stops telling their body to release chemicals that leave them in that very real and very dark place of depression.

So, what does this have to do with the Gospel? Well, in all that a counselor can teach you about how you should think, in all the truth they can give you, there is only ONE truth that will genuinely right-side the upside-down thinking that makes us all so vulnerable to depression. There is only one way to be inoculated against nonclinical depression—the Gospel!

It's important to note that grief and depression are two different things. We are not talking about grief today. You can't be inoculated from grief. Even Jesus grieved. Grief is how we feel our way through loss. The Gospel gives us a very different way to grieve and provides a pathway out of it, but when we lose a loved one, grief is a natural and healthy pathway for us, so long as it's a path with the light of Christ showing us the way in Him that brings healing!

Depression, on the other hand, is not an emotional response to loss but a state of being that results from a belief that our life has lost its purpose, that we have no real value to society, our families, or even our existence, and that we don't matter. Because of the reality of the effects of sin in our lives, every one of us will go through some level of a battle with depression.

A midlife crisis is a battle with depression. It is a feeling of hopelessness, a sense of not only falling short of your purpose, but being locked out of the ability to ever fulfill it because you are now too old to have the time or situation to accomplish it. Some find themselves in a state of hopelessness or worthlessness because they think they've never performed anything of value for society, their family, or even themselves; others end up there because they feel like they used to provide something of great value to society, their family and themselves but now they can't! No matter the variable, we end up feeling this way because the world's way of determining who we are is upside-down. Every decision in life, every failure, and ironically even our successes, when put into the formula of the upside-down system of a sinful world, always ends with the same product—lack of value and self-worth, and hopelessness. Here's how that happens.

The world's upside-down system of determining my self-worth is as follows:

- (1) What I perform and how well I perform determines my value.**
- (2) My value determines the type and level of acceptance I receive from others.**
- (3) How I'm accepted determines my self-worth.**
- (4) Self-worth then depends entirely on what I perform and how well I continue performing it.**

The irony of this system is that even if you do something successful, something that gives you value and acceptance, it's inevitable that you will one day no longer be able to do whatever that it is, and you will end up in a worse place than where you started!

Eventually, the President of the United States will not be President, so what do you do to match that performance? In the world system, you can never have that kind of value and acceptance again; thus, you will forever see yourself as less than what you once were.

Every successful athlete will one day not be a successful athlete, but somebody who used to be successful. Every great business leader will one day be somebody who used to be a great business leader. Every great preacher will one day be somebody who used to be a great preacher. Success is not sustainable! Ironically, even when you reach the mountain peak you've labored to climb, you realize you are surrounded by mountains, many of which are taller than the one you climbed!

The problem with this system is that the success and failure of your performance inevitably produce the same thing! The root problem is not your performance but the system you are performing in. The root problem is not the variable being applied to the formula but the formula itself! Trying to get an upside-down car to take you somewhere is ridiculous. No matter how incredible you are at driving cars, as long as the car is upside down, you're not going anywhere!

So what's the answer? Well, the Good News is that the baby born in the manger right sided everything! He came to put away sin and defeat death, and in so doing, He taught us how we are supposed to see ourselves and our situation in this world. He completely redefined how we think about ourselves and, as such, provided us an inoculation against nonclinical depression, that is, if we will actually see ourselves through the right-side-up formula of the Gospel!

The Gospel is God's right-side up system that declares my self-worth.

Proposition: Ephesians 1:3-12 provides three Gospel truths that create the right-side up way I'm supposed to see myself.

The first truth is that ...

(1) God adopted me as one of His favored children because He loves me. –

Acceptance!

A. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)

B. "God put us and Christ together in his mind. He determined to make us (who did not yet exist) his own children through the redeeming work of Christ (which had not yet taken place). It was a definite decision, for the

verb *he chose* (*exelexato*) is another aorist. It also arose from his entirely unmerited favour, since he chose us *that we should be holy and blameless before him*, which indicates that we, when in his mind he chose us, were unholly and blameworthy, and therefore deserving not of adoption but of judgment.”²

- C. We were not adopted by God to be His children because of our accomplishments; in fact, if our accomplishments are what God based His decision on, then we would all be doomed! In the very next chapter, Paul wrote,
- D. **1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Ephesians 2:1-3)**
- E. As proud as I am to be Ada's dad and as beautiful as she is, we didn't adopt her because of who and what she had done or could do; we chose to love her. She was a newly born baby who did what every other newborn baby did—sleep, cry, eat, pee, and poop! We didn't go to a nursery in Ethiopia and interview the babies or have resumes sent to us. We didn't research her family history to see if we wanted to align with it; we couldn't; she was abandoned at birth. We have no idea who her biological ancestors were—if they were at some point high achievers in one of the world's oldest nations or not! We simply decided to adopt her as one of our children and, as such, love her unconditionally. There is nothing Ada can do to turn me against her. Once we committed to adopt her, we took her in not as our adopted child but simply as our child! That's what it means to adopt a child. You are bringing them into a relationship with you as your child.
- F. Now think of the implications of that! Jesus is God's eternal Son, the Father's eternal CHILD. When God adopted us, we were then made the eternal children of GOD in the same way! We are not the adopted kids that He somehow loves with a less or different kind of love than He loves His eternally begotten Son, but rather in the same way He loves the eternally begotten Son. This is why Paul wrote this to the church in Rome,
- G. **15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs**

² Stott, J. R. W. (1979). [*God's new society: the message of Ephesians*](#) (p. 36). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:15-17)

- H. So, in God's right-side formula for us to determine who we are and our self-worth and identity, we find out we are fully loved and accepted by God no matter how well we perform! The acceptance that tells me I matter, have purpose, and have meaning has been eternally decreed by the Father, who will not nor cannot change. I am a highly favored, fully loved, and accepted child of God forever, not because of what I have done but because God chose to love me!

The second Gospel truth that creates the right-side up way I'm supposed to see myself is that ...

(2) Christ died for me because I'm worth that much to Him. – Value!

- A. **7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (Ephesians 1:7-10)**
- B. I don't know if you caught it, but in Ephesians 2:3, Paul said we are "children of wrath"; that is, what we belong to and are a product of is the wrath of God. Every child of Adam is born into the circumstance of being under the wrath of God and a product of the wrath of God in that we are born incapable of living in unity with God or His life! We are born under the judgment of God on sin, His wrath on sin, and as such, we are born not into the reality of life but death. This reality is what we are damned into by Adam's sin, and our only escape is to be rescued from it—AKA redeemed!
- C. **"Redemption here, as in Col. 1:14, indicates deliverance as a result of the payment of a ransom."³**
- D. The ransom paid was the life of Christ! Hendriksen and Kistemaker further explain,
- E. **"Expressions such as, "He gave his blood," "He gave his soul," and "He gave himself," are synonymous. They all indicate that the Redeemer was made (and made himself) an offering for sin (Isa. 53:10; 2 Cor. 5:21); that he suffered the eternal punishment due to sin; that he did this vicariously, and**

³ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of Ephesians* (Vol. 7, pp. 81–82). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

that he did all this for those who by nature were “children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3).”⁴

- F. In God’s will to send His Son to buy us out of not only the curse of sin that we were born in, but have continued in; and in Christ’s willingness to be sent for this purpose, we can only conclude one thing—HE LOVES US! There is no higher price to pay than one’s own life, and in this case, the price was not simply to physically die but to suffer the eternal wrath of God on sin on our behalf. Physical death is certainly a product of God’s wrath on sin, but the substance of God’s wrath on sin is eternal death, that is, eternal separation from God. Therefore, Jesus didn’t simply die on the cross, but He fully suffered something He had never experienced in all of eternity. In His death on the cross, Jesus took upon Himself the burden of suffering eternal separation from the Father. In one eternal moment, an eternal act was accomplished once and for all, an act of unthinkable horror and pain, was eternally suffered in one act of Jesus Christ on the cross for us because He loves us! I’m worth that much to Him! No one has, nor can, love me that much!
- G. Therefore, in the Gospel, I find out that my value has nothing to do with what I have performed or not performed or how well I performed it or didn’t perform it! What determines my value is what declares my value—the suffering savior who came to redeem me out of sin and its consequence into righteousness and His life!

The third Gospel truth that creates the right-side up way I’m supposed to see myself is that ...

(3) The Holy Spirit is working in and through me so that I can accomplish things that match His glory! – Performance!

- A. **11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:11-12)**
- B. In the next chapter of Ephesians Paul expounded on this truth. He wrote,
- C. **8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10)**

⁴ Hendriksen, W., & Kistemaker, S. J. (1953–2001). *Exposition of Ephesians* (Vol. 7, p. 82). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House.

- D.** We were made to accomplish things, to perform. In the Garden, God gave Adam and Eve tasks. Being made in God's image means we are made to create and accomplish; to work. But the works of God and His life are not the same as those of this upside-down world.
- E.** It's not to say that all the works of this world are evil; it's just that they are upside down in their effect. There is nothing wrong with your career, nor with how much money you make, so long as what you are doing or how you are doing it is not unethical or immoral. Suppose you can invent a widget and execute the business wisdom to make and sell a billion of those widgets. In that case, there is nothing unethical or immoral about the billions of dollars that you will earn for doing so!
- F.** However, the problem of accomplishing even the necessary tasks of this world, is that it can never provide you the same experience as the performance of God's works. And this is precisely where so many Christians unknowingly find themselves returning to the upside-down formula. They rightly say to themselves that the performance of earthly careers or jobs doesn't fulfill them, but then incorrectly conclude that if they quit doing them and instead do what they consider Godly careers or jobs, they will suddenly experience fulfillment. There are two flaws with this conclusion:
1. If you are basing your sense of value on your task performance, then you are applying your performance to the upside-down sinful formula for establishing your self-worth!
 2. God doesn't separate the tasks of preaching and leading the church as inherently more important or fulfilling than cutting grass, welding a pipe, or leading a multibillion-dollar corporation! God's gifting and calling me to lead ministry does not create a more important or Godly task than your gifting and calling to teach English in middle school or stack boxes in a warehouse.
- G.** So, what then is Paul talking about if leading a local church isn't the work God refers to here? Listen, church, understand that when the Chief Shepherd appears, He will no longer need me to shepherd His church! When the Bridegroom appears to claim His bride, He will no longer need me to be a husband to Keri. When we are standing before the Father as His children, my kids will no longer need me to parent them! I'm blessed to see Christ's life in my children; therefore, in eternity, I will not stand in front of them as their dad but beside them as their brother, praising our FATHER together with them! Being a pastor, a husband, and a dad are God-ordained works, but they are still works of this world; good and beautiful works, but they are not eternal works; they are not the works Paul was talking about at all! These are works that both the saved and the unsaved walk in every day, including some unsaved people who attempt

to Shepherd the flock of God! These are all good works, but these are not the works only the redeemed can experience. So, what is He is talking about?

- H. K.S. Wuest wrote something about Ephesians 2:10 that's very helpful in understanding the Biblical doctrine of "work." He wrote,
- I. **"These good works were prepared beforehand "that we should walk in them." The word "walk" is *peripateō*, "to regulate one's life, to conduct one's self, to order one's behavior." "In them" is *en toutois*, "in these," namely, the good works, locative of sphere. We are to order our behavior within the sphere of these good works."**⁵
- J. He has prepared us to walk in the works of HIS LIFE that He will produce in and through us as we live our lives in this world, doing whatever it is God has called and gifted us to do in this life and world.
- K. **22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)**
- L. **The love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control** that Paul speaks of is not the human version of God's works, but literally God's life being manifested through us. Paul is telling us about the fruits of the Spirit, the works of God that a fallen world unsuccessfully tries to replicate. It's not that the world doesn't possess love, joy, peace, patience, etc. but rather the type of love, joy, peace, patience, etc. is different. The world produces these fruits in its upside-down system and thus its results can never achieve what they produce in God's right-side up system. Furthermore, the primary purpose of fruit is in the seed it contains. The self-control of the world's religions doesn't contain the seed of God's life, but religion. As admirable as it may be, it is a different kind of self-control applied to a different system with an entirely different result. However, the self-control that the Holy Spirit of God produces in us through God's system, contains the seed of His life and thus as it is poured out on others it turns heads and hearts to Him rather than us. The end result of the worlds version of God's fruit, as good as that fruit may taste, can never be the same because the seed within that fruit is not the same seed, and the system that produced that fruit is an entirely different system.
- M. As such, these works should be the works of followers of Jesus who run the most powerful nations on the planet, run multibillion-dollar corporations, run touchdowns, or run machines at a machine shop! When you walk in step with the Lord, His life will manifest through you. When you abide in Christ, no matter what you are called to do in this life, you will produce HIS LIFE!

⁵ Wuest, K. S. (1997). [*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader*](#) (Vol. 4, p. 71). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

- N. There is fulfillment in accomplishments, in performing something well. However, the fulfillment of successfully performing the works of this world is fleeting at best, and possibly still, at worst, demoralizing and destructive. But when we are performing the works of this world while also walking in step with the Spirit and seeing Him live through us, seeing our lives pouring out HIS LIFE in others, we experience a sense of fulfillment like no other! There is no experience in this world as fulfilling as when we see the worthiness of His life being stirred in us and lavished on others through us!

Challenge: The Gospel only inoculates us against depression when we actively live our lives from it. What system are you living your life in?