

# The Voice of Depression

by

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*"We are not unaware of his schemes." 2 Corinthians 2:11b*

This week, the world is mourning the loss of the talented actor/comedian, Robin Williams. All of us, from all generations, were touched in some way by this man's career. It has been discovered that he suffered from deep depression and that he took his own life, and people the world over are now talking about the "disease" of depression. As I listen to commentators and entertainers talking about depression as a hidden epidemic, I do concur that many people seem to be struggling with this. I don't know if Robin Williams was a believer, though I pray he was, but being a believer does not prevent someone from being tempted by depression.

As believers, we should always look first to the Word and look to Jesus for answers and hope. In Hebrews 4:15, it says of Jesus:

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One Who has been tempted in every way, just as we are- yet was without sin."*

Robin Williams talked often about the "Voice" in his head which was always trying to lure him down dark paths. If you are a believer in Christ, and have any sense of spiritual awareness, you know that the "Voice" he is talking about is the voice of the Devil or one of his demons. I'm sure you, like me, have heard that voice. Jesus, who took on the form of man, put Himself in a position of weakness, and He knows the source of that voice. We know Jesus had a tough encounter with the Devil himself when he was weak and hungry from fasting for 40 days in the desert. At one point, the Devil took Jesus to the highest point of the Temple, and said:

*"If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You to guard you carefully; they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'" Luke 4:9-11*

Jesus, in this moment, was tempted to commit suicide. The Devil tries to convince Him that He can end his pain and suffering immediately and fall into the angels' arms. I feel certain that many who commit suicide fall for this same rationale from the Devil. We, as believers, must abide in Christ daily, so we will know the difference between our

Shepherd's voice and the voice of the Enemy. However, we must also be aware of the Devil's schemes and how he works, so we will be prepared.

I was reading an account in the Old Testament when Sennacherib, King of Assyria, was closing in to attack King Hezekiah and Jerusalem. This story is recorded in 2 Chronicles 32, 2 Kings 18 and Isaiah 36, and it truly seems worthy of note, as I believe it helps us understand how the enemy speaks to us. As the Field Commander for Sennacherib approaches the city, he brings a message:

*"On what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, 'The Lord our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,' he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst. Did not Hezekiah himself remove this god's high places and altars, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You must worship before one altar and burn sacrifices on it?' Do you not know what I and my predecessors have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? Who of all the gods of these nations that my predecessors destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand?" 2 Chronicles 10-14*

*"Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses- if you can put riders on them! How then can you repulse one officer of the least of my master's officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this land without the Lord? The Lord himself told me to march against this country and destroy it." Isaiah 36:8-10*

*"Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the people sitting on the wall- who, like you, will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine? ...Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew, 'Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust the Lord when he says, 'The Lord will surely deliver us.'" 2 Kings 18:28-30*

If you spend some time studying this interchange between God's people and their enemy, you will hear the "Voice" of the enemy. You will notice 3 key elements to the strategy of the enemy: Doubt, Bargaining, and Intimidation.

**Doubt-** There is a subtle line of questioning and reason which casts doubt. You can trace this tactic to the very beginning as the serpent asked Adam and Eve, "Are you

sure He told you not to eat from the tree?" The enemy knows our weaknesses and he knows how we are prone to use our intellect and reasoning to figure everything out, rather than trusting in our faith, so this is almost always his first line of attack. He will try to get us to doubt the existence of God, let alone his ability to help us. When he is not sure this is working, he will make us doubt whether we are really on God's side. Maybe we are on the wrong side of the situation.

**Bargaining-** After planting the seed of doubt, then he goes on to strike a bargain. "Okay, I tell you what. You come follow me, and I'll make it worth your while. I'll give you riches and honor and release from your pain. Why do you want to risk your life, just to hang on to your principles and your faith. I'll take care of you." The enemy always acts as if he has something better to offer us, and we are justified in taking it. We deserve it. It is a trap, my friends.

**Intimidation-** If we don't fall for the Doubt or the Bargaining, he then attempts to strike fear in us through intimidation. If you read the Commander's words, you see that he finally gets harsh, threatening that they will be eating their own excrement and drinking their own urine. Satan's final card is always intimidation. "I will destroy you if you do not follow me. You will die."

Brothers and any Sisters out there reading this, we have an enemy. He does come to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to take you off the mission of following Christ and fighting for His Kingdom. He will speak to you in deceitful, manipulative ways. I know that you know what I'm talking about. But we have a God Who is greater than the Devil! He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die an atoning death for us on the Cross, which took away the power of the Devil. Jesus left His Spirit to live inside us to help us finish the race. He helps us die to our flesh and to the things of this world so that the Devil does not have any bargaining chips. Even if he threatens death, we do not fear, for we have already died.

Hezekiah knew God. His God healed him of a life-threatening illness. He had confidence and faith, no matter what the circumstances presented. He fell on his face before the Lord in the midst of his trial. He sought counsel from Isaiah and stood strong with fellow believers. And guess what happened:

*"That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning- there were all the dead bodies!" 2 Kings 19:35-36*

For all of you struggling with depression and with darkness, there is Hope. When you hear that "Voice" in your head, do what Hezekiah did. Fall on your face and turn to Him. Seek the counsel of others. Humble yourself and let go, so He can work on your behalf. God will deliver you.

*"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

*James 4:7*