

Spiritual Depression-Its Causes and Cures

-A study through D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones sermon series-

Chapter 1-General Considerations

Psalms 42 (and 43) is the biblical backdrop for this chapter. In this psalm we see how a struggling saint deals with his depressed soul. All saints will struggle with this particular problem at some point in their lives and some will struggle with it to a greater degree and for longer periods. In fact, the _____ have much to say about our struggle with spiritual depression.

“It is interesting to notice the frequency with which this particular theme is dealt with in the Scriptures and the only conclusion to be drawn from that is that it is a very common condition. It seems to be a condition which has afflicted God’s people right from the beginning, for you find it described and dealt with the Old Testament and in the New.” (pg. 10)

When beginning to think about this issue we must start with God’s infallible Word. When looking to God’s Word there are two different forms of help that can be found. The Scriptures gives us doctrine and examples of others that can both help and encourage us. We must remember here that _____ always takes precedence over illustration.

“It is good, always, to start with the Bible, where there is explicit teaching on every condition and it is also good to look at examples and illustrations from the same source...it is very vital that we should take the teaching first...it is because they are always looking at persons and their stories instead of first grasping the teaching, that they so often and so badly go astray.” (pg. 10-11)

Laying some of this foundation we now must ask the question of why should we even deal with this topic at all? There are two primary reasons (and these go from lesser to greater in order of importance) we should look at. First, _____ struggle with this issue so as a way to help it must be examined.

“It is very sad to contemplate the fact that there are Christian people who live the greater part of their lives in this world in such a condition. It does not mean that they are not Christians, but it does mean that they are missing a great deal...” (pg. 11)

Secondly, this issue must be discussed for the sake of God’s _____ and His _____.

“We must face this problem for the sake of the Kingdom of God and for the glory of God. In a sense a depressed Christian is a contradiction in terms, and he is a very poor recommendation of the gospel.” (pg. 11)

When dealing with this issue Christians must understand that it is not a _____ fix issue.

“We are all in such a hurry, we want everything at once. We believe that all truth can be stated in a few minutes. The answer to that is that it cannot, and the reason why so many today are living superficial Christian lives is because they will not take the time to examine themselves.” (pg 12)

Psalms 42 teaches us that spiritual depression affects even our _____ (our countenance). What is happening in our soul will impact our body (our facial expressions, etc.). As we see from this Psalm, only as we get a clear view of God will our face be changed. Our face is changed as our soul is changed (Ecclesiastes 8:1 also teaches this principle). We often do not realize how we are presenting ourselves to others. Therefore, others can often tell what is going on within us when we may be blind to it ourselves.

“If we but had the power to see ourselves as others see us, it would oftentimes be the main step to victory and release.” (pg. 14)

Now, let us look at some of the “general causes” of spiritual depression. Lloyd-Jones approaches this topic in a unique way, one in which you can see the wisdom of God in preparing Lloyd-Jones in the medical field before bringing him to be a fisher of men. The first subject he would have us consider when looking at the causes of spiritual depression is a person’s _____.

“First and foremost I would not hesitate to put-temperament. There are, after all, certain different types of people.”

Lloyd-Jones quickly deals with the _____ some may want to raise that temperament has nothing to do with Christianity because salvation does away with all the differences between people.

“We begin by saying that temperament, psychology and make-up do not make the slightest difference in the matter of our salvation. That is, thank God, the very basis of our position as Christians. It does not matter what we are by temperament; we are all saved the same way, by the same act of God in and through His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...But while I emphasize, with all my being, the fact that temperament does not make the slightest difference in the matter of our fundamental salvation, I am equally anxious to emphasize the fact that it does make a very great difference in actual experience in the Christian life...” (pg. 15)

“As I understand the Biblical teaching about this matter, there is nothing which is quite so important as that we should without delay, and as quickly as possible, get to know ourselves... We are all in the same fight, of course, as we share the same common salvation, and have the same common central need. But the manifestations of the trouble vary from case to case and from person to person. There is nothing more futile, when dealing with this condition than to act on the assumption that all Christians are identical in every respect. They are not, and they are not even meant to be.” (pg. 15)

The second general cause of spiritual depression has to do with your _____. Physical conditions can add to the feeling of depression in your soul.

“There are certain physical ailments which tend to promote depression... You cannot isolate the spiritual from the physical for we are body, mind and spirit. The greatest and best Christians when they are physically weak are more prone to an attack of spiritual depression than at any other time and there are great illustrations of this in the Scriptures.” (pg. 19)

A third general cause of spiritual condition is what Lloyd-Jones refers to as “a _____.”

“A reaction after a great blessing, a reaction after some unusual and exceptional experience... If we but realized that when God is pleased to give us some unusual blessing we must be unusually watchful afterwards...” (pg. 19)

A fourth general cause is the existence of the _____.

“In a sense, and in the last analysis, that is the one and only cause of spiritual depression-it is the devil, the adversary of our souls... the ultimate cause of all spiritual depression is unbelief.” (pg. 19-20)

Lloyd Jones then concludes by giving a quick general overview at the _____ for spiritual depression.

“Very briefly at this point, the first thing we have to learn is what the Psalmist learned-we must learn to take ourselves in hand... We must talk to ourselves instead of allowing ‘ourselves’ to talk to us!... I suggest that the main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow our self to talk to us instead of talking to our self... this is the very essence of wisdom in this matter. Have you ever realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?” (pg. 20)

“The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself... defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world... The essence of the matter is to understand that this self of ours, this other man within us, has got to be handled. Do not listen to him; turn on him; speak to him, condemn him; upbraid him; exhort him; encourage him; remind him of what you know, instead of listening placidly to him and allowing him to drag you down and depress you.” (pg. 21)