

Spiritual Depression-Its Causes and Cures

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

Chapter 7 - Fear of the Future

Spiritual depression can arise from several _____ sources. Last week we focused on how past regrets can lead to this condition. Today we will see how fear about the future can also lead to spiritual depression.

“Now this again is a very common condition, and it really is most extraordinary to notice the way in which the enemy often produces the self-same fundamental condition in the same people by these apparently diametrically opposed methods.”

It appears that this condition was the issue that spurred Paul on to write his letters to Timothy. Timothy was a timid man who was struggling with fear about the _____ prospect of facing life and ministry without his spiritual father (the Apostle Paul).

“The supreme example of this particular condition is undoubtedly this man Timothy to whom the Apostle wrote this Epistle together with the previous one. It was, without doubt, his peculiar problem.”

Why do some people struggle more than others in this particular area? While spiritual depression will be experienced by all to some degree, everyone does not arrive at this condition in the same way. When looking at this particular issue (fear of the future) there are several reasons a person may struggle in this way. The first of those has to do with a person's _____. Some people are just more easily fearful and nervous.

“There can be no doubt at all that the first and foremost among causes we must put temperament-the particular make-up. We are all born different...the work of God in the soul by which He implants a principle of divine and spiritual life within us-does not change a man's temperament. Your temperament still remains the same. The fact that you have become a Christian does not mean that you cease to live with yourself.”

A second reason that some Christians fear the future is that when they consider the Christian life, they do not think that they will be able to do all that is _____ of a Christian.

“They read their New Testament and-invariable they are intelligent people-they are aware of the greatness of the task and of the calling. But that in turn tends to depress them because they are equally aware of their own smallness...They say: ‘I like the gospel. I believe my sins are forgiven. I want to be a Christian, but I am afraid I will fail.’”

“Such spiritual depression is due to fear of the future-often imaginary fears.”

Before we examine the cures of this particular cause of spiritual depression let's first mention that it is not _____ or _____ to think about the future. Just like our discussion last week about regret there is a line that needs to be drawn between right thinking about the future and sinful fear about the future.

“It is right that we should think about the future, and it is a very foolish person who does not think about it at all...the whole question is where to draw the line. Thinking is right up to a point, but if you go beyond that point it becomes worry and anxiety and it paralyzes and cripples. In other words, although it is very right to think about the future, it is very wrong to be controlled by it.”

“As we saw before, it is a waste of time to be concerned about the past which you cannot affect; but it is equally wrong to be worried about the future which at the moment is obscure.”

Now let us move to consider the spiritual cures for this particular condition. As always, we must start with _____. Biblical truth must guide our thinking on the subject. And we see this doctrine, these

biblical truths, in 2 Timothy 1:7, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” First, we must realize what God has given us.

“The principle, the doctrine here, is that our essential trouble, if we suffer from this particular manifestation of spiritual depression, is our failure to realize what God has given us, and is giving us, in giving us the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

We must do as we were told in the beginning by Lloyd-Jones and “take ourselves in hand” and _____ to _____ biblical truth. We must think about Him and what He has given us.

“We have to learn to say, that what matters in any of these positions is not what is true of us but what is true of Him. Timothy by nature was weak and the enemy was powerful, and the task was great. Yes, but he must not think of himself alone or of the situation in terms of himself...Do not think of your own weakness; think of the power of the Spirit of God. It is when we begin to do that that we balance our doctrine and see the whole position clearly.”

“All our temperaments are different and that also is of God. Yes, but it must never be true of us as Christians that we are controlled by our temperaments. We must be controlled by the Holy Ghost...The natural man is always controlled by his temperament, he cannot help himself; but the difference that regeneration makes is that there is now a higher control even over temperament.”

The Holy Spirit that has been given to the saints is a Spirit of _____. The power of the Holy Spirit is greater than our natural weakness. It is right and good to acknowledge our own weakness. However, we must not stay there but must turn our attention then to the wonderful grace of God that has given us the Spirit of Christ-the divine Spirit.

“He says to Timothy: ‘Do not talk like that. You are talking like a natural man. You are talking as if you yourself with your own power have to face it all. But God has given you the spirit of power. Go forward. He will be with you.’”

The saints are also given the spirit of _____. How does the spirit of love help the weak and fearful Christian?

“There is only one way to get rid of self, and that is that you should become so absorbed in someone or something else that you have no time to think about yourself. Thank God, the Spirit of God makes that possible...as you become absorbed in the love of God you will forget all about yourself. ‘The spirit of love!’ It will deliver you from self-interest, self-concern, and from depression about self, because depression results from self and self-concern. It gets rid of self at all points. So talk to yourself about this eternal, amazing love of God-the God who ever looked upon us in spite of sin and planned the way of redemption and spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all.”

“And then, love of the brethren. Think of other people, their needs, their concerns...If you are consumed with a spirit of love you will forget yourself.”

The third element Paul mentions here is that of _____-_____. A spirit of self-control helps us to take ourselves in hand and to control our thoughts and bring them into submission to Christ.

“Instead of allowing the future and thoughts of it to grip you, talk to yourself, remind yourself of who you are and what you are, and of what Spirit is within you; and, having reminded yourself of the character of the Spirit, you will be able to go steadily forward, fearing nothing, living in the present, ready for the future, with one desire only, to glorify Him who gave His all for you.”