

Spiritual Depression-Its Causes and Cures

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

Chapter 16 - Trials

Life is hard and, ultimately, it is because of sin that this is the case. Not only do we battle sin without, but we battle the sin within. Our Heavenly Father is committed to seeing us grow spiritually in our Christian life. One of the ways that He helps us battle sin is by bringing us to the place of trial. Trials are used by God for our spiritual growth. All Christians will go through trials at various times and these trials can weigh heavy on the soul and this is not wrong. The Christian life is a _____ between joy and heaviness of soul.

“He is describing people who at one and the same time are greatly rejoicing and yet are in heaviness... You may if you like call it paradoxical, but it is not contradictory. Indeed the condition of the Christian as described in the New Testament seems always to include these two elements and at one and the same time we find that these Christian people of whom the apostle writes are ‘greatly rejoicing’ and are also ‘in heaviness’.”

Trials and hardships will come. The Christian life never offers a problem free life. Only false gospels offer people problem free lives in this present world. The Christian life is not about the elimination of problems in this life but is about godliness in the midst of problems as well as a future hope without problems. The Lord says, “In this world you will have trouble...” (John 16:33) and these troubles can and will weigh _____ on your soul.

“Heaviness means to be grieved (as it is translated in the ESV), it means we are troubled. It is not merely that we have to suffer certain things, but that the suffering of these things does grieve us. We are troubled by them and are really made unhappy by them.”

In the Christian there will be both joy and heaviness at times, as it was with the saints in 1 Peter. The issue is not the presence of both of these, but the issue comes when the heaviness _____ and becomes the only part that impacts the saint continually.

“This is the amazing thing about the Christian that at one and the same time he does experience these two things. ‘If that is so,’ says someone, ‘where is the problem?’ The problem lies here, that we fail to maintain the balance and that we tend to allow this heaviness, this grief to overwhelm us and really cast us down. The danger is not merely that we are temporarily upset by it, but that it really may become a prevailing mood which we can never get rid of...”

“The Christian must never regard himself as one who is exempt from natural feelings. He has something that enables him to rise above these things, but the glory of the Christian life is that you rise above them though you feel them. It is not the absence of feeling. This is a most important dividing point.”

The Apostle Peter does tell us here that these trials will be _____. Trials vary and we must remember this. If we forget this point it can lead to all sorts of trouble. Trials can come in the form of external persecution. However, it is not limited to this one area - remember trials vary.

“The world in its heart of hearts hates Christ and it hates the Christian, because such holy living condemns it. The man of the world does not like it because it makes him feel uncomfortable... The Apostle Paul experienced this constantly... and you have but to read the lives of the saints to find this kind of thing constantly.”

“Here, then, were these Christians suffering manifold trials. The term is comprehensive, it means anything in this life that tends to trouble you, something that touches you in the most sensitive and delicate part of your being, in your heart, in your mind, the things that tend to cast you down.”

Why do we have these various trials? Is there any purpose to them or do we just simply chalk it up to what happens in life under the sun? According to the Scripture, there is more going on in a trial than simply suffering because of living in a sin cursed world. In 1 Peter 1:6 Peter talks about the _____ of these trials.

“He says: ‘You are at the moment enduring this grief, because it has proved needful for you that you should do so’. Now, there then, is our principle; there is a definite purpose in all this. This does not happen accidentally, this is not something that just takes place because of the whole organization of life. That does come into it, but it is not the main reason. These things happen...because God has appointed it.”

“We must look at the Christian life in this way. We are walking through this world under the eye of our Heavenly Father. This is the fundamental thing, the Christian must think of himself as in a peculiar relationship to God...There is a very definite plan and purpose for the whole of my life, God has looked upon me, God has adopted me and put me into His family. What for? In order that He may bring me to perfection. That is His objective- ‘that ye may be made conformable to the image of His dear Son’. That is what He is doing...”

With this understanding then we must turn to what specifically the trial may be doing to conform us to the Lord Jesus Christ. It could be that the trial is a form of _____ for our sin (Hebrews). It could be that the trial is a preparatory trial for some future great act of service (Joseph) or for a greater trial in the future (Paul - Acts 9:16). It could be simply for our continued growth into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 12:9). But whatever the purpose we can trust God that there is something ultimately for our good hidden within it.

Getting more specific we can say this about these various trials, they serve to grow our _____ -1 Pt. 1:7.

“Faith is this extraordinary principle which links man to God; faith is this thing that keeps a man from hell and puts him in heaven; it is the connection between this world and the world to come...”

“It is faith-without good works and prior to good works-that takes us to heaven. We come to God through faith alone.”-Martin Luther

“Our faith, we see, needs to be perfected. There must therefore be degrees of faith. There are differences in the quality of faith...He tests us by trials as if by fire in order that the things which do not belong to the essence of faith may fall off. We may think that our faith is perfect and that we can stand up against anything. Then suddenly a trial comes and we find that we fail.”

Trials grow our faith, and the essence of true Christianity is a persevering faith that will ultimately _____ under the many and sundry trials of life.

“It is the way in which we endure trials that really certifies our faith...there is nothing which so certifies the genuineness of a man’s faith as his patience and his patient endurance, his keeping on steadily in spite of everything.”

We must _____ who God is (our Father), who we are (His children through Christ His Son), and what awaits us in the midst of trials for us to not collapse under them-1 Peter 1:3-4, 7

“You are in the hands of your loving Father, so trust Him and go on...When the great day comes, the genuineness of your faith will be made manifest. There will be praise and honor and glory...He (Christ) will look at them and He will be proud of them. They will be His glory and praise and honor...”