

Spiritual Depression-Its Causes and Cures

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

Chapter 17 - Chastening

One of the great doctrines of the Scriptures is that of spiritual adoption (as is clearly declared in our confession chapter 12). In fact, J.I. Packer went so far as to declare that the doctrine of adoption is greater for the Christian than even the doctrine of justification, *“To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is greater.”* Through Jesus Christ, God the Father, has adopted us, declaring us to be His children. He is our heavenly Father and all that this entails is good. There are no bad side-effects from being a child of God. All that God has done and will do for His children is always only for their good. He is a perfect Father and His love for His children is always perfect. Because God loves His children, He will at times discipline us when He knows that it is _____ for our good.

“Like foolish children we feel our heavenly Father is unkind to us and we pity ourselves and feel sorry for ourselves and feel that we are being dealt with harshly. That, of course, leads to depression and it is all due to our failure to realize God’s glorious purposes with respect to us.”

God will chastise His children because He desires to see their _____ grow. These things are truly best for us even if we don’t feel like it. God’s chastisement is one way in which He grows us. When we fail to heed God’s clear instruction from His Word, He will discipline us to bring us back to a place of trust and obedience.

“If, therefore, we will not be obedient to the positive lessons and instructions from God’s Word, we must not be surprised if other things begin to happen to us. We must not be surprised if we begin to endure certain things which are rather painful.”

In fact, the Scriptures declare that the chastening of God is actually to be seen as a sign of God’s fatherly concern and care for us (Hebrews 12:7-11). The battle here is one of faith. Are we going to believe this Word to be true or are we going to reject it. The Lord declares, *“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline.”* (Rev. 4:19) Do we believe that? Just as a child when disciplined will either grow in love or disdain for their parent based upon their trust in their parent, so too it is the case for the Christian. This usually is something that is learned over _____ because immediately no discipline is immediately pleasant.

“Far from being annoyed by the process, we ought to thank God for it for He is giving us proof that we are His children, He is treating us as His children. He is punishing and chastising us in order to make us conform to the pattern and to be worthy of Him who is our Father.”

The purpose of chastisement is never simply punitive but there is always a positive element in it, the element of _____. A parent does not simply discipline because they want to punish a child. Parental discipline, when done rightly, always has the goal of training and correcting. The goal is _____. The parent does not want immature, untrained, and unwise patterns of acting and thinking to continue so they discipline so as to grow the child in these areas.

“It includes correction, but it also includes instruction; it includes rebuke, indeed it may include a good deal of punishment, but the essential thing is, and the essential object of chastisement is, to train and to develop the child so as to produce a grown person.”

God wants us to grow up in our faith. We are not to stay as spiritual babies but are to mature. We know that God will chastise us but how does God do this? According to Lloyd-Jones, God largely chastises us through _____ in our lives. Lloyd-Jones does give several different circumstances that God seems to commonly use in the lives of His people (finances, health, persecutions, death, and a withdrawal of His presence).

“Circumstances are constantly affecting us and their purpose is to produce our sanctification-pleasant circumstances and unpleasant circumstances...God often uses in this respect some financial loss, a change in one’s material position, the loss of goods, the loss of possessions, the loss of money.”

“Take the question of health...this is a method that God has often employed, so that those who say that it is never God’s will that any of us should be sick or weak are simply denying the Scriptures.”

“In the same way God has allowed persecution.”

“The doctrine, however, goes further, it goes so far as to say that God seems to employ death at times in this way...It is a mystery, no one can understand it, but it is the clear teaching of the Scripture, and therefore I say that we must realize that all these things have a significance.”

“God undoubtedly at times seems to withdraw His presence and to hide His face from us for this precise purpose...God withdrew Himself and withdrew His presence, withdrew His face and His blessing in order to bring them to the place of repentance; it is a part of sanctification.”

We have established that God will chastise His children. We have also looked at some of the various ways God will do this. But now let us ask the question of why. Why does God chastise His children? Lloyd-Jones answers this question first in a _____ way.

“It is because God loves us that He appears at time to be ‘cruel and unkind’. It is all done for our good that is the thing we must lay hold of, it is always for our good...the purpose of your enduring is your growth, your training, your development; the thing that you are enduring are part of your chastening...it is all done, he says, ‘for our profit’, and the profit is sanctification.”

Now for a few _____ or particulars as to why God chastises His people.

“Let us look at some of the particular reasons which He has for doing so. One is that there are certain faults in us, certain faults in all of us, which need to be corrected...The fact that a man is a Christian does not mean that he is perfect. Alas, you do not immediately on belief in the Lord Jesus Christ arrive at a state of complete perfection.”

“Spiritual pride is a terrible danger...If God does grant us in His mercy and love some unusual experience, we are in a position which the devil may exploit to our harm; and oftentimes men who have had such experiences have needed chastisement in order to keep them in a right and safe place.”

“Another danger is the danger of self-confidence. God has given gifts to man and the danger is for men to rely upon himself and his gifts and to feel in a sense that he does not need God.”

“There is always the danger of being attracted by the world and its outlook and its way. The point that is made by the Scriptures is that these things are so subtle.”

“Yet another danger is that of resting on our oars (efforts), the danger of being satisfied with the position we have reached in the Christian life-smugness, self-satisfaction...God knows, the danger is to forget Him because we are interested in ourselves and in our experience. And so God in His infinite love chastises us in order to make us realize these things, in order to bring us back to Himself.”

Chastisement is the work of God to conform us into the image of Christ. Three of the characteristics of Christ that we need to constantly be growing in are _____, _____-_____, and _____. Divine chastisement is always aimed at growing us in these (as well as other) Christian graces.