

Spiritual Depression-Its Causes and Cures

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

Chapter 19 - The Peace of God

One of the biggest causes of spiritual depression is the overwhelming feeling we can have when the circumstances of life seem to be bearing down on us. In the book of Philippians, the Apostle Paul encourages the struggling saints with the _____ of God's peace.

"He is concerned about the happiness and the joy of the members of the church at Philippi...Here in these verses he goes on to consider another factor that is perhaps more problematic than any of the others which tend to rob us of the joy of the Lord, and that is what we may well describe as the tyranny of circumstances, or the things that happen to us."

"The great problem in life is, in a sense, how to lay oneself down to rest and to sleep...Anybody can lie down, but the question is can you sleep?"

Paul tells us not to be anxious about anything. The troubling circumstance of life should not lead us to be taken as prisoners to anxiety. We become anxious as the _____ of life fill our hearts and minds so that we cannot think about anything but them and what could happen because of them.

"The trouble is in in the heart and mind. It is the heart and the mind that tend to produce this state of anxiety, this morbid care and solicitude."

We can become anxious when we feel overwhelmed by the troubles of life and this will lead to a complete loss of experiencing the joy of the Lord in our lives. What is needed to overcome a troubled heart and mind only _____ can give. Human methods of coping cannot permanently solve the issue of a troubled heart and mind.

"What Paul is saying in other words is that we can control many things in our lives and outside our lives, but we cannot control our hearts and minds...And how true that is to experience. Recall any occasion when you were in this condition of anxiety. Remember how it could not be controlled. You were lying awake and you would have given the whole world if you could only sleep. But your mind would not let you sleep, your heart would not let you sleep. The heart and the mind are outside our control."

The Apostle does not simply say, "Stop worrying". It is not that easy. Nor does the Apostle say, "Don't worry about things that might never happen". We need more than this. The Apostle also doesn't say, "It is wrong to worry, and it won't change anything anyways". Paul does not simply deal with man on a human level. He does not rely on psychology. So, what does Paul say here? First, Paul tells us to _____.

"What does he mean by prayer? This is the most general term and it means worship and adoration. If you have problems that seem insoluble, if you are liable to become anxious and overburdened, and somebody tells you to pray, do not rush to God with your petition. That is not the way. Before you make your requests known unto God, pray, worship, and adore...Even before you make your requests known unto God you realize that you are face to face with God, that you are in His presence and you pour out your heart in adoration. That is the beginning."

Paul does not simply say pray but he adds to prayer the words _____ and _____. These are all various elements that are to be involved in our prayer.

“Having worshipped God because God is God, having offered this general worship and adoration, we now come to the particular, and the apostle here encourages us to make our supplications. He tells us that we can take particular things to God, that petition is a legitimate part of prayer.”

“But wait, there is still one other thing- ‘by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving’. That is one of the most vital of all these terms. And it is just here that so many of us go astray when we are in this condition with which the apostle is dealing... We have our problems and troubles but there on our knees we must ask our ourselves: ‘What can I thank God for?’ We have to do this deliberately and it is something that we can do.”

“Therefore we must come into His presence with a loving, praising, worshipping, adoration and confident faith and then make our requests known unto Him. The prayer that Paul advocates, in other words, is not a desperate cry in the dark, not some frantic appeal to God without any real thought. No, no, we first realize and recollect that we are worshipping a blessed, glorious God. We worship first and then we make our requests known.”

After Paul encourages us who are troubled with a heavy heart and mind to pray, he then takes us to the _____ of God. The Apostle tells us something that God will do for us. Our hope is always in God and in His promises. Law never is the place for hope but hope always flows to us from the gospel (Calvin loved to refer to the gospel as the promises of God).

“Have you ever noticed the promise, have you noticed its character, have you noticed that it does not even mention the things that are worrying you? That is the peculiar thing about the Christian method of dealing with anxiety... It does not mention our condition, it does not talk about these things that are harassing and perplexing, it does not say a single word about them. They may or may not happen, I do not know. Paul does not say that the thing feared is not going to take place, he says that we shall be kept whether it happens or whether it does not happen.”

Paul does not say that our prayers will _____ our circumstances. Paul does not say that God will hear our prayers and stop the bad circumstances from happening. What Paul does say is that God will sustain us and keep us in His grace in the midst of our troubling circumstances. Remember, Paul was writing this letter from prison. God did not break Paul out of prison (although He could have and did at other times) but instead God kept Paul in His grace and allowed him to experience the peace and joy of the Lord even as he went through hard circumstances.

“We are inside, and the activities of the heart and mind are producing those stresses and anxieties and strains from the outside. But the peace of God will keep them all out and we ourselves inside will be at perfect peace. It is God that does it. It is not ourselves, it is not prayer, it is not some psychological mechanism. We make our requests known unto God, and God that that for us and keeps us in perfect peace.”

Where does this peace come from? What is this peace grounded in? Paul tells us that this peace of the Lord is found in Christ Jesus. The peace of God comes to us _____ Christ. We will experience the peace of the Lord more as the knowledge of Christ Jesus fills our minds and hearts more (2 Peter 3:18). Remember what the Apostle has told us elsewhere, “For all of the promises of God find their Yes in Him.” (2 Cor. 1:20)

“It is God’s peace that is in Christ Jesus. What does he mean by that? He is telling us that this peace of God works by presenting the Lord Jesus Christ to us and reminding us about Him.”