

SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION – ITS CAUSES AND CURE

CHAPTER 9 – LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

MATTHEW 20:1-16

I. REVIEW AND INTRO

II.

Where do feelings come in, what is their place, what should be their position in the Christian experience?

- A. Your feelings MUST be engaged (Romans 6:17)
- B. You cannot create or command feelings
- C. Feelings are variable

We must have been amazed at ourselves many times that, on waking up in the morning, we find ourselves in a mood or condition quite different from the day before. Nothing you know of accounts for it. Yesterday you may have been perfectly happy and you went to sleep anticipating another great and glorious day, but you find yourself in the morning waking up depressed and in a wrong mood. Suddenly, without any explanation, you just find yourself like that.

- D. Similarity to temperament

Our danger is to submit ourselves to our feelings and to allow them to dictate to us, to govern and to master us and to control the whole of our lives.

- E. There are no required feelings to be a true Christian

Feelings must be engaged in true Christianity, but the mere fact that we have not had certain particular feelings does not of necessity mean that we are not Christian. Feelings are essential, but if we postulate certain particular feelings as being essential we may very well become victims of the devil and spend the whole of our life in unhappiness and ‘bound in shallows and in miseries’, though the whole time we are truly Christian

III. HOW TO RESPOND

- A. Self Examination - Proverbs 13:15b “the way of transgressors is hard” (KJV)

If you are at all depressed at this moment you should make certain that there is no obvious cause for the absence of joyous feelings. For instance, if you are guilty of sin, you are going to be miserable. ‘The way of the transgressor is hard.’ If you break God's laws and violate His rules you will not be happy. If you think that you can be a Christian and exert your own will and follow your own likes and dislikes, your Christian life is to be a miserable one. There is no need to argue about it, it follows as the night the day, that if you are harbouring some favourite sin, if you are holding on to something that the Holy Spirit is condemning through your conscience, you will not be happy. And there is only one thing to do, confess it, acknowledge it, repent, go to God at once and confess your sin, open your heart, bare your soul, tell Him all about it, hold nothing back and then believe that because you have done so, He forgives you.

- B. Avoid the mistake of concentrating too much upon your feelings

- i. What comes first? Psalm 34:8

I must never ask myself in the first instance: What do I feel about this? The first question is, Do I believe it? Do I accept it, has it gripped me? Very well, that is what I regard as perhaps the most important rule of all, that we must not concentrate overmuch upon our feelings. Do not spend too much time feeling your own

pulse taking your own spiritual temperature, do not spend too much time analyzing your feelings. That is the high road to morbidity.

C. Difference between rejoicing and feeling happy

i. *Philippians 4:4*

ii. *2 Corinthians 4:8-9*

D. Stir up the Gift

I have reminded you that you must speak to yourself, this horrible self. Speak to it and then 'stir up the gift'. Remind yourself of certain things. Remind yourself of who you are and what you are. You must talk to yourself and say: 'I am not going to be dominated by you, these moods shall not control me. I am going out, I am breaking through'. So get up and walk, and do something. 'Stir up the gift'. This is the constant exhortation of the Scriptures. If you allow these moods to control you, you will remain miserable, but you must not allow it. Shake them off. Do not recognize them.

E. HOW?!?!

If you want to be truly happy and blessed, if you would like to know true joy as a Christian, here is the prescription—'Blessed (truly happy) are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness'—not after happiness. Do not go on seeking thrills; seek righteousness. Turn to yourself, turn to your feelings and say: 'I have no time to worry about feelings, I am interested in something else. I want to be happy but still more I want to be righteous, I want to be holy. I want to be like my Lord, I want to live in this world as He lived, I want to walk through it as He walked through it'. You are in this world, says John in his First Epistle, even as He was. Set your whole aim upon righteousness and holiness and as certainly as you do so you will be blessed, you will be filled, you will get the happiness you long for. Seek for happiness and you will never find it, seek righteousness and you will discover you are happy—it will be there without your knowing it, without your seeking it.

Finally, let me put it in this way: 'Do you want to know supreme joy, do you want to experience a happiness that eludes description ? There is only one thing to do, really seek Him, seek Him Himself, turn to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. If you find that your feelings are depressed do not sit down and commiserate with yourself, do not try to work something up but—this is the simple essence of it—go directly to Him and seek His face, as the little child who is miserable and unhappy because somebody else has taken or broken his toy, runs to its father or its mother. ...If you seek the Lord Jesus Christ and find Him there is no need to worry about your happiness and your joy. He is our joy and our happiness, even as He is our peace. He is life, He is everything. So avoid the incitements and the temptations of Satan to give feelings this great prominence at the centre. Put at the centre the only One who has a right to be there, the Lord of Glory, Who so loved you that He went to the Cross and bore the punishment and the shame of your sins and died for you. Seek Him, seek His face, and all other things shall be added unto you.