

SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION – ITS CAUSES AND CURE

CHAPTER 12 – THE SPIRIT OF BONDAGE

ROMANS 8:15-17

I. REVIEW AND INTRO

..the Apostle has a very definite object in view in writing these words, and it is that he is anxious to save these Roman Christians from a spirit of discouragement-from a spirit of despondency or depression.

A. ESSENCE OF THE PROBLEM

there is a failure on their part to realize certain truths concerning the Christian life, a failure to realize what is possible for us as Christians. It is, ultimately, a failure to understand doctrine, or, if you prefer it, it is, ultimately, another failure in the realm of faith.

II. A SPIRIT OF BONDAGE

A. WHAT IS IT?

He means the danger of having a 'servant spirit,' a serf-like spirit and attitude. The slave attitude generally arises from the tendency to turn the Christian life and the living of the Christian life into a new law, into a higher law.

B. EXAMPLES

- i. COLOSSIANS 2:20-23
- ii. 1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5
- iii. OTHERS?

III. A SPIRIT OF FEAR

A. (WRONG) FEAR OF GOD

- i. 1 JOHN 4:18

There is a right fear of God, and we neglect and ignore that at our peril; but there is also a wrong fear of God and that is a craven fear, 'a fear that hath torment! These people, I suggest, tend to develop this kind of wrong fear. They regard God as a task-master, they regard Him as Someone who is constantly watching to discover faults and blemishes in them, and to punish them accordingly. Others think of God only as a stern Law-giver far away in the distance.

B. GREATNESS OF THE TASK

They have no joy in it because the gigantic nature of the task is something that fills them with a spirit of fear, and they are in trouble about themselves and the possibility of ever really living this life as it should be lived.

C. FEAR OF THE DEVIL

- i. JUDE, 2 PETER

There is a right fear of the devil. You will find that mentioned in the Epistle of Jude, you will find it also in the Second Epistle of Peter. There are flippant, spiritually ignorant people, who make jokes about the devil simply because they are utterly ignorant of him and of his power. But, on the other hand, we must not be subject to a craven fear of the devil. These people are, because they are aware of his power. They are spiritually-minded people-this is a peculiar temptation to some of the best people-and they see this mighty power, the power of the devil set against them and they are afraid.

D. FEAR OF OWN SINFULNESS

E. FEAR OF SELF AND OF FAILURE

They say: 'I have come into this Christian life, yes, but the question is, can I live it? It is so marvellous and so wonderful and so exalted. How am I to live such a life, how can I rise to such heights?' And with this consciousness of their own weakness, of the greatness of the task and of the power of the devil, they enter into this spirit of bondage and are held down and troubled, worried and full of fears.

IV. THE ANTIDOTE – THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN

he says in effect to these Romans- 'You have been thinking of this task of yours as if you alone, by yourself, had to live the great Christian life. You realize that you are forgiven, and you can thank God that your sins are blotted out and washed away, but you seem to think that that is all and that you are left to live the Christian life on your own. If you think like that,' says Paul, 'it is not surprising that you are in a spirit of fear and bondage, for the whole thing is entirely hopeless. It means that you just have a new law which is infinitely more difficult than the old law. But that is not the position, for the Holy Spirit dwells within you!'

- i. **ROMANS 8:3**
- ii. **PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13 – FEAR AND TREMBLING?**
- iii. **GALATIANS 4: 6**

The law could not save anybody, the law could not enable anybody to live the Christian life, for the reason that the law is weak, because of the weakness of my flesh. 'What the law 'could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.' There is no flesh in the law, you obviously cannot talk about the weakness of the flesh of the law. What it means is, that the law was given, but that man in and of himself is asked to keep it. The weakness of the flesh is in the man, not in the law.

B. REMINDER OF OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD

i. GOD AS OUR FATHER

As Christian people we must learn to appropriate by faith the fact that God is our Father. Christ taught us to pray 'Our Father'. This eternal everlasting God has become our Father and the moment we realize that, everything tends to change. He is our Father and He is always caring for us, He loves us with an everlasting love, He so loved us that He sent His only begotten Son into this world and to the Cross to die for our sins. That is our relationship to God and the moment we realize it, it transforms everything. Henceforth my desire is not to keep the law but to please my Father.

- ii. **JESUS IS OUR BROTHER – JOHN 17:23**
- iii. **HOLY SPIRIT IS DWELLING WITHIN US (1 CORINTHIANS 6:19)**

C. REMINDER OF OUR DESTINY

i. ROMANS 8:38-39

It is not a question of keeping to a standard, it is not a question of vainly striving to do something; it is a question of getting ready for the place to which you are going. The way to get rid of the spirit of bondage and fear, is to know that if you are a child of God, you are destined for heaven and for glory, and that all the things you see inside yourself and outside yourself cannot prevent that plan from being carried out.

- ii. **1 JOHN 3:2,3**