



(MIS)UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS.

“FOR WE HOLD THAT ONE IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH
APART FROM WORKS OF THE LAW.”

ROMANS 3:28

Tonight, we'll continue in our series *Hope in God: A Study on Spiritual Depression*. Why we've chosen to study what God's Word has to say about this issue is fairly self-explanatory. I've spoken to numerous Christians in this room and in other areas of the church who would say that their lives are marked by sadness, apathy, fear, and shame. These are Christians! Brothers and sisters who claim the name of Christ, who cling to him, and yet, they are in ruts, devastating pain. A definition of spiritual depression that we'll work with is this: **a severe sadness and darkness of soul linked to a crisis of faith**. As always in this series, my aim tonight will be to direct you to Scriptures in order to determine a significant cause of spiritual depression and anxiety as well as provide its cure.

Naming a cause is vital, because it allows us to properly respond with a true cure, a reason for hope. There's another reason why I've chosen to study this condition which is linked to the first. It is that God's design for his Church is that it will be known by its joy! Sadness and fear is not to be the distinguishing mark of the Church; that is the condition from which we have been delivered! “In a world where everything has gone so sadly astray, we should be standing out as men and women apart, people characterized by a fundamental joy and certainty in spite of conditions, in spite of adversity.”¹ The apostle Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9 that the church's duty is to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called [us] out of darkness into marvelous light.” The apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians is a 4 chapter charge to a people in difficult circumstances to drink from the fountain of joy! The source of their joy? Their salvation! Christian joy is the most potent factor to the spread of Christianity. That's why we are studying this condition.

Last week, we studied the condition in general by studying the song of depression and hope: Psalms 42 & 43. One thing that we saw that author do consistently is preach to himself. He named his condition, but instead of allowing his self to speak to him, he stood up and started to speak to himself. Tonight, we will move beyond the condition in general, and look at a specific cause of this spiritual depression and anxiety.

In short, the reason we will confront tonight is a misunderstanding of the basics of the faith. It may not even be a misunderstanding; it could be that you may not understand the basics at all. There are so many people in church today who have come to Christ, but have never moved beyond the initial conversion, the emotions of the moment. They have never started to understand what it is that they believe, what God says about the salvation miracle, and how we are to respond. Inevitable, a trial comes, and these people suffer serious depression and fear because they have no backbone of doctrine to rely upon. You do not know the great truths of the Scripture, so you are not able to feed yourself in moments of hunger. You do not know have the promises of Scripture in your arsenal, so you are not able to clothe yourself with them when the weather gets cold.

And I'll be honest with you, this issue is the church's fault most of the time, especially for you in this room. The vast majority of you placed your faith in Jesus Christ in middle school or high school during youth group – probably at a summer camp. Even a cursory glance at what youth groups have become is pretty disgusting. In a vain attempt to attract kids to church, they rely on give-aways, gimmicks, and cheesy games. Instead of believing that God's Word is valuable enough to teach to students, they do nothing to prepare young Christians for the road ahead. They don't teach Scripture, they teach verses ripped out of context, cheap imitations of something that will provide hope. So, to me, it's no wonder college students struggle with doubt, depression, and anxiety so much. And then they feel shame for feeling that way. It's because you've never been taught to look to the Word, ask questions, that His Word is able to be understood, and to clothe yourself in his Scripture (not just a mug or a bracelet).

¹ Lloyd-Jones, D. (1965). *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure.*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 23.

BIG IDEA:

Christians can have joy and peace in this life,
because right relationship with God comes by faith alone not works.

SPIRITUAL DEPRESSION'S CAUSE:

- Christians attempt to earn favor with God through works.
 - Only perfect righteous people can enjoy relationship with God.
 - God punishes unrighteousness – Romans 1: 18
 - God draws righteous men near – Philippians 3:9
 - Attaining perfect righteousness is an impossible task.
 - All fall short – Romans 3:23
 - In man's quest for perfection, all inevitably fail.
 - By this logic, all the favor your past works must have conjured up is gone as soon as failure re-enters the picture.
 - Continual failure leaves a man empty and hopeless.
 - Instead of joy, attempting to earn favor by works brings misery.

"... the average person in the Church seems to regard men as Christian simply because they do good works, even though they may be entirely wrong about justification... We have to realize that there are certain things about which we must be perfectly clear before we can really hope to have peace, and to enjoy the Christian life."² – **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

REMEMBER:

In spiritual depression, we are considering Christians who are struggling. These are Christians, men and women who can recite the good news, have placed their faith in Jesus Christ and his substitutionary atonement, and yet slip into an avoidable rut. They find themselves depressed and fearful because they once again looking to their actions and abilities to provide the right setting for righteousness with God. They are allowing their actions to direct their joy, not the truth.

THE COMMON PRAYER OF A SPIRITUALLY DEPRESSED MAN:

- "Lord, heal me."
- "Lord, help me."
- "Save me again."
- "I don't measure up. I can't do it."
- "I'm failing you."
- "I need an answer to how to be fixed!"

AN ANSWER TO PRAYER:

The Christian faith is able to be understood. God's design for right relationship with him is clearly articulated in Scripture, and he's given you the mind to comprehend it and apply it by allowing it to inform your steps and prayers. In Romans 3, the Holy Spirit is saying answering your prayers by saying, "I've answered your prayers! I've given you direction." His point in Romans 3 is this... Your works don't get you there. That those are your hope, of course you feel like a failure. That's not the way to righteousness though! Relieve yourselves of that unnecessary burden. REMEMBER the basics of the faith!

Q: Do you know the basics of your faith? Did you know that God expressed himself in the Bible for your benefit? Did you know you can understand the heart, plan, and intentions of God? Did you know that he's gifted you with a mind and the ability to reason, and he's communicated with you in such a way that you can use that intellect and sense to ease your fears and curb your misery? There is hope, and you can KNOW that hope! Study God's Word.

² Lloyd-Jones, D. (1965). *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure.*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 26-27.

THE BASICS:

1. Christians hold that man's works earn God's wrath, not favor.
 - o You were far more sinful than you can ever imagine.
 - o What does this have to do with joy?

"You must be made miserable before you can know true joy... Ultimately, the only thing which is going to drive a man to Christ and make him rely upon Christ alone, is a true conviction of sin."³ - **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

2. Christians hold that Jesus' redemptive work is man's only hope for life.
3. Christians hold that man is justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ, not by works.

THIS IS HOPE:

1. Works are the fruit of joy, not the pursuit of it.
2. Nobody is too far gone.

³ Lloyd-Jones, D. (1965). *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure.*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 28.