

Part Three: The Way Out

Session 22

Overcoming Your Despair and Discouragement, Part 2

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:4, 13

Sessions 21—Overcoming Your Despair and Discouragement, Part 1 (REVIEW)

- A. The Nature of Sorrow
- B. The Nature of Despair
- C. The Complication of Physical Illness
- D. The Complication of Overload

Understanding and applying the following warning can help us handle sorrow biblically:

**Watch how you muse
and what you choose
when you lose.**

E. The Antidote to Despair

1. Despair starts when we _____ something we value (Psalm 42:1-4).
 2. Despair (sorrowing without hope) is fueled by wrong _____ during our loss.
 - “Watch how you _____ when you lose.”
 - a. Unchecked thoughts can lead to overwhelming _____.
 - b. The psalmist talks to _____ (Psalm 42:1, 6-7).
 - 1) Stopping wrong thinking at the _____ level by letting “your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6) keeps you from moving to the despair level.
 - 2) Don’t ask just for _____. Ask for _____ (Hebrews 10:35-36; 11:27; 12:1-3).
 - c. The psalmist talks to _____ (Psalm 42:5, 11).
 - 1) He _____ himself (“*Why are you in despair, O my soul?*”)
- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a doctor who left his medical practice to preach, addresses this issue when speaking about depression. He says, “*The ultimate cause of all spiritual depression is unbelief.*” He goes on to say, “*I suggest that the main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow our self to talk to us instead of talking to our self. Am I just trying to be deliberately paradoxical? Far from it. This is the very essence of wisdom in this matter. Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts which come to you the moment you wake up in the morning.... They start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man’s treatment [speaking of the psalmist in Psalm 42] was this; instead of allowing his self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?” he asks. His soul has been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: “Self, listen for a moment, I will speak to you.” Do you know what I mean? If you do not, you have had but little experience.*

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your

soul: “Why art thou cast down”—what business have you to be disquieted? You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself: “Hope thou in God”—instead of muttering in this depressed, unhappy way. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done, and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people [who discourage you], and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: “I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God.”

This is the essence of the treatment in a nutshell.”ⁱ

- 2) He _____ himself that God is in this picture and has a disposition to help.
- I have a God to hope in* (vv. 5, 11).
 - God is full of lovingkindness* (v. 8).
 - He will send me songs for times like this* (v. 8b)
 - He is the One Who will cause my countenance to be lifted up again* (vv. 5, 11).
- You can’t preach yourself a sermon you haven’t prepared ahead of time.
 - You must become a person of the Word—a person who spends much time meditating upon Who God is and what He has promised us.
 - You must “Watch how you muse when you lose.”
3. Despair (sorrowing without hope) is complicated by wrong _____ during our loss.
- This why we say, “Watch how you muse and how you _____ when you lose.”
 - Some bad choices amidst a loss include
- Indulging your lusts and passions in sexual fantasies or activities in order to “feel good” again.
 - Going on a wild spending spree in order to forget what has been troubling you or to make you feel better.
 - Ignoring important responsibilities at home, work, or school because you want a break from pressures.
 - Binging on food to experience a little bit of pleasure amidst all the disappointment.
 - Attempting an overdose or contemplating some other form of suicide.
 - Turning to alcohol or drugs for a “pick-me-up” during the down times.
 - Indulging in some reckless or dangerous activity because of the temporary “rush” it gives.

Many people complicate their lives by making wrong choices like these when they are despairing. Then they also have to face the debt, addiction, work termination, shame, guilt, and other results of their sinful choices. Thus, it is absolutely essential that you “watch...what you choose when you lose.”

CONCLUSION: The psalmist of Psalm 42 give us wonderful instruction for handling sorrow.

- Objectively identify your _____.
- Talk to the _____ of all hope.
- Talk to _____: rebuke yourself of wrong thinking and remind yourself of what God is like.
- _____ for God’s deliverance in His time.

Watch how you muse, and what you choose, when you lose.

ⁱ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 20-21.