

Many times clients are referred to me by MD's, psychologists and other professionals who have had little or no success with medications, therapies and other secular interventions. When I receive these referrals I immediately think of Spiritual depression. Spiritual depression will not respond to secular interventions. Below is an article by R. C. Sproul which may help you.

The Dark Night of the Soul

by R.C. Sproul

The dark night of the soul. This phenomenon describes a malady that the greatest of Christians have suffered from time to time. It was the malady that provoked David to soak his pillow with tears. It was the malady that earned for Jeremiah the sobriquet, "The Weeping Prophet." It was the malady that so afflicted Martin Luther that his melancholy threatened to destroy him. This is no ordinary fit of depression, but it is a depression that is linked to a crisis of faith, a crisis that comes when one senses the absence of God or gives rise to a feeling of abandonment by Him.

Spiritual depression is real and can be acute. We ask how a person of faith could experience such spiritual lows, but whatever provokes it does not take away from its reality. Our faith is not a constant action. It is mobile. It vacillates. We move from faith to faith, and in between we may have periods of doubt when we cry, "Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."

We may also think that the dark night of the soul is something completely incompatible with the fruit of the Spirit, not only that of faith but also that of joy. Once the Holy Spirit has flooded our hearts with a joy unspeakable, how can there be room in that chamber for such darkness? It is important for us to make a distinction between the spiritual fruit of joy and the cultural concept of happiness. A Christian can have joy in his heart while there is still spiritual depression in his head. The joy that we have sustains us through these dark nights and is not quenched by spiritual depression. The joy of the Christian is one that survives all downturns in life.

In writing to the Corinthians in his second letter, Paul commends to his readers the importance of preaching and of communicating the Gospel to people. But in the midst of that, he reminds the church that the treasure we have from God is a treasure that is contained not in vessels of gold and silver but in what the apostle calls "jars of clay." For this reason he says, "that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." Immediately after this reminder, the apostle adds, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Cor. 4:7-10).

This passage indicates the limits of depression that we experience. The depression may be profound, but it is not permanent, nor is it fatal. Notice that the apostle Paul describes our condition in a variety of ways. He says that we are "afflicted, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down." These are powerful images that describe the conflict that Christians must endure, but in every place that he describes this phenomenon, he describes at the same time its limits. Afflicted, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed.

So we have this pressure to bear, but the pressure, though it is severe, does not crush us. We may be confused and perplexed, but that low point to which perplexity brings us does not result in

complete and total despair. Even in persecution, as serious as it may be, we are still not forsaken, and we may be overwhelmed and struck down as Jeremiah spoke of, yet we have room for joy. We think of the prophet Habakkuk, who in his misery remained confident that despite the setbacks he endured, God would give him feet like hind's feet, feet that would enable him to walk in high places.

Elsewhere, the apostle Paul in writing to the Philippians gives them the admonition to be "anxious for nothing," telling them that the cure for anxiety is found on one's knees, that it is the peace of God that calms our spirit and dissipates anxiety. Again, we can be anxious and nervous and worried without finally submitting to ultimate despair. This coexistence of faith and spiritual depression is paralleled in other biblical statements of emotive conditions. We are told that it is perfectly legitimate for believers to suffer grief. Our Lord Himself was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Though grief may reach to the roots of our souls, it must not result in bitterness. Grief is a legitimate emotion, at times even a virtue, but there must be no place in the soul for bitterness. In like manner, we see that it is a good thing to go to the house of mourning, but even in mourning, that low feeling must not give way to hatred. The presence of faith gives no guarantee of the absence of spiritual depression; however, the dark night of the soul always gives way to the brightness of the noonday light of the presence of God.

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