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DEPRESSION

D.B. Knox

"The Protestant Faith"

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DEPRESSION

Spiritual depression is not an uncommon experience amongst Christians. It may be said to be an aberration or fungus that grows on a sensitive conscience. Some people easily sink into morbid guilt feelings, a sense of inadequacy and spiritual depression. This is not God's purpose for a Christian, rather as St. Paul says, we should rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4).

How do we overcome spiritual depression? There is a right and wrong way. The wrong way is to urge sufferers to think more highly of themselves, to love themselves and to tell themselves that they are not as bad spiritually as they think they are. This is the wrong way for two reasons. First of all, we are worse than we think we are. Jesus told us that when we had done everything we are to say that we are unprofitable servants and St. Paul, that great Christian character, said that he knew that within himself dwelt no good thing. The fact is that we are worse spiritually and morally than we think we are, so it is no cure to say that we ought to lift up our own estimates of ourselves. Untruth never helps. But there is a second reason why this suggestion is wrong, and that is that we ought not to think about ourselves at all. The solution to spiritual depression is to take our thoughts off ourselves, and to look away to God and to keep in the centre of our thinking His views of us. He sees us as perfect through our relationship with Jesus. He sees no fault in us. He has forgiven us completely, so that the things which depress us are not there, as far as He is concerned (Rom. 4:7,8). We stand in His presence as His dearly loved sons and daughters and have His full approval because of our relationship through faith with Jesus Christ, our Lord, the one with whom the Father is always well pleased. This full approval of God and enjoyment of His presence is a tremendous privilege and one which every Christian at the present moment enjoys.

If we remember this fact we will be able to rejoice in the Lord, knowing that our sins, which are real, are completely forgiven so that God does not see them; and it is God's view that counts, not our own sense of spiritual deficiency.

Nor can we overcome spiritual depression by striving to be better. None of us can ever be approved by the adequacy of our life or our endeavour but we do not have to strive for approval, we already have the full and complete approval of our Heavenly Father because of our relationship to Jesus if we have acknowledged Him as our Lord. We know Christ and we stand in God's presence as His fully accepted and much loved children. He cares for us. So if you have a bout of spiritual depression do not be depressed by your shortcomings, real or imaginary, or do not try to increase your love for yourself, but accept yourself for what you are, whether it is good, bad or indifferent in your own judgement, (in reality it will be much worse). Turn your thoughts to God and to His love and to the tremendous privilege you have been given of forever being His accepted child. God gives us this favour freely, and gives it to all of us equally for Christ our Saviour's sake, so that our hearts should be full of thankfulness to God for His free forgiveness for all the shortcomings we can see and all the ones we do not see. They are all forgiven, He sees none of them and we stand fully accepted, fully approved in His presence, so that there is no reason why we should not rejoice in the Lord always. This is a tremendous gift if you will think about it and be thankful. When the heart is full of thankfulness there is no room for depression.

This three line poem sums it up.

"Look without and be distressed"
 Look within and be depressed,
 Look to Jesus be at rest."

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THE PROTESTANT FAITH
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