***How to Overcome Depression - PH81-02

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 4:4***

Please open your Bibles once more to Philippians 4:4, as we continue with our study of Philippians as the basis for an advanced Bible doctrine course. A few sessions back, we were talking about the subject of happiness as we read verse 4, where the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say rejoice." We found that that was a command (an imperative) to be happy. So that led us into the subject of unhappiness. The enemy of happiness, we said, was personal depression. So we've been studying depression. I told you to come back to learn how to overcome depression. So I've been working on this, and it has me terribly depressed. I hope we can learn something about the subject.

Obviously, one of the things that Adam and Eve had going for them in the Garden of Eden was great personal happiness. They actually shared God's joy. That was God's plan for them, as it is for us – that we should share His happiness. Happiness has always been maximum with God, and has never been mitigated by anything.

Sin, of course, immediately destroyed their happiness, and the loss of that happiness resulted in personal depression, which was then expressed in a variety of ways. This still is the major problem of humanity today – people seeking to be happy. Yet, the Bible here, very clearly, commands us to be happy. This is even more amazing, that God should command us to be happy, when we realize that we live in the midst of the angelic warfare, and that we are in combat. Combat is not usually a place that one views as a happy situation in which to be. It's a very grim place to be. Yet, here we are, surrounded by the angelic conflict. Here we are, on the firing line in spiritual warfare. Yet, God commands us to be happy in the midst of that.

Christians usually lack a clear approach to attaining inner happiness, so they mostly try to psych themselves into the idea of how to be happy. They psych themselves, as believers, that they are happy when indeed they are not, because they have not followed the biblical pathway to happiness. The Christian's failure on happiness is indicated by depression, and this depression, we have shown, has expressions on the physical side, and it has expressions on the emotional side.

We said that depression can progress from being a very mild thing to being a very pathological thing. So it goes from the stage of simple discouragement, to a little deeper sort of depression in the form of despondency, and ultimately to a severe situation in the form of despair. We found that depression is influenced by certain cycles in our lives, and therefore, to observe those cycles (and our being prone to depression at that time) would be helpful: holidays; physical cycles; the time of the day; routine activities in which we're engaged; our age level; and, so on.

We also indicated that there were certain external factors that were conducive to triggering depression in us. These were disappointment; lack of self-esteem; unfair comparisons; ambivalence; sickness; biological malfunction; post-natal depression; hyper mental activity; rejection; and, inadequate goals.

**Worldly Methods for Curing Depression**

So now we come to the question, after all is said and done, "Well, how do I, as a child of God, avoid this condition of unhappiness as it is summed up in depression?" There are three basic pathways (which our society in general uses, and which the world follows) that are followed for curing depression:

1. **Drugs**

Number one is drugs. This is a very ancient practice. We have records of the fact that ancient civilizations used drugs to seek to cure the condition of depression. This can often be used on people who are actually too depressed (they've gone so deeply into depression) that they're not able to cooperate in other techniques for their own curing. This doesn't really remove the cause of depression. It just gives a person a false sense of well-being. It also takes time to take effect, and a person may go on to even a worse state of depression while the drugs are trying to take effect. He may even go to the extreme of suicide. So there are very limited results with the technique of drugs. Also, there are bad side effects. It's generally not a good method.

1. **Electrotherapy**

A second method in dealing with depression is electrotherapy. Electrotherapy creates selective amnesia. It is a method whereby, through the use of electrical shocks, certain areas of the brain are blanked out so that an amnesia condition is created. It is applied to a patient while he's under an anesthesia so that he's actually asleep, and he's not suffering any pain in the process of the shock. But what it does is that it relaxes certain areas of mental obsession, and enables a person to begin to overcome the condition of depression which, again, will have a variety of expressions.

However, electrotherapy, like drug therapy, has limited long-range benefits. And its permanent value, in either case, is only achieved if the person comes to the place where he can change his mental attitude. These two methods may bring him to the place where he breaks the obsession to where he can then change his mental attitude. This is because depression, as we have seen, is fundamentally a mental attitude problem.

1. **Psychotherapy**

Then there is a third method called psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is talk treatment to help a depressed person understand himself. Psychotherapy today, as it is generally practiced, makes one very serious mistake (and thus limits what value it could have), in that it takes a position that it will not tell a person what to do. It's non-directive.

You can consult the Bible, in Deuteronomy 6, where it tells parents how they are to educate their children, and how very definitive they are to be. Throughout the Bible, there is always the attitude that you tell a person what is right, and you tell a person what is wrong. You direct a person to what he should do, and you direct him away from what he should not do. So the Bible is directive when you talk to people.

I've had seminary students in our church who have gotten caught up in the psychotherapy concepts of our age that they should never direct a person in anything. They are told that they should never take a young person who is looking for some answers, and give him the answers. But what they have done is thrown out ideas, and said, "Make up your own mind."

Non-directive therapy will follow a pattern like this. A person comes in, and the idea is that the counselor never says anything to the person, and he never gives them any advice. He's just a sounding board. So the person comes in and says, "I'm terribly depressed." The counselor says, "I understand you don't feel well. You're depressed." The person says, "And the situation is becoming worse all the time." The counselor says, "Apparently, things are not improving for you." The person then says, "I'm trying to find some answers to this thing. I've tried several things, and I just don't know what to do." The counselor says, "Apparently you're floundering and not able to solve your problem."

And this just goes on. He is just repeating back to the person what he has said. That is non-directive counseling. That is simply asininity, because the Word of God always opposes that kind of an approach. Psychotherapy, therefore, as it is practiced for depressed people, has, again, very little long-range recovery. The truth of the matter is that as many people recover from depression without psychotherapy as those that do with it. The results are not too impressive. It's just a sympathetic crutch that a person may have provided, but it doesn't supply the answer to his problem. The analyst himself, in psychotherapy, may actually suggest (when he does suggest anything), things that are even immoral and contrary to the Word of God itself, which in time will compound the depression.

**Biblical Therapy**

Then there is a fourth therapy for depression, and that's the biblical therapy that we want to look at. Biblical therapy for depression has several factors in it:

1. **Regeneration**

It begins, naturally enough, with regeneration. Right away you can see that all the people out in the world who are unbelievers, who are struggling with depression of one kind another, are really hard put to ever come to a solution for their problem. To resolve the question of happiness, a person must begin with the knowledge of God. He must begin with a personal relationship to Jesus Christ, or happiness will always elude you. This is point number one, and you cannot avoid this. It begins with a personal, spiritual new birth.

As you know, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 tells us that a person's total being involves the spirit, the soul, and the body. Personal depression originates in the soul. The mind of the soul is the central control center of the human being. Up in the front part of your brain is the control center, an electronic control board, that controls all of your physical actions. That control center is affected by how you feel, and that's why your feelings of depression affect your physical body. That's why what you think affects your physical being, because the same control center, that influences your physical body and its motions, is the control center that is affected by the emotions, and the decisions that you then make. The mentality has a viewpoint by which it is controlled – either the human viewpoint of the old sin nature, or the divine viewpoint that God the Holy Spirit gives us through the Word of God. The mind, on the basis of whichever frame of reference it has, generates emotions which in turn activate the will. This is expressed through the body.

So all feelings flow from mental attitudes. That's why the source of depression is what you think. You cannot change depression until you change your attitude of mind – until you change what you think. You cannot say, "I'm not going to exercise my will in this way anymore." You can't say that, and by sheer willpower and sheer determination change, unless you have changed your thinking. All emotions and all actions of the will flow from your thinking.

So all the input into the mind through the five senses determines the emotions (good or bad), and the choices (good or bad) that we function on. We operate from what we think – divine viewpoint, or human viewpoint. So the real treatment with depression has to begin with an effect upon the mentality of your soul. And the first effect upon the mentality is regeneration. That is the new birth – coming into the mind of Christ. Human viewpoint produces frustration, futility, and confusion into your life because the factor of regeneration is missing. When modern psychiatry tries to treat the depression of people, it rejects this number one step very deliberately. Sometimes the psychiatrist says, "I don't want you to have any religious thinking or religious relationship. Stop reading your Bible. Stop all your religious activities." And the very thing that the person needs, as step number one, is the very thing that modern psychiatry destroys in trying to solve the problem. So all thinking independent of God's mind results in harmful emotions and unwise decisions, and these harmful emotions and unwise decisions lead to depression.

So in getting victory over depression, the first step is regeneration. What this does for you is that it provides you with a living human spirit. You now have come alive spiritually. We read in Ephesians 2:1, "And you He has made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins." At the point of regeneration, God brings us to spiritual life. This provides a capacity in which we may gain and store divine viewpoint in order to direct our thinking. The human spirit acts as a reservoir of divine viewpoint. We secure this through gaining an understanding of Bible doctrine. That's why we study doctrine – to build up our reservoir of divine viewpoint. You cannot understand spiritual phenomena if you do not have a living human spirit.

So in seeking victory over depression, regeneration is step number one. That results in a living human spirit which you are now able to fill with Bible doctrine – the Word of God.

1. **Maintaining Spirituality**

The next factor is to maintain the status of spirituality. Spirituality, as you know, is maintaining temporal fellowship. We can think of this as two concentric circles. There is the outer circle of eternal fellowship, and there is the inner circle of temporal fellowship. This is the point of spirituality. Spirituality is maintained by confessing all known sins as they occur, as per 1 John 1:9. This enables the believer to be able to be taught by God the Holy Spirit; to be able to develop divine viewpoint; and, to be able to store doctrine in his living human spirit, and thus to have God's mind directing his mind.

This is a very critical factor in being happy. A person yesterday told me that, as a result of listening to our tapes, that he has, in the last three months, made more spiritual progress (more forward motion) in his spiritual life than he had up to all that time that he has walked as a Christian. And he said, "The thing that has brought me along is the series of tapes on confessing sin biblically. Now I have learned how to handle my relationship to God the Holy Spirit so that He can use me; He can lead me; and, He can speak to me. Before that, I had a dull ear because nobody ever explained to me the critical factor of maintaining spirituality through the confession of known sins.

So obviously, if you are not in the inner circle, you are not going to experience inner happiness. Please remember that. Inner happiness is right there in that inner circle. There is no inner happiness out in the area of cardinality (outside of the inner circle, but within the outer circle). That is the area of carnality.

So personal happiness begins with regeneration; the taking of that living human spirit which you receive at new birth; filling it with God's viewpoint through the study of the Word of God; and, then maintaining a functioning relationship to God the Holy Spirit through the confession of sin – maintaining the status of spirituality so that the Word of God can affect your thinking, and the Spirit of God can direct you in your emotions and in your actions. When you remain in the status of spirituality, you will be sensitive toward the things that are sin. It is sin that ruins our happiness. It will protect you from building up calluses upon the facets of your soul so that you are not responsive to God. When you, as a person, are not responsive to God, then you are unhappy. Depression comes in. Therefore, the willful, stubborn practicing of secret sin will bring internal depression. Then, ultimately, your secret sin, if persisted in (if not confessed and abandoned) will bring you open shame.

You can go ahead and rationalize what your conscience is saying to you. Please remember that one way of looking at conscience is that it is your God consciousness. So when your conscience is hammering away at you, do not fail to understand that it is God calling out from heaven to you and speaking to you. You may persist in a carnal condition. You may persist in some open or secret sin, but you'll have a life of misery, and the open shame that comes with it. So the depression that follows that will be something that you will look back upon with great regret. You will then see that it wasn't worth the exchange of the immediate pleasures of sin for the moment.

Moses knew this, and he knew it well. He had the highest status in Egypt, and he had the greatest opportunity. But the Word of God very clearly says, "He chose not to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," but rather to commit himself with the cause of the people of God, meaning to commit himself to obedience to the Word of God. Moses decided the only place for him was in the inner circle, and thus Moses experienced happiness. So take care of the kicks that your particular sin is giving you. It will cause you the most intense depression the farther you go with it.

1. **Bible Doctrine**

The next factor is feeding daily upon Bible doctrine, thereby taking divine viewpoint into your mind so that you are not conformed to the world's human viewpoint. Use God's grace system for learning spiritual things that He has provided so that you can fill your living spirit with the Word of God, and thus influence your thinking. Depression never thrives on a mind that is functioning on doctrine. Remember that. Anytime you feel depressed, just remember that you are no longer, at that point, functioning on doctrine. Maybe you can't. Maybe you don't have it in your human spirit to function on. Then you're going to be just generally depressed. But to feed on Bible doctrine is to learn it, and to respond to it with a positive acceptance.

1. **Spiritual Maturity**

The result of this will be the building of a spiritual maturity structure in your soul with its five basic facets. We're going to look at this in more detail now, because this is where we're headed. The Christian who is the happy Christian is the Christian who's got a spiritual maturity structure built in his soul. He has moved step-by-step toward developing this in his soul. That's why you may be unhappy, and you're not going to be able to snap out of it tomorrow. You may be depressed, and you're not going to be able to remove it tomorrow. It's going to take time to build this spiritual maturity.

* 1. **Grace Orientation**

For example, first of all, spiritual maturity means orientation to the grace of God. Grace orientation means that you forgive, and you forget immediately, those who threaten or abuse you. Ephesians 4:30 says, "Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake has forgiven you." Colossians 3:13: "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another. If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also should you." He very definitely declared to us that when people offend us, we are to forgive, and we are to forget. That is being oriented to grace. An unforgiving attitude spreads its evil not only throughout your body; throughout your human being; and, throughout your emotions and will, but it begins to affect other people. They become contaminated by your unforgiving spirit. The result is that they sometimes even get involved in your sins.

A grace-oriented person is resting upon the essence of God, so that you view everything that comes into your life from the framework of the essence of God. So you remember that God is sovereign; that He is absolute righteousness; that He is perfect justice; that He is unmitigated love; that He is eternal life; that He is omniscient; that He is omnipresent; that He is omnipotent; that He is absolutely immutable; and, that He is veracity (he is truth).

It is a great thing to realize that God is immutable. That gives us an anchor point in the universe. The trouble with every other viewpoint in life and every other philosophy is that there is no anchor point in life. This is true in every expression, like even a scientific field. Evolution struggles over the fact that it has no immutable anchor. It's trying to hook a theory on something that has no anchor point of stability, whereas creationism has the anchor point of the immutable God.

Just remember what God is like, and you'll be able to be a grace-oriented person. It is the legalistic mentality that is open to depression. Maintain that positive attitude. Stop being the person who goes around being the complainer who's saying, "Why me? Why did this happen to me? Why not to somebody else?" And if that is your habit, then you need to work on getting oriented to the grace of God. You have something lacking in that area.

* 1. **The Relaxed Mental Attitude**

Next, let's apply it to the relaxed mental attitude. Attitudes of resentment and bitterness harden into habit patterns, and in time, you're bitter toward everyone. Ephesians 4:31 reads, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice." That is the pattern of the believer who is in happiness. If you want to be in unhappiness, then have these patterns of bitterness that harden into habits. Romans 9:20 calls upon us to accept ourselves as God has made us, and to watch His plan unfold for you. The apostle Paul says, "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?'" Do not try to dismiss yourself: whatever you are; however you are; or, however God has made you.

Beware of that secret bitterness that sometimes you even have toward God himself for some reason. That's a certain road to depression. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 gives us the amazing declaration that we are to give thanks in all things: "In everything, give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." We are always to give thanks for whatever comes into our lives. That indicates to us that ingrates are depressed people, whereas grateful people are happy people. You see the grace of God working in your life. You avoid self-pity, which inevitably leads to depression. So having a relaxed mental attitude means to be free of mental bitterness. It means to have agape love functioning in your life. The Christian who has a mentality oriented to the grace of God based on the confidence in what God is like in the essence of God, and the Christian who has a relaxed mental attitude free of bitterness, is a Christian who can be happy. Without it, he never can be.

* 1. **The Mastery of the Details of Life**

Then consider the mastery of the details of life. How much misery is brought into the lives of people because of their incapacity to handle the details of their lives – forgetting the promise of God? For example, in Philippians 4:19: "But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." That verse is coming up in this chapter that is now coming to a climax in this book on the subject of happiness. And basic to all happiness is to remember that God can supply all of your needs now. God has told us that we are to work in order to earn what we need so that we may have what we want and to help others. It's a principle of, "He who will not work shall not eat." But the Word of God also reminds us that God will supply our needs. So Matthew 6:33 lays down the principle that first we are to seek the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, and then all these other things shall be supplied to us.

Notice where we look for our supply. We look to the living God. We do not look to government. If you search through the Word of God, you will discover that government, the fourth divine institution, has always laid upon it, by God, the responsibility to be a restrainer of evil. Government is always to be in the game of national life as an umpire. Government is never to be in the game as a player. Yet, the whole attitude of Americans today is looking to government to supply the good things of life that we would like to have, and that we need. So the government is getting into programs of producing that which God says should be produced by the family; by a marriage relationship; and, by the exercise of your own free will in a responsible way (the first three divine institutions).

The tragedy of our day is that the American public is so deluded that it has lost the realization that government is always, by God's order, to be negative – to be stopping what is going to hinder the condition of peace, and the condition of availability of the Word of God. Government is to be out there killing the weeds in the field, while you with your will; your wife; and, your family are out there growing the crops and producing the prosperity. How can this nation even get a president elected when we have a society that does not understand the fourth divine institution – that government must always be negative, restraining evil, but must never be out there trying to produce good? When government does that, government inevitably produces evil with its good.

So the mastery of the details of life is not only a personal factor, but it is a national factor, and we haven't done it on that basis. Thus, there is through this nation a great deal of unhappiness. People are terribly depressed over what's happening to their finances. Out in California, they have raised personal property taxes up to 100%, and sometimes more. People by the hundreds are storming into city halls all over the state. They're holding rallies and meetings, and they're threatening the people who are on the boards of the city council that they're going to be out in the next election.

Yet you can drive down any street, and there's a modest little house, and you would have to pay four times the amount for it as you would in most other states. Why is this? Because our government has violated the fourth divine institution, and it has been meddling around in the economic system, trying to manipulate in order to produce good, rather than permitting the other institutions to produce good; to maintain the conditions so that prosperity can function under peace; to restrain crime; to restrain evil (internal and external); and, so on. You search through the Scriptures and see what government does, and how God prospers a nation when its government acts as an umpire and not a player.

Well, we are nationally depressed, but you and I, as believers, know that there is something more important than the details of our material existence, and therefore we don't have to fall apart. Hebrews 13:5-6 says, "Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have." Do you know what that means? A lot of people are depressed because they can't be content with what they have.

A man recently said to me, "I just backed out of a half-million dollar deal. This man has a tremendous income. He has an income per month which is unbelievable. He's looking around for investments. He almost got into this one, and backed off. I said, "You may want to consider this. You have certain freedoms now. You have so much income that you don't know what to do with it. You are looking for places to use it for the Lord's glory, and you're moving in the right direction. Has it occurred to you that maybe your greatest happiness lies in being content with what you have, and with what God is giving you each week and each month, rather than looking for greater investments to multiply what you have?"

He said, "I've been thinking about that. I think you're right." He said, "That's why I didn't feel right about this big deal, and why I backed out of it. I think maybe what God is telling me is to enjoy what He has given me." How many people have more than they can use, yet they are constantly pursuing some investment and bringing unhappiness and depression into their lives? There comes a time to be content with such things as you have. For He has said, "I'll never leave you nor forsake you, so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I'll not fear what man shall do unto me.'"

Now this is not to speak against the proper investments of our money for profit. As you know, from the parable of the talents, the man that God blessed and honored was the man that invested his money for a profit. That is a biblical economic principle – that you always try to put your money that you do not need to live on in some situation where it brings you a profit return. The man that was condemned was the guy who came and said, "Lord, I've got everything you gave me. I haven't lost a cent." He thought he was going to be patted on the head, and the Lord booted him because he should have invested for profit. But you must balance that with the will of God, at some point, to be content with such as you have, and not to be bringing depression upon depression into your life.

The thing to do is to give yourself in Christian service with your spiritual gifts. That's real happiness. Luke 6:28: "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them who despitefully use you." Matthew 10:39: "He that finds his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it." Giving yourself in service through your spiritual gifts is where happiness comes. So the ability to be content with what God has given us is very critical to our happiness.

But I'll also add that you need the ability to be happy with what God takes away from you. It's pretty easy to be happy when you've got so much and you've got a comfortable life: "I can't really complain." But it's something else when God takes away something that you have worked for, and that you have built hopes upon, and maybe for a good reason. Then God takes it away. Your real mastery of the details of life is going to be shown (and your stability and your happiness) when God takes it away from you, as well as when He gives it to you. I could give you some very great personal testimonies to the fact that you can trust God at a time when you think that something very tragic has happened to you in a material way.

I had an experience one time that might illustrate this. I had an accident type of situation, concerning damage to a piece of property that was a very sad thing. It was very disappointing. Yet, I recognized that this was just a piece of thing. It is God who is doing something. It is God who has a plan. I don't know all the details. I thank Him for what He's doing even though I don't know it. I thank Him when He gives me things, but I also thank Him when He takes something away. And He just took something away.

Well, the insurance company came by and looked at the damage and said, "We're going to give you $700 for this damage. I went out and had it fixed for $36. It was the kind of damage that the insurance company had to pay such that if you had the whole thing fixed, it would be very expensive. But there was another way of doing it, and it was $36. I said, "Lord, that's really a wonderful system you have. When do we do it again?"

Several years ago, we didn't have the front on this gym and it looked kind of shoddy. There was no front and no entranceway. We had a hailstorm. I walked across the gym roof, and sure enough, there were the holes, and the gym had just recently been built. It affected other buildings, too. The insurance company came along. They were paying off all over town. They gave us $3,000. That was like ten years ago, so maybe that would be $6,000's worth today. We fixed all the roofs for $15 worth of material, and we put the front of the gym on.

In the last few months, we had another hailstorm. Every time it rains, I catch myself peeking through the curtains, "Any hail?" And sure enough, here came the hail, and I wasn't even aware of it. All over town there were shingles again piled up; people fixing; and, insurance companies paying off, and we got something like $3,000 for hail damage again. It's providing us with an Addressograph machine that's going to enable us to start resolving a situation we have found in a survey while I've been gone.

A survey has been conducted among pastors, businessmen, and people of influence in this city of what they know about Berean Memorial Church and our operation. And there's one thing that they know almost uniformly, that the report that was handed to me says. That is that they don't know we're here. The second thing they said that came through is that people are either neutral toward us, or they're very positive. They don't find anybody adverse against Berean Memorial Church and its operation. They're for us, but they just don't know about us. So they haven't had time to get mad at us. We're going to try to correct that. God has given us the means with a little hail to do this.

When He takes away, He helps us. He has His way of giving us the means to do these things when He gives us funds, and, when he takes things away. So mastery of the details of life in your spiritual maturity is a very great factor as to whether you're happy or depressed.

* 1. **The Capacity to Love**

Let's go to the capacity to love. The capacity to love in all human relationships is the one way to drive out depression. Ephesians 3:17: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith that you be rooted and grounded in love." Ephesians 4:16: "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body into the edifying of itself in love."

That quality of love brings edification. When you are being edified, you're a happy person. This is why we have reservations concerning the Body Life movement. Body Life churches want to go from regeneration to a capacity to love. That's what it's all about. So the body is expressing love, people one for another, which Christians should do, and treating each other in love in the local assembly, which Christians should do. And you're a real fink if you don't. But you cannot go from regeneration to the capacity to love, and to express that kind of relationship with other members of the local body, until you have filtered this through Bible doctrine. That's where Body Life misses the point. The capacity to love only comes from intensive, expository instruction in the Word of God in usable form. It's not just explaining the Bible, but in usable form, and in terminology that people can relate to, and that they can apply to their lives.

And then you have to go through doctrine to get to the capacity to love. So people who are getting together, and again, putting on pseudo love, and putting on a human-created emotion, and saying, "We really love one another in the Lord" don't do any such thing. You don't even know what love is. You're not even capable of loving. But you're kidding yourself. And after all the hand-clapping and the singing and the guitar-strumming and everything else that moves your emotions is over, you're depressed again. You're not really all that kicked-up. Those who can love are able to respond on divine viewpoint principles, and you will respond no matter how unloving the other person may be. The object of your love will not necessarily deserve it.

Those who lack the capacity to love are going to be operating on human viewpoint. What are they going to do? They're going to give evil for evil. They're going to give tit-for-tat, and they're going to wreak with unhappiness. Romans 12:17-21 is a good passage that gives us a frame of reference on that point: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. For it is written. 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord.' Therefore, if your enemy hungers, feed him; and, if he thirsts, give him drink. For in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

What's that verse saying? It's saying, "Christian, exercise a capacity for loving, and get off this evil-for-evil tit-for-tat basis. That's human viewpoint. If you operate on that basis, you're going to be depressed, and you're going to be unhappy. If you have a good capacity for loving, you will do something else. You will stay out of other people's problems. You'll be helpful, but you will not become part of their problem. You will not get caught up and start taking sides. Once you start taking sides in other people's problems, you are introducing mountains of depression for yourself. So don't be tricked into taking sides with what does not concern you. Become part of the solution by maintaining a detachment from the problems that people have.

Of course, capacity for love ultimately begins with capacity to love God, as Deuteronomy 6:5 declares: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

* 1. **Inner Happiness**

And finally, what it's all leading up to is this facet of the spiritual maturity structure, and that is inner happiness. This is the piece which passes understanding. In a few sessions later, we will read here in Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Such inner happiness is not dependent on people, on circumstances, or on things, so it is lasting. It's emotionally stable. Inner happiness carries you through the storms of life which otherwise would have produced great depression. It realizes God's power in working in our lives which nothing can defeat.

That's what Romans 8:28 means: "All things work together for good." When you recognize that, then happiness will be your normal capacity, and you will say with Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

So accept whatever your role in life is under God's order of human relationships, and you will find inner happiness a normative part of your life. But again, all the spiritual maturity structure, and all these facets as they are critical in their individual ways to your happiness, are dependent upon the fact that you are building up your reservoir of God's viewpoint through doctrine. Without that, there is no hope for you.

1. **Prayer**

There is one other factor that we may add to personal happiness, and that is prayer. Prayer is very critical to personal happiness. John 16:24: "For until now you have asked for nothing in My name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full." Ephesians 3:20: "Now unto Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly of all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us," with the use of the technique of prayer. God calls upon us to express specific items of thankfulness to God in prayer – not just generalities. Our specific items of petition are to be under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit in a way that is compatible with Bible doctrine, as per Philippians 4:6-7: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

You express specific factors of thankfulness in prayer. That's one reason it helps your happiness. Also, you petition God in specific requests under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the direction of doctrine. Those specific requests provide you with a basis for resolving your conflicts and your tensions, and to bring you into happiness. But after all is said and done, the thing we must remember, in the use of the technique of prayer, is that the battle is the Lord's in all that we face.

With that background, there are two factors for our lives as believers to move into happiness. There are two elements that are the kiss of death, and that are at the core of depression every time, and you don't think they are. If I were to say that, I want all of you to write down the two things that you think that trigger depression, and thus unhappiness in my life, probably not many of you would come up with these two words. These are the two deadly factors that inevitably trigger depression and unhappiness in the life of a believer. We'll tell you about those in the next session.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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