

“Surprised by Suffering” and “Dealing with Difficult Problems”
(R.C. Sproul video lecture series)

Schedule of Classes

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Lecture 1 – Suffering: A Case Study

Outline

1. Common response to suffering: Why me?
A question of purpose.
 - A. Worse than pain is the sense that suffering has no value or purpose
 - B. Judy Griese-“I just cannot take it anymore”
 - C. Martin Luther-“It is the duty of every Christian to be Christ to his neighbor”
2. Is suffering from the Devil?
 - A. Erroneous views on suffering
 - * God doesn’t have anything to do with suffering
 - B. Biblical view connecting God and suffering
 - * God is intimately involved with pain and suffering
 - * Jesus: A man of sorrows acquainted with grief (the Suffering Servant)
 - * Conclusion: It is impossible that any pain could be without purpose
 - * The character of God allows us to trust Him
3. Christians are often surprised by any suffering
 - * 1 Pet. 4:12 (“think it not strange”)
 - * God sometimes calls us to suffer (“vocation”)

Scriptural References

Numbers 12:9-10

Genesis 50:20

Job 2:8-10

Job 13:15

John 9:1-3

John 16:33

Romans 5:5

Romans 8:18-21, 26-28

Questions to Consider

1. What would you have said to Judy Griese?
2. What would you have wanted had you been Judy Griese?

Notes

Lecture 2 – Suffering: A Divine Vocation

Outline

1. God’s vocation = call (Latin). God calls certain people to suffer.
2. Biblical examples
 - A. Job: “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (13:15)
 - * Accusations from Job’s friends
 - * Job’s interaction with God (“trust Me”)
 - B. Blind man (John 9)
 - * Who sinned? Fallacy of false dilemma
 - * Jesus’ answer: “Neither...purpose was to manifest God’s power”
 - C. Jesus
 - * Singular vocation: to die
 - * Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:38)
 - * Simeon’s prophecy (Luke 2:34-35)
 - * “My Father’s business” (Luke 2:49)
 - * Jesus’ rebuke of Peter: “Get thee behind Me, Satan” (Matt. 16:21-23)
 - * Jesus knew He had to suffer as the Messiah; He grieved immensely (Luke 22:44)
 - * All the pain of human life was placed upon Jesus
3. Conclusion
 - A. Let the suffering grieve as Jesus did in the garden (Matt. 26:36-44)
 - B. “Let this cup pass from Me” (Matt. 26:39)
 - C. Jesus endured because He knew His vocation
 - D. Whenever God calls us to suffering and death, He always provides the means to endure

Questions to Consider

1. What is the most difficult aspect of enduring suffering?
2. Why would a loving God call anyone to suffer?
3. What is the meaning of filling up “what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (Col. 1:24)?

Scriptural References

Ecclesiastes 7:2-4 (“Sorrow is better than laughter”)
2 Tim. 2:11-12

Notes

Questions to Consider (Lecture 2 – Suffering: A Divine Vocation)

1. What is the most difficult aspect of enduring suffering?

Common answers:

- * *Feeling of isolation and abandonment (by God, by family and friends, etc.)*
- * *Despair over losing a major role in life*
- * *Inability to show emotion through tears, anger, etc.*
- * *Can not feel God’s presence in the midst of suffering*

Possible approaches (keeping in mind that every person is unique and no two people respond to suffering and comfort in exactly the same way):

- * *Music, a universal language of comfort*
- * *Psalms are very meaningful*
- * *Touch (holding hands, caressing, hugging) conveys support and commitment*
- * *Tears and laughter release tensions and bond people together*
- * *Let the person in pain set the pace—be alert to his/her energy level and attention span (usually much lower for hospital patients)*
- * *Tell the person to be strong and courageous (“tough talk”) if wallowing in self-pity*

2. Why would a loving God call anyone to suffer?

Sometimes the presence of pain in my life has the practical benefit of sanctifying me. God is sometimes only able to work in me through affliction. As uncomfortable as pain can be, we do know the Scriptures tell us again and again that tribulation is a means by which we are purified and driven to a deeper dependence upon God. There is a long-range benefit to us that we would presumably lose were it not for the pain that we are called to endure for a season. Notice what the Scriptures say: Endure it for a season—because that which is stored up for us in the future is far beyond any pain that we have to endure now.

3. What is the meaning of filling up “what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (Col. 1:24)?

*In terms of the value of Jesus’ suffering, it is blasphemous to suggest anything was lacking—the merit of His atoning sacrifice is infinite. The answer to this difficult question lies in the broader teaching of the New Testament of the believer’s call to participate in the humiliation of Christ. Our very baptism signifies that we are buried with Christ. Paul rejoiced that his own suffering was a benefit to the church. The suffering of Christians may benefit other people, but will always fall short of atonement. It may also serve as a witness to the One whose sufferings were an atonement (“witness” = *martus* (Latin) = *martyr*). What is lacking in the afflictions of Jesus is the on-going suffering which God calls His people to endure.*

Source: “Surprised by Suffering—Study Guide for the Video or Audio Series”, p. 90-92
Surprised by Suffering, p. 37-39

Lecture 3 – Dying in Faith

Outline

1. Ultimate questions on death
 - A. Not a question of “if” or “why”, but “when” and “how”
 - B. Scriptures most interested in state of soul (“how”); what is our relationship to God at death?
2. Examples
 - A. R.C. Sproul’s mother – peaceful, “This is the happiest day of my life”
 - B. Tom Graham – “died in faith” (common Biblical epitaph)
 - C. Billy Graham and Jack Paar
 - * Either we die “in faith” or die “in our sins” (refusing to submit to the Creator)
 - D. R.C. Sproul’s uncle – “got things settled with God”
 - E. R.C. Sproul’s father – “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7)
 - * Spoken words are irrevocable
 - * *Fight* against illness is a worthy struggle
 - * *Race*—endurance (marathon)
 - * *Faith*—not magic or superstition, but trust
3. Conclusion
 - A. The just live by faith
 - B. The just also die in faith

Questions to Consider

1. How honest should a family be when a loved one has a life-threatening illness? Who should be told the truth? Should anyone be shielded from the truth? Under what circumstances, if any, should the truth be held back?
2. Are there any relationships or circumstances you would have regrets about if you died today? What about them would cause regret?

Scriptural References

Ezekiel 3:17-19

John 8:23-24

Hebrews 3:12-19, 11:13-16

Notes

Lecture 4 – Life After Death?

Outline

1. Human race pre-occupied with continuity of personal existence (“If a man dies, shall he live again?”—Job 14:14)
 - A. Hamlet: “To be or not to be”
 - * We would rather hang on to the pains of this world than venture to a world we don’t know
 - * This makes cowards of us all
 - B. Socrates: comforting speculation
 - C. Kant: “If there is no life after death, then this life is meaningless”
 - D. Holocaust
 - * Without God, there can be no holocaust, for life would be meaningless
 - * For something to be tragic, there first has to be value, a foundation for ultimate meaning
2. Our greatest comfort
 - A. The teaching of Jesus (His Words)
 - * John 14:1 (“Let not your hearts be troubled”)
 - * John 13:21 (“One of you is going to betray Me”)
 - * John 13:33 (“Where I am going, you cannot come”)
 - * John 14:2 (“If it were not so, I would have told you”)
 - * Jesus spoke as One having authority
 - B. The example of Jesus (His Work)

Notes

Questions to Consider

1. Do you think the fear of separation from loved ones is hardest for the one dying or the ones who remain? Why?
2. What is one insight about life after death which you have gained from this session?

Scriptural References

Psalms 16:9-11
Psalms 49:10-15

Discussion Questions (Lecture 4 – Life After Death?)

1. How did Jesus speak as One having authority, especially on life after death (John 14:1-3)? (Matt. 7:28-29, John 7:44-46)

The Greek word that is used for “authority” in Matt. 7:28-29 is exousia (prefix ex = “from” or “out of”, root ousia = present participle of the verb “to be”). Literally, the word means “out of being” or “substance.” Exousia also means “power” in Greek, so we can translate it as “powerful authority.”

In simple terms, what the Bible means when it says that Jesus spoke as One having authority is that Jesus was not uttering an empty or vaporous opinion. He had the “stuff” or “substance” of reality behind His words. His authority was backed up by nothing less than the very being or substance of God.

When God speaks, all dispute about the truth and reality of what is spoken must end, except for those who are chronically obstreperous, or incomprehensibly foolish. Who else would dare to correct the Deity?

If Jesus spoke the truth concerning His authority, then no objection can withstand the conclusion that He spoke the truth regarding life after death. His declaration, “If it were not so, I would have told you,” remains the consolation of all consolations.

We recall that Jesus declared boldly “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). If the One who possesses all authority in heaven speaks a word about heaven, then it follows that His teaching on the subject is impeccable.

2. The example of Jesus (His Work)—this is not directly addressed in the session. What “works” of Christ demonstrated God’s power over death?

Jesus raised many from the dead. How many people does the New Testament record Him raising from the dead? _____

His resurrection (discussed at length in Lecture 5) serves as the foundation of Christian faith. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul powerfully describes the great benefit to us all as a result of Jesus’ triumph. Because Christ arose, those who are in Him will also be raised from corruption to incorruption, from weakness to power. As a result of this sharing in His victory, the terrible sting of death is removed and we have the assurance that our mortality will put on immortality.

Source: “Surprised by Suffering—Study Guide for the Video or Audio Series”, p. 104
Surprised by Suffering, p. 117, 119, 121

Lecture 5 – The Resurrection of Christ

Outline

1. Nihilism as a worldview
 - A. Edgar Allen Poe’s poem *The Raven*
 - B. Conclusion: Total despair
2. Judeo-Christian worldview
 - A. 1st century no more naïve about death than today (people stayed dead then just as now)
 - B. 1 Corinthians 15—Paul’s if/then conditional logic
 - * If no resurrection, then Christ did not rise
 - * If Christ is not raised, then
 - our preaching and faith is useless (the cornerstone of Christian faith is “He is risen”)
 - we are false witnesses
 - those who have died are lost
 - * If all we have is this life, then we are most to be pitied
 - * If no resurrection, then we should “eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die” (hedonism)
 - Kant: “If there is no life after death, then there is no basis for justice or ethics and life is meaningless”
 - Dostoevsky: “If there is no God, then all things are permissible, and life is just a cosmic joke”
 - Nietzsche: “Life *is* meaningless”
 - * Paul’s evidence
 - Christ was raised according to Scripture
 - 2 Pet. 1:16 (“eyewitnesses of His majesty”)
 - * Paul’s conclusion
 - 1 Cor. 15:58 (“your labor is not in vain in the Lord”)

Notes

Questions to Consider

1. What question(s) concerning the Resurrection would you ask any one of the eyewitnesses to the risen Lord Jesus?
2. In light of Jesus’ teaching about life after death, why should a believer cry over the passing of a Christian loved one?
3. How can a Christian deal with the fear of death?

Scriptural References

Matt. 28:5-9, Mark 12:24-27, 2 Cor. 5:1-8

Reference Material (Lecture 5 – The Resurrection of Christ)

“The great truths which the apostles declared were...asserted...in the face of the most appalling terrors that can be presented to the mind of man. Their Master had recently perished as a malefactor....The interest and passions of all the rulers and great men in the world were against them....Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt...bitter persecutions...and deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution....They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith...and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact....If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication.”

--Excerpt from *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence* (1846, Simon Greenleaf, one of the foremost legal scholars of the 19th century)

In light of Jesus’ teaching about life after death, why should a believer cry over the passing of a Christian loved one?

It is comforting to know that Jesus was moved to tears by the sadness of grieving people. Tears are a gift from God to heal the deepest hurts that cannot be touched by any medicine, and they are a meaningful tribute to the depth of feelings generated by a loved one. While our culture accepts and honors tears at the moment of death and burial, there is often an unease that develops if someone weeps much later. The pressure to control tears is sad, for deep, strong feelings will remain for a long time, and the need for release remains as well. In most cases, the hardest times come long after the initial shock of loss. There is no shame in continuing to mourn, for grief seems to require all of us to pass through definite stages of recovery, and the process always takes time. There is no more lack of trust in responding to emotional hurts than there is in dressing a wound that afflicts the body. Neither is there any merit in “putting on a happy face” and denying the existence of real sorrow. The true joy and peace of the believer comes through experiencing the Lord’s comfort in the midst of pain, not instead of pain.

How can a Christian deal with the fear of death?

While trust in the resurrection is very comforting to the believer, there are still aspects of death which remain disturbing and cause most people to seek to hold death at bay as long as possible. The person who fully anticipates the joys of heaven may still experience fear over the process of dying. Something within us pulls back from the loss of control, the possibility of pain, the sense of the unknown, and the tearing away from people and places we love. Both the person dying and the family and friends experience very similar feelings, including a concern for what life will be like once the loved one is no longer present.

The first step in dealing with these fears is to admit they are present and to accept them as natural. Experiencing such fears is not an indicator of lack of faith or courage. Thus the believer can openly and without shame talk to God and to loved ones about these fears, asking for support and comfort.

Source: “Surprised by Suffering—Study Guide for the Video or Audio Series”, p. 67, 104, 106

Lecture 6 – What is Heaven Like?

Outline

1. Scripture is vague and shadowy on the subject of heaven
 - A. There will be a radical change in our nature; the seed sown in dishonor, raised in honor
 - B. There will be a continuity of personal identity
2. Pascal describes humans as beings of highest grandeur and lowest misery (“paradox of man”)
 - A. Grandeur: Our ability to imagine a far better life
 - B. Misery: Our inability to create such a life
 - * No one is ever 100% satisfied with life
3. Scriptural glimpses into heaven (Apocalypse/Revelation)
 - A. John’s experience; Christ commanded John to write of his vision (Rev. 21:5)
 - B. New heaven/new earth (Rev. 21-22)
 - * Redemption plan (perfecting of creation, not destruction of it)
 - * “No more sea” (Rev 21:1); Jewish symbolism in literature, poetry (sea = chaos, darkness)
 - * River is the positive image (Rev. 22:1-2)
 - * “God Himself will be with them” (Rev. 21:3); God’s presence will be permanent
 - * “God will wipe away every tear” (Rev. 21:4); deepest gesture of intimacy; there will be no more reason for sadness (no death or sickness in heaven)
 - * “I am making all things new” (Rev. 21:5)
 - * Measurements are symbolic (immense size of the New Jerusalem)
 - * No temple or sun or moon (Rev. 21:22-23); “For the glory of God illuminated it”; “The lamb is its light”
 - * We shall see His face (Rev. 22:4); scene from the movie “Ben Hur”
4. Conclusion
 - A. The sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared to the joys of heaven
 - B. Death is the gateway to paradise

Scriptural References

- 1 Cor. 15: 42-44 (earthly body vs. resurrected body)
1 Cor. 15: 45-49 (Jesus as the exemplar of what our resurrected bodies will be like)
1 Cor. 15: 50-54 (continuity and discontinuity)
Phil. 1:19-24 (heaven is “far better” than life in this world)

Notes

Questions to Consider (Lecture 6 – What is Heaven Like?)

1. When believers die, do they go immediately to heaven?

Certain groups hold to a doctrine of “soul sleep”, holding that at death the soul is separated from the body and goes into a state of suspended animation, unconscious, and remains in that state until the return of Christ or the final day of resurrection. Then those who are dead in Christ awaken to enter heaven, with no awareness of time having passed. Mainstream orthodoxy, however, takes the view that believers immediately go to heaven, existing as spirits with no bodies in the interim until the final resurrection.

There is abundant biblical evidence to indicate that we have a continuity of personal existence after death. When Paul expressed his desire to be in Christ, he affirmed that it was far better to die and be in the immediate presence of Christ (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-23). It is hard to imagine Paul viewing an unconscious state as better than the present fellowship that he enjoyed with Christ in this world. Jesus’ parable of Lazarus depicts people in the interim state who are quite conscious. In the book of Revelation, the departed martyrs cry out to God from behind the altar, waiting for the day of their full redemption. They do not yet have their resurrected bodies, but they are alive, awake, and talking. On the cross, Jesus said to the believing thief, “Truly I say to you that on this day you shall be with Me in paradise.” Advocates of soul sleep punctuate the sentence differently, claiming that Jesus meant that He was telling him this today. This is grammatically an arbitrary act, especially in light of the fact that Jesus was dying and was not likely to expend any unnecessary words to the effect that their conversation was occurring today. The most straightforward understanding of the text is simply that Jesus is promising that the thief will be in fellowship with Him that day.

2. Are there gradations in heaven whereby one Christian, as a result of greater obedience and good works, will enjoy more of God’s blessings and rewards than another?

Yes. There are degrees of reward to be given in heaven as well as various levels and gradations of punishment in hell. While justification is totally by faith with no possibility of any good works earning entrance into heaven, Scripture clearly informs us that rewards will be distributed according to our works. A person who has been faithful in many things will be acknowledged by the Master who will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” The one who wastes time and energy on things of no lasting value will see the efforts of a lifetime destroyed, even though “he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:15-16). There are at least 25 places where the New Testament clearly teaches that we will be granted rewards according to our works.

3. How literally are we to take the biblical portrayals of hell as a place for those who die outside of Christ?

There is every indication that Jesus took such portrayals very literally. He made frequent reference to the certainty of eternal punishment, and described it as a fate of great horror (Matt. 5:21-22, 13:40-42, 18:8-9, 25:30). Similar phrases are used in the epistles to show that a terrible end is in store for the wicked (Rom. 2:5, 2 Thes. 1:8-9, Heb. 6:2, Jude 7). While there is considerable debate among scholars and theologians as to the exact nature of the punishment, there is no doubt that the Bible intends us to understand that the ultimate consequence of sin is severe and irreversible. Just as the written descriptions of heaven’s glories can reveal only a small measure of the wonders God has prepared, it is likely that the sketches we have of hell’s terror is also greatly limited in comparison to the awesome reality.

Source: “Surprised by Suffering—Study Guide for the Video or Audio Series”, p. 109, 111, 112

Lecture 7 – Knowing the Will of God

Outline

1. Several meanings for the phrase “the will of God”
 - A. 2 Greek words for “will”
 - B. Several distinctions
 - * “revealed will of God”
 - * “hidden or secret will of God”
 - * “active will of God”
 - * “passive will of God”
 - * “decretive will of God”—God’s sovereign decree which is unchangeable
 - * “preceptive will of God”—laws God has ordained for man, but which we are not compelled to follow
 - * “will of disposition”—expresses God’s attitudes, desires, and delights
 - C. Importance of using the correct interpretation—for example, “God is not *willing* that any should perish” (2 Pet. 3:9)
 - * “Willing” used in this way should be translated as “desiring”
 - * Any other translation directly contradicts other parts of Scripture
2. It is wrong for Christians to seek to discern God’s hidden will—decisions should be based on what would be most pleasing to God
3. The “preceptive will of God” should be our focus—our sanctification and obedience to His commandments are most important
 - A. We are to live by biblical principles
 - B. It is also appropriate and legitimate to seek God’s leading for our lives, carefully moving according to His precepts
 - C. The more we make it a priority to know God’s precepts, desires, and His Word, the more we will be able to make decisions that are pleasing to Him

Notes

Scriptural References

1 John 2:17
Eph. 5:15-17
Luke 22:42
1 Sam. 15:22
Prov. 29:18
Judges 6:36-40

Reference Material (Lecture 7 – Knowing the Will of God)

Paul Little, *Affirming the Will of God* (pp.17-18)

At the Urbana Convention in 1948, Dr. Norton Sterrett asked, "How many of you who are concerned about the will of God spend five minutes a day asking Him to show you his will?" It was as if somebody had grabbed me by the throat. At that time I was an undergraduate, concerned about what I should do when I graduated from the university. I was running around campus, going to this meeting, reading that book, trying to find somebody's little formula - 1, 2, 3, 4 and a bell rings - and I was frustrated out of my mind trying to figure out the will of God. I was doing everything but getting into the presence of God and asking him to show me. May I ask you the same question: Do you spend even five minutes a day specifically asking God to show you?

John White, *The Fight*

God does not desire to guide us magically. He wants us to know His mind. He wants us to grasp His very heart. We need minds so soaked with the content of Scripture, so imbued with biblical outlooks and principles, so sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting that we will know instinctively the upright step to take in any circumstance, small or great ... Through the study of Scripture you may become acquainted with the ways and thoughts of God.

Lecture 8 – How to Deal with Guilt

Outline

1. 2 types of guilt
 - A. “Objective guilt” – reality of being in the wrong regardless of guilt feelings
 - B. “Guilt feelings” – personal inward response to our perception of guilt
2. Society’s morals/ethics are constantly changing
 - A. Christians called to live by God’s standards regardless of culture’s view
 - B. Conscience (can accuse or excuse) very susceptible to changing values – 3 factors:
 - 1) “desensitizing of conscience” – excuses what God condemns, justifies sin through rationalization, suppresses guilt, “hardens” our hearts through process of repeated sin (Eph. 4:18)
 - 2) “hypersensitive conscience” – produces guilt based on what is taught as wrong even if there is no Biblical basis for such teaching
 - 3) Satan, the accuser, who seeks to paralyze a Christian’s growth
 - C. The Word of God must be our guide for what is right and wrong, not our feelings
3. Dealing with guilt consists of specific steps
 - A. We must acknowledge the reality of guilt
 - B. We must repent (David’s guilt/repentance) (2 Sam. 12; Psalm 51)
 - C. We must accept God’s promise of forgiveness (1 John 1:9)
 - D. Through this process, we are cleansed

Scriptural References

Ex. 8:15
Ps. 65:3, 103:10-12
James 5:16

Questions to Consider

1. What are some reasons we might continue to feel guilty even after we have repented and been forgiven by God?
2. How does unresolved guilt manifest itself if it isn’t acknowledged?

Notes

Lecture 9 – Forgiveness

Outline

1. There is much confusion regarding forgiveness
 - A. Arrogance prevents us from taking God at His word
 - B. Repeatedly asking God’s forgiveness for the same sin challenges His integrity
 - C. It is difficult for us to accept forgiveness as a free gift
 - * We want to make up for sin through our own merit
 - * Because of God’s holiness, it is foolish to think we, “debtors who can not pay” (Matt. 18:23-35), could make up for any sin apart from His grace
2. Feelings of forgiveness are subjective; forgiveness is objective
 - A. God’s Word makes forgiveness indisputable when we repent (1 John 1:9, Eph. 4:32)
 - B. Our feelings can not negate God’s authority
 - C. We can be assured of God’s forgiveness if we abide by His requirements (confess/repent)
 - D. If God has forgiven us, we must not allow pride to keep us from accepting His grace and forgiving ourselves
3. What is the meaning of forgiveness and our obligation towards others?
 - A. Forgiveness means never referring to that particular sin again (Jere. 31:34, Prov. 17:9)
 - B. We are obligated to forgive someone who repents (Luke 17:3); if they do not repent, we do not have to forgive them
 - C. In marriage, we are required to forgive an adulterous mate who asks for forgiveness; however, in adultery, forgiving them does not mean divorce is out of the question

Notes

Scriptural References

Heb. 8:12, Heb. 10:17
Ps. 85:2, Ps. 86:5
Matt. 6:12, 14-15

Question to Consider (Lecture 9 –Forgiveness)

Does God call believers to forgive unconditionally? Specifically, is repentance on the part of the offender required?

While it is often true that forgiveness involves a two-way transaction, it is not true of all forgiveness. There are times when forgiveness should be unconditional and unilateral, and there are other times when forgiveness must be withheld until the offender repents... This, then, is the governing rule: unless an offense requires confrontation, unconditional, unilateral forgiveness should cover the transgression.

- Pastor Dr. John MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness*, p. 119

Related Scripture (All NASB translation; words of Christ underlined)

o Unconditional:

- “Take courage, My son, your sins are forgiven.” (Jesus heals a paralytic) (Matt. 9:1-7)
- “And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions.” (Mark 11:25)
- But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34)
- And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Eph. 4:32)
- And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Col. 3:12-13)

o Conditional:

- “And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax gatherer.” (Matt. 18:15-17)
- “Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.” (Luke 17:3)
- But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler--not even to eat with such a one. (1 Cor. 5:11)
- And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (2 Thes. 3:14-15)

Lecture 10 – How to Deal with Anxiety

Outline

1. Jesus often said “Fear not” and “Be anxious for nothing” (Matt. 6:25-34, Luke 12:22-34, John 14:27, John 16:33)
 - A. He clearly knew what a problem anxiety is
 - B. “Anxiety attack” is a modern phrase used to describe the panic of extreme anxiety
2. Anxiety can be caused by a number of factors
 - A. Excessive change produces anxiety through a lack of permanence
 - B. Uncertainty about the future can also cause anxiety
3. Three types of anxiety
 - A. “Objective specific anxiety” is produced by something that is perceived as a threat (e.g., fear of failure in athletes); it could be a phobia
 - B. “Neurotic anxiety” is usually repressed and non-specific; some probing is necessary to determine its cause (very dramatic at times)
 - C. “Restlessness” is rooted in estrangement from God; we were created to be in fellowship with God—without this, we can not experience a sound mental outlook (1 John 4:18)
4. There are practical ways to deal with anxiety
 - A. Avoid “wallowing fellowship” (comparing our problems with those of others) – contagious
 - B. Avoid over-indulgence in introspection
 - C. Avoid a negative (i.e., “can not”) attitude (Phil. 4:8)
 - D. Put your focus on God; give your burdens to Him because only through His power can we triumph over anxiety (Matt. 11:28-30, 2 Cor. 12:9)

Scriptural References

Ps. 37:8
Prov. 12:25
Mark 4:18-19, Luke 8:14
Luke 10:41-42
Phil. 4:4-7
2 Tim. 1:7
1 Pet. 5:7

Notes

Reference Material (Lecture 10 – How to Deal with Anxiety)

“There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human’s mind against the Enemy [God and His son Jesus Christ]. He wants men to be concerned with what they do; our business is to keep them thinking about what will happen to them.”

-Screwtape, an associate of the Devil, writing to his apprentice in The Screwtape Letters (C.S. Lewis)

Turning Stress into Strength (Robert Schuller)

This book, one of over two dozen written by Robert Schuller, explores how to make positive use of stress. Schuller gives example after example of bringing glory to the Lord through stress. This is quite different from allowing stress to become a trigger for anxiety.

Getting Through the Tough Stuff: It's Always Something (Charles Swindoll)

I have my own definition for anxiety. *Anxiety is the painful uneasiness of the mind that feeds on impending fears.* In its mildest form, we simply churn. In its most severe form, we panic.

Why is anxiety so wrong and spiritually debilitating? Here are three statements that help answer that question:

1. *Anxiety highlights the human viewpoint and strangles the divine, so we become fearful.* When we worry, we have such a high level of awareness of the human events surrounding us that God’s perspective gets choked out. Worry strangles the divine perspective from our daily living, which puts us on edge.

2. *Anxiety chokes our ability to distinguish the incidental from the essential, so we get distracted.* In the midst of the worrisome details, we add endless fears, doubts, tasks, expectations, and pressures. Eventually we lose focus on what matters. We become distracted by incidentals and, at the same time, neglect the essentials. Fruitful people are usually relaxed people. Unproductive people, on the other hand, are tied up in knots, having allowed incidental worries to entangle their minds like a thorny vine.

3. *Anxiety siphons our joy and makes us judgmental rather than accepting of others, so we become negative.* We become negative when worry wins the battle. Inevitably we take our anxiety out on others. Worry works like bad cholesterol, hardening the arteries of our spiritual hearts and clogging the flow of love and grace toward people.”

After years of studying the tough stuff of anxiety (and yielding to it more times than I want to remember), I’ve distilled what I’ve learned about its destructive power into four practical principles. I’ll make them easy to remember by giving them to you in simple math—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

- *We worry when we add unnecessary pressure to an already full plate.* Trying to meet everyone’s expectations adds unnecessary pressure.
- *We worry when we subtract God’s presence from our crises.* Adversity minus God’s presence equals doubt and fear.
- *We worry when we multiply our problems by inserting our solutions prematurely.* Anxiety grips us when we insist on finding our own way out of the tough stretches in life instead of walking with God through them.
- *We worry when we divide life into the secular and the sacred.* God doesn’t want to compartmentalize our lives. He wants every aspect to be under His control.

Lecture 11 – How to Deal with Anger

Outline

1. The Bible says “Be angry and sin not” (Eph. 4:26)
 - A. Anger in and of itself is not necessarily evil
 - B. Anger can produce responses such as bitterness, vengefulness, and violence, all of which are sinful
 - C. We are to practice self-control or temperance
2. There are three common causes of anger:
 - A. Disappointment
 - B. Frustration
 - C. Pain or hurt (“if you see anger, look for the pain”)
3. Two common types of anger are “situational anger” and “misdirected anger”
 - A. Situational anger is expressed towards an innocent person over circumstances beyond our control
 - B. Misdirected anger is expressed towards someone or something else when we are really mad at ourselves (very destructive)
4. There are several ways we should deal with anger
 - A. We should not be short-tempered
 - B. We should not suppress anger altogether
 - C. Try to understand the reason behind the anger (makes it much easier to handle)
 - D. We are not to provoke one another to anger (“a soft answer turns away wrath”—Prov. 15:1)
 - C. Do not let the sun go down on our wrath (Eph. 4:26)
5. The Bible says, “Be angry, but...”
 - A. Be angry at what angers God
 - B. Never victimize others over your lack of self-control

Scriptural References

Prov. 14:17, 22:24, 29:11, 29:22
Eccl. 7:9
1 Cor. 13:5
Titus 1:7
James 1:19

Notes

Questions to Consider (Lecture 11 – How to Deal with Anger)

1. Are there any positive/productive aspects of anger? If so, what are they?
2. What does anger involve that’s so destructive to relationships?
3. What are some of the dangers of letting “the sun go down on our wrath”?

Related Scripture (NASB)

²⁶BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not give the devil an opportunity (Eph. 4)

¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord (Rom 12)

¹A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Prov. 15)

¹⁷A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated (Prov. 14)

²⁴Do not associate with a man given to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man, ²⁵or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself (Prov. 22)

¹¹A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back... ²²An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression (Prov. 29)

⁹Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools (Eccl. 7)

⁴Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered (1 Cor. 13)

⁷For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (Titus 1)

¹⁹This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; ^{20c}for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God (James 1)