

Where Am I Wrong?

by F.B. Meyer

F.B. Meyer explores the reasons behind spiritual dissatisfaction and emphasizes the importance of obedience, will, and communion with God for a joyful Christian life.

Scripture: Psalm 37:4, Psalm 62:5, Psalm 85:8, Isaiah 60:20, Matthew 6:33, John 15:4, Romans 12:1, Ephesians 5:14

Topics: "Obedience to God", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

F.B. Meyer addresses the common Christian struggle of feeling inadequate and lacking joy, encouraging believers to seek a deeper understanding of their relationship with Christ. He emphasizes that emotional states do not define one's standing with God, and that true spiritual health comes from a willful commitment to God rather than fluctuating feelings. Meyer also highlights the importance of obedience to God's commands and warns against allowing known sins or distractions to hinder spiritual growth. He calls for a focus on Jesus rather than self-examination, and stresses the necessity of regular communion with God through prayer and Scripture. Ultimately, Meyer urges Christians to fully submit to the lordship of Jesus to experience true peace and joy.

Transcript

THIS IS THY EAGER QUESTION, O Christian soul, and thy bitter complaint. On the faces and in the lives of others who are known to thee, thou hast discerned a light, a joy, a power, which thou enviest with a desire which oppresses thee, but for which you should thank God devoutly. It is well when we are dissatisfied with the low levels on which we have been wont to live, and begin to ask the secret of a sweeter, nobler, more victorious life. The sleeper who turns restlessly is near awakening, and will find that already the light of the morning is shining around the couch on which slumber has been indulged too long. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. 5 :14) .

We must, however, remember that temperaments differ. Some seem born in the dark, and carry with them through life an hereditary predisposition to melancholy. Their nature is set to a minor key, and responds most easily and naturally to depression. They look always on the dark side of things, and in the bluest of skies discover the cloud no bigger than a man's hand. Theirs is a shadowed pathway, where glints of sunshine strike feebly and with difficulty through the dark foliage above.

Such a temperament may be yours; and if it be, you never can expect to obtain just the same exuberant gladness which comes to others, nor must you complain if it is so. This is the burden which your Saviour's hands shaped for thee, and thou must carry it for Him, not complaining, or parading it to the gaze of

others, or allowing it to master thy steadfast and resolute spirit, but bearing it silently, and glorifying God amid all. But though it may be impossible to win the joyousness which comes to others, there may at least be rest, and victory, and serenity--heaven's best gifts to man.

We must remember, also, that emotion is no true test of our spiritual state. Rightness of heart often shows itself in gladness of heart, just as bodily health generally reveals itself in exuberant spirits. But it is not always so. In other words, absence of joy does not always prove that the heart is wrong. It may do so, but certainly not invariably. Perhaps the nervous system may have been overtaxed, as Elijah's was in the wilderness, when, after the long strain of Carmel and his flight was over, he lay down upon the sand and asked to die-a request which God met, not with rebuke, but with food and sleep. Perhaps the Lord has withdrawn the light from the landscape in order to see whether He was loved for Himself or merely for His gifts. Perhaps the discipline of life has culminated in a Gethsemane, where the bitter cup is being placed to the lips by a Father's hand, though only a Judas can be seen; and in the momentary anguish caused by the effort to renounce the will, it is only possible to lie upon the ground, with strong crying and tears, which the night wind bears to God. Under such circumstances as these, exuberant joy is out of place. Somber colors become the tried and suffering soul. High spirits would be as unbecoming here as gaiety in the home shadowed by death. Patience, courage, faith are the suitable graces to be manifested at such times.

But, when allowance is made for all these, it is certain that many of us are culpably missing a blessedness which would make us radiant with the light of Paradise; and the loss is attributable to some defect in our character which we shall do well to detect and make right.

PERHAPS YOU DO NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN YOUR STANDING AND YOUR EXPERIENCE

Our experiences are fickle as April weather; now sunshine, now cloud; lights and shadows chasing each other over miles of heathery moor or foam-flecked sea. But our standing in Jesus changes not. It is like Himself-the same yesterday, today, and forever. It did not originate in us, but in His everlasting love, which, foreseeing all that we should be, loved us notwithstanding all. It has not been purchased by us, but by His precious blood, which pleads for us as mightily and successfully when we can hardly claim it, as when our faith is most buoyant. It is not maintained by us, but by the Holy Spirit. If we have fled to Jesus for salvation, sheltering under Him, relying on Him, and trusting Him, though with many misgivings, as well as we may, then we are one with Him for ever. We were one with Him in the grave; one with Him on the Easter morn; one with Him when He sat down at God's right hand. We are one with Him now as He stands in the light of His Father's smile, as the limbs of the swimmer are one with the head, though it alone is encircled with the warm glory of the sun, while they are hidden beneath the waves. And no doubt or depression can for a single moment affect or alter our acceptance with God through the blood of Jesus, which is an eternal fact.

You have not realized this, perhaps, but have thought that your standing in Jesus was affected by your changeful moods. As well might the fortune of a wealthy heiress be diminished or increased by the amount of her spending money. Our standing in Jesus is our invested capital. Our emotions at the best are but our spending money, which is ever passing through our pocket or purse, never exactly the same. Cease to consider how you feel, and build on the immovable rock of what Jesus is, and has done, and is doing, and will do for you, world without end.

PERHAPS YOU LIVE TOO MUCH IN YOUR FEELINGS, TOO LITTLE IN YOUR WILL

We have no direct control over our feelings, but we have over our will. Our wills are ours, to make them God's. God does not hold us responsible for what we feel, but for what we will. In His sight we're not what we feel, but what we will. Let us, therefore, not live in the summerhouse of emotion, but in the central citadel of the will, wholly yielded and devoted to the will of God.

At the Table of the Lord, the soul is often suffused with holy emotion, the tides rise high, the tumultuous torrents of joy knock loudly against the floodgates as if to beat them down, and every element in the nature joins in the choral hymn of rapturous praise. But the morrow comes, and life has to be faced in the grimy counting house, the dingy shop, the noisy factory, the godless workroom; and as the soul compares the joy of yesterday with the difficulty experienced in walking humbly with the Lord, it is inclined to question whether it is quite so devoted and consecrated as it was. But, at such a time, how fair a thing it is to remark that the will has not altered its position by a hair's breadth, and to look up and say:

"My God, the spring tide of emotion has passed away like a summer brook; but in my heart of hearts, in my will, Thou knowest I am as devoted, as loyal, as desirous to be only for Thee, as in the blessed moment of unbroken retirement at Thy feet."

This is an offering with which God is well pleased. And thus we may live a calm, peaceful life.

PERHAPS YOU HAVE DISOBEYED SOME CLEAR COMMAND

Sometimes a soul comes to its spiritual adviser, speaking thus:

"I have no conscious joy, and have had but little for years."

"Did you once have it?"

"Yes, for some time after my conversion to God."

"Are you conscious of having refused obedience to some distinct command, which came into your life, but from which you shrank?"

Then the face is cast down, and the eyes film with tears, and the answer comes with difficulty:

"Yes, years ago I used to think that God required a certain thing of me; but I felt I could not do what He wished, was uneasy for some time about it, but after a while it seemed to fade from my mind, and now it does not often trouble me."

"All, soul, that is where you went wrong, and you will never get right till you go right back through the weary years to the point where you did drop the thread of obedience, and perform that one thing which God demanded of you so long ago, but on account of which you did leave the narrow track of implicit obedience."

Is not this the cause of depression to thousands of Christian people? They are God's children, but they are disobedient children. The Bible rings with one long demand for obedience. The key-word of the Book of Deuteronomy is, Observe and Do. The burden of Christ's Farewell Discourse is, If ye love me, keep My commandments. We must not question or reply or excuse ourselves. We must not pick and choose our way. We must not take some commands and reject others. We must not think that obedience in other directions will compensate for disobedience in some one particular. God gives one command at a time, borne in upon us, not in one way only, but in many; by this He tests us. If we obey in this, He will flood our

soul with blessing, and lead us forward into new paths and pastures. But if we refuse in this we shall remain stagnant and waterlogged, make no progress in Christian experience, and lack both power and joy.

PERHAPS YOU ARE PERMITTING SOME KNOWN EVIL.

When water is left to stand, the particles of silt betray themselves as they fall one by one to the bottom. So if you are quiet, you may become aware of the presence in your soul of permitted evil. Dare to consider it. Do not avoid the sight as the bankrupt avoids his telltale ledgers, or as the tubercular patient the stethoscope. Compel yourself quietly to consider whatever evil the Spirit of God discovers to your soul. It may have lurked in the closets and cloisters Of' your being for years, suspected but unjudged. But whatever it be, and whatever its history, be sure that it has brought the shadow over your life which is your daily sorrow.

Does your will refuse to relinquish a practice or habit which is alien to the will of God'?

Do you permit some secret sin to have its unhindered way in the house of your life'?

Do your affections roam unrestrained after forbidden objects?

Do you cherish any resentment or hatred toward another, to whom you refuse to be reconciled?

Is there some injustice which you refuse to forgive, some charge which you refuse to pay, some wrong which you refuse to confess'?

Are you allowing something yourself which you would be the first to condemn in others, but which you argue may be permitted in your own case because of certain reasons with which you attempt to smother the remonstrances of conscience'?

In some cases the hindrance to conscious blessedness lies not in sins, but in weights which hang around the soul. Sin is that which is always and everywhere wrong; but a weight is anything which may hinder or impede the Christian life, without being positively sin. And thus a thing may be a weight to one which is not so to another. Each must be fully persuaded in his own mind. And wherever the soul is aware of its life being hindered by the presence of any one thing, then, however harmless in itself, and however innocently permitted by others, there can be no alternative, but it must be cast aside as the garments of athletes who compete for the prize in wrestling or racing.

PERHAPS YOU LOOK TOO MUCH INWARD ON SELF, INSTEAD OF OUTWARD ON THE LORD JESUS

The healthiest people do not think about their health; the weak induce disease by morbid introspection. If you begin to count your heartbeats, you will disturb the rhythmic action of the heart. If you continually imagine a pain anywhere you will produce it. And there are some true children of God who induce their own darkness by morbid self-scrutiny. They are always going back on themselves, analyzing their motives, reconsidering past acts of consecration, comparing themselves with themselves. In one form or another self is the pivot of their life, albeit that it is undoubtedly a religious life. What but darkness can result from such a course? There are certainly times in our lives when we must look within, and judge ourselves that we be not judged. But this is only done that we may turn with fuller purpose of heart to the Lord. And when once done, it needs not to be repeated. "Leaving the things behind" is the only safe motto.

The question is not whether we did as well as we might, but whether we did as well as we could at the time.

We must not spend all our lives in cleaning our windows, or in considering whether they are clean, but in sunning ourselves in God's blessed light. That light will soon show us what still needs to be cleansed away, and will enable us to cleanse it with unerring accuracy. Our Lord Jesus is a perfect reservoir of everything the soul of man requires for a blessed and holy life. To make much of Him, to abide in Him, to draw from Him, to receive each moment from His fullness, is therefore the only condition of soul health. But to be more concerned with self than with Him is like spending much time and thought over the senses of the body, and never using them for the purpose of receiving impressions from the world outside. Look off unto Jesus. "Delight thyself also in the Lord" (Ps. 37:4). "My soul, wait thou only upon God!" (Ps. 62:5).

PERHAPS YOU SPEND TOO LITTLE TIME IN COMMUNION WITH GOD THROUGH HIS WORD

It is not necessary to make long prayer, but it is essential to be much alone with God; waiting at His door; hearkening for His voice: lingering in the garden of Scripture for the coming of the Lord God in the dawn or cool of the day. No number of meetings, no fellowship with Christian friends, no amount of Christian activity can compensate for the neglect of the still hour.

When you feel least inclined for it, there is most need to make for your closet with the shut door. Do for duty's sake what you cannot do as a pleasure, and you will find it becomes delightful. You can better thrive without nourishment than become happy or strong in Christian life without fellowship with God.

When you cannot pray for yourself, begin to pray for others. When your desires flag, take the Bible in hand, and begin to turn each text into petition; or take up the tale of your mercies, and begin to translate each of them into praise. When the Bible itself becomes irksome, inquire whether you have not been spoiling your appetite by sweetmeats and renounce them; and believe that the Word is the wire along which the voice of God will certainly come to you if the heart is hushed and the attention fixed. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak" (Ps. 85:8).

More Christians than we can count are suffering from a lack of prayer and Bible study, and no revival is more to be desired than that of systematic private Bible study. There is no short and easy method of godliness which can dispense with this.

PERHAPS YOU HAVE NEVER GIVEN YOURSELF ENTIRELY OVER TO THE MASTERSHIP OF THE LORD JESUS

We are His by many ties and rights, but too few of us recognize His lordship. We are willing enough to take Him as Saviour; we hesitate to make Him King. We forget that God has exalted Him to be Prince, as well as Saviour. And the Divine order is irreversible. Those who ignore the lordship of Jesus cannot build up a strong or happy life.

Put the sun in its central throne, and all the motions of the planets assume a beautiful order. Put Jesus on the throne of the life, and all things fall into harmony and peace. Seek first the kingdom of God, and all things are yours. Consecration is the indispensable condition of blessedness.

So shall light break on thy path, such as has not shone there for many days. Yea, "thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw herself; but the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Isa. 60: 20).

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