

Spiritual Apathy

by Chuck Smith

The sermon addresses the dangers of spiritual apathy and the necessity of trials and disturbances in deepening our relationship with God.

Duration: 30:31

Scripture: Galatians 5:16

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Maturity"

Description

This sermon focuses on the dangers of becoming too comfortable in life, leading to a lack of spiritual growth and a continued thirst for worldly pleasures. It emphasizes the need to be open to God's refining process, even when it involves disturbances or challenges, in order to prevent settling in a stagnant state. The message encourages seeking true satisfaction and fulfillment in Jesus Christ, who alone can quench the deep longings of the soul and bring lasting peace.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Psalm 42 for our scripture reading today. I'll read the first in the outnumbered verses and Pastor Brian will lead you as you read the even-numbered verses. Shall we stand as we read the Word of God? As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me. For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with a voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts.

All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me in my prayer unto the God of my life. I will say unto God, my rock, why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with the sword in my bones, my enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, Where is thy

God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the help that you give to us, and that as we gather here this day we look to you to guide and direct us in your paths. Make us instruments, Lord, as was sung of your love, that we might bring your love to others, and show your love, Lord, by our attitudes toward them, loving them even as you love them.

Lord, guide us now in the study of your word. Speak to us. Let our hearts be open to receive.

In Jesus' name we pray, amen. You may be seated. Well, we're going to be finishing Jeremiah tonight, as was announced, and so we encourage you to read over.

We start this week with chapter 47 and on through, and 52 is really sort of a repeat. If you go back to 2 Kings, you'll find that this is a part of the history that was written in 2 Kings, so 52 is sort of a repeat, so we won't really need to go over that. So just read through chapters 47 through 51, and tonight join us as we continue our journey from Genesis to Revelation, going through the Bible book by book.

This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the 48th chapter of Jeremiah, verse 11, as Jeremiah is making a prophecy against Moab. He declares, Moab hath been at ease from his youth. He has settled on his lease.

He has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, and neither hath he gone into captivity. Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. It seems like many people today are looking for the easy life, but there are real dangers attached to the easy life.

I have found in my own life that trials are necessary to develop depth and character. The person who just sort of has an easy way through life usually is a very shallow person. The person that's gone through a lot of difficult situations is the person who has developed a depth of character that unfortunately it seems we can't really develop apart from problems.

The Apostle James wrote, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, he said, You should count it all joys when you fall into diverse trials, knowing this, that the trying of your faith is working patience, that patience have a perfect work, that you might be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. The Apostle Peter wrote, that the trial of your faith being more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, yet you love, in whom though you see him not now, yet believing, you rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Interesting that both James and Peter associate joy with trials.

Now, we don't. As we're going through trials, we're usually complaining and so forth about the problems, but they related trials to joy because of the effect that they have upon us, deepening our walk, developing character, and developing strength. Moab, well, they've been at ease from their youth, the writer tells us.

They've settled on their lease. They've not been emptied from vessel to vessel, and neither have they gone into captivity, and therefore, not much development. Their taste remained, and their scent is not changed.

Moab has been on ease from his youth, settled on his lease. The Moabites were descendants of Lot. They lived in that fertile country that is east of the Jordan River in the plains, actually the mountainous plains,

but it's very fertile, and it's off the main trade routes of the ancient world.

The Viamaras went up the Mediterranean, and whenever the Egyptians were invading towards Europe, they would come up the Viamaras, and whenever the European or the Eastern nations would invade Egypt, they would come by the way of the Viamaras along the sea, but the inward route through Moab was just really not very well-traveled, and thus, it was sort of an easy place to live. You weren't really upset by enemy troops coming through, going north or south, and thus, living in these highlands east of the Jordan River, they weren't really disturbed. They really didn't have many problems.

They could just sit back and relax, living there in peace and tranquility. Ruth, who was the great-grandmother of King David, came from this area called Moab, and in our text, it is describing the winemaking process of the people in those days. They would put the grapes into the wine vat, and then they would dance on the grapes to crush them, and then they would pour the juice into the jugs, and they would wait for the seeds and the skins to sort of settle to the bottom.

And as they were settling to the bottom, they would, at a precise time, pour the juice out from the one jug into another jug, careful not to pour the dregs and the seeds and so forth, the skins, on into the next jug. And they would again leave it for a settling process, and then after a while, they would pour it out of the jug again into another jug for further settling, and they would pour from vessel to vessel until they pretty much settled out all of the skins and seeds and so forth that were there in the juice, and thus, you had a pure, clear wine. It wasn't as strong because they didn't allow it to ferment, but you didn't get the alcoholic content that they do today.

Today, of course, they do let it just sit in the lees, and it does strengthen the flavor and so forth of it, but it's just a different process than what they used in those days. And thus, the refining of the juice by being poured from vessel to vessel. If they did not follow this process, the sediment that would remain would ferment and greatly increase the alcoholic content of the wine.

And people were wondering about wine in the Bible, that's why it wasn't nearly as potent as the wine today that has stronger alcoholic content. But Jeremiah uses this simile, or this practice, to describe the problem of Moab. They had been too long at ease, they had settled in their lees, in other words, it had just settled there and began to just ferment and, you know, pollute the pure wine.

It's interesting how that God oftentimes uses unsettling processes in our life to keep us from turning bad. When we get too comfortable and we begin to turn from a complete reliance on the Lord, he allows oftentimes some disturbance to come into our lives as he pours us from one vessel to another. We often rebel at this process.

We don't like it when he upsets our routine. The world says to you, oh, take it easy, enjoy yourself, it's later than you think. We read that Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Luke concerning this man who actually had a rich man, he brought forth bountifully, and he thought within himself, what shall I do? I don't have room to store all of my goods in my barns.

And he said, this is what I'll do, I'll pull down my barns and I'll build bigger than I might be able to bestow all my fruit and my goods, and I'll say to my soul, soul, you have much, enough to last for many years, take it easy, just kick back, be merry. But God said to him, you fool, this night, your soul will be required of you, and then who will have those things which you have acquired? And Jesus said, so is he that lays up treasure for himself, but is not rich toward God. So many people are like that, one that Jesus spoke about

in that parable.

They feel, well, you know, I can just kick back and take it easy, I finally arrived, you know, I'll just tear down the barns, build bigger, and I'll just say, you know, take it easy, you've got plenty to last you from now on. But the Lord said, you know, you don't know when he's going to just say, your number's up. It's all over.

So many today who get to that point of looking around and saying, well, I can just take it easy, you know, and just relax and kick back, so often they are dead within six months because of inactivity. The world has many axioms that describe this take-it-easy philosophy. The term don't sweat it, or don't upset the apple cart, or go with the flow.

It's interesting how we don't like it when God brings disturbances into our lives. And it's interesting about disturbances. If you don't like disturbances, you'll always be disturbed.

For every time disturbances come, they disturb you. But if you are expecting to be disturbed, you're never disturbed because you're expecting it. So, you know, you just say, well, you know, God has another plan or God has another purpose here.

So the disturbances don't disturb you. Like the little kid who took a long time building this sailboat, and just putting together this model until it was just perfect, every little flag was in place, and the railings and so forth. He took it down to the pond and put it on the pond, and he watched it as the winds caught the sails and it began to sail across the pond.

And about the middle of the pond, a gust came along, blew it over, and it just sunk. And he looked around and he said, that's a good wind for flying kites, you know. And it's just disturbances.

They don't disturb you. You just say, well, that's good for flying kites, you know. And you just take it as it comes.

So the man who doesn't want to be disturbed is always disturbed. The man who doesn't mind being disturbed is never disturbed, because disturbances just don't disturb him. You realize, God is pouring me into another vessel to purify, and it keeps me from settling in the lees.

Maybe your world is being turned upside down today. Maybe you thought things were going so smoothly, but it seems that suddenly you've been hit by a combined earthquake and tsunami, and you don't know which side is up. And God is just in the process of pouring you into another vessel.

You were getting to that danger point of just settling down in your lees, and so God is just working in your life to just keep you alert and open to the things, the changes that God wants to bring into your life. Perhaps you were becoming so comfortable in your situation and your circumstances that you no longer felt that great need for God in your life. And so he said, well, time to pour them into another vessel.

It's not a tragedy. It's just a wake-up call from God, because he loves you, and he's just drawing you back into the center of his will, back to himself. Because Moab had it so easy.

They had never gone into captivity, and thus they saw no need of change, and thus they began to get very careless. The Bible tells us that his taste remained in him. The taste for the world had not gone away.

His taste for worldly things, for the pleasures of the world, the luxury and the ease, was still there. Some of you today still have a taste for the world. Jesus describes it as the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of

riches, and the lust of other things, and they are the things that have distracted you from seeking the Lord, causing you to just sort of settle back and think, oh, I'm in good shape, I don't have to worry.

And so the Bible tells us that we're not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world, for he that has the love of the world in his heart has not the love of the Father. With many of you, your life is sort of inverted. You are ruled by your flesh, not by your spirit.

God intended that we be ruled by the spirit. When he created man, he created him spirit, mind, and body. The mind was under the control of the spirit, but through sin, the body appetites began to rule over man, and when your life is ruled by your body appetites, you are out of order, you're inverted.

God did not intend that you be a slave to your body appetites, but that you be submitted to the yielding of the Spirit of God. The Bible warns us that if we live after the flesh, we will die. But if we, through the Spirit, will mortify the deeds of the flesh, then we will live.

Paul warned in Galatians, Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. If we sow to our flesh, then of our flesh we're going to reap corruption.

And so the warnings that we receive. If we sow to the Spirit, then of the Spirit we will reap life everlasting. It's a sad thing, but you see a person who is given over to their lust.

The thing about lust is that it can never be satisfied. Lust has a strange property. That is, the more you feed it, the more it grows.

Not satisfies, but the more it grows, the more you desire. And it's just the way it goes. Pornography is a classic example.

So many of the convicted rapists today began that whole sordid journey by just looking at girly magazines and inflaming their lust. And more and more they want more explicit kind of pictures until finally they want to move out beyond pictures into the reality, and that's where they become rapists and all. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, when he asked her for a drink, she said, how is it that you ask me for a drink? You're a Jew.

I'm a Samaritan. We don't have dealings with each other. He said, woman, if you knew who it was that was asking you for a drink, you would have asked him.

She said, fat chance. That well is deep. You don't have anything to draw water with.

He said, well, if you drink of this water, you will thirst again. But if you drink of the water that I give, you'll never thirst again. It will be like a spring, a living spring, just springing up within.

And so she said, well, sir, give me this water that I don't have to come out here every day and draw. And he said, well, first go call your husband. She said, well, I don't have any.

And he said, well, I guess that's true. You've had five, and the last guy you just moved in with, and you didn't marry him, so I'll accept you don't have a husband. And suddenly she realized things are not going to my desire here.

And she said, sir, I perceive you're a prophet. Now our fathers tell us that we're to worship God in these mountains. You Jews say you were to worship in Jerusalem.

Where can I find God? Where can I worship God? And Jesus said, God is the spirit. They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And God is seeking such to worship him.

But that word of Jesus to her was so important. He who drinks of this water will thirst again. I think that you need to write that over every ambition that you have, over everything that you are looking toward or looking to to satisfy the clamor cry within your life for meaning and for purpose.

And people are looking for purpose and for meaning and coming up empty so many times. Drink of this water. And they think, well, if I just had this, well, if I just had that, well, if I could just do.

And they always have something in the back of their mind that they feel if I could just accomplish, then I would be satisfied. But as Jesus said, drink of this water, you will thirst again. It's not going to satisfy guaranteed.

But yet there are so many people that are just in that condition. They're living in hope that the next experience will bring satisfaction they're looking for, but they're dying in despair. It's always, it seems, just out of reach.

It's just around the next corner. And so there's always the pursuit, but never the attaining. And so here we find with Moab, they've gone into captivity.

Their taste remained in them. They're still thirsty and still hungry, but it hasn't been satisfied. And the scent is not changed.

The conditions are still the same. There's still that vacant, empty space within that is clamoring to be filled. I think of the lyrics of that one song that used to be sung.

Friends all around me are trying to find what their hearts yearn for by sin undermined. I have a secret. I know where it is found.

Only true pleasures in Jesus abound. All that I want is in Jesus. He satisfies.

All my joy He supplies. Life would be worthless without Him. All things in Jesus I find.

And I pray that that might be so with you. That if you haven't found that completeness and that full satisfaction in Christ, that this will be the day that you will just open up your heart and say, Lord, come in. Fill that empty space in my life.

Let me find the richness of Your presence dwelling within me so that I'm no longer thirsty and hungry and seeking and trying to find in the empty things of this world. But may, Lord, I find that richness and that fullness in You. Father, we thank You for the richness that is ours in and through Christ Jesus.

And Lord, we realize that there are many today who, like Moab, are just being poured from vessel to vessel. They're settled down and tried to settle down, but yet they find that there is that disturbing thing within their lives that keeps them from being settled. But Lord, we pray that You'll just help them this day.

That they might just turn their lives over to You. And that they might just say, Lord, help me. I want to find that peace, that rest, that security that is there for those who will put their trust fully in Jesus Christ.

And Lord, may You this day minister to them in a very special way. And we will thank You for it. Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today. And so we would encourage you, if God has been speaking to your heart, and if you have found that, you know, maybe you are in one of those conditions today where things have been turned upside down. You were very comfortable, things were going so well, it looked like the job was secure and, you know, the family was secure, but suddenly, you know, you've been poured out into another vessel.

And you think, oh my, what's going on here? What's happening? And maybe God's just getting your attention. That you might just really submit your life fully to Him today and to find His help. Turn to Him and find that life that He wants you to live and that you might enjoy the power of God working in your life, smoothing things out, making, well, accomplishing the purposes for His pouring you into another vessel today.

And so may the message just resonate in your heart and may you turn your life and the issues of your life over fully to Him. We pray this in Jesus' name. The Lord bless thee.

And keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee. And be gracious unto thee.

And be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee. And give thee peace.

God bless you.

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