

Life in the Body How to be Spiritually Miserable 7/16/24

Intro:

- a. Ps 10
 - b. 97
 - c. Misery: a state of dissatisfaction, unfulfillment, and emptiness. It is the consequence of pursuing something other than the biblical Christ for salvation, satisfaction, and/or stability. Though these pursuits may deceitfully appear to cause happiness in the short-term, they will always eventually returns with a vengeance, and, in some cases, eternally. Often, the longer it delays its experiential effects, the worse it will be when reality sets in.
 - d. Misery begins and is compounded in the heart.
1. Meditate on how you have seemed to receive a “raw deal” when things are hard.
 - a) Struggle is inevitable. And we are sure to increase our misery when we allow ourselves to ponder how we have received less than what we suppose we deserve, the short end of the stick, and been dealt a rotten hand.
 - b) It’s impossible to be thankful or joyful in this mindset. But, through Christ, we can corral those out-of-control musings towards biblical thinking (2 Cor. 4:16-18, Col. 3:1-5).
 - c) Phil 4:11
 2. While thinking about your “raw deal,” seek the world’s solutions to soothe yourself.
 - a) Instead of bolting quickly into the welcoming and gracious throne room of God through Christ (Heb. 4:14-16), you seek out those old faithful idols for some worldly treatment.
 - b) Pay a visit to the comfy “Rejuvenation Spa of My Idolatrous Flesh” for an hour (or day or week) of self-pampering. And as you sow to the flesh (even things that might not necessarily be sin, Heb. 12:1-2), be sure that you will reap further disappointment, spiritual weakness, and, possibly, hell (Gal. 6:7-8).

3. Ponder often how things used to be so much better for you than they are now.
 - a) Whether a current relationship, a job, health, or any other station in life, we're sure to compound misery when we use meditation on "the good 'ole days" as a regular escape mechanism from today.
 - b) That's not to say that it's wrong to be thankful for past blessings. But there is a fine line here between the humility of thankfulness and the idolatry of covetousness. Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this (Eccles. 7:10).

4. Operate with a "one-for-you-one-for-me" mentality towards God and people.
 - a) First, we approach obedience to Christ in a client-type relationship. As long as he does what I want in my life, I will render him some obedience. But, when it gets hard I will not render him service. I pull away from church, ministry, prayer, and anything else I think that he wants me doing.
 - b) Second, the "one-for-you-one-for-me" mentality can infect relationships with people. When we perceive that people are not paying us our relational dues (e.g. accolades, invites to events, compliments, gifts), we decrease our service accordingly. This can compound misery because we are not motivated by the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 5:9-10, Col. 3:17).
 - c) Instead, we are like a scrupulous spiritual accountant, keeping meticulous track of who has served where, when, and how much. And when that person has not paid their spiritual/relational dues, then it's our job to make them pay.
 - d) How does this often look today?

5. Meditate on how little others seem to be doing/serving in comparison to you.
 - a) Time spent comparing yourself—whether your perceived morality, deeds, ministry, or life state—to those who appear to be inferior to you delivers a temporary self-righteous buzz, for sure. But, because it is fueled by a self-worship, it will reap the deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).
 - b) The peace of God-centered gratitude will never bloom from this mindset.

6. Decrease your ministry and service for Christ and to people because others are not “pulling their weight.”
 - a) Similar to #4 and #5, this mindset operates as a spiritual referee and whistle-blower. When this person perceives that others in life or their church are doing a little less than they think that they should, then they conclude, “Fine, if so-and-so isn’t going to pull their weight, then neither am I.” It’s a form of self-righteousness. The demand is that everyone must do an equal amount; everyone must be doing as much as I am. I become the standard for service in the church.
 - b) But, we forget that we are not omniscient. Who knows what other things people have done before they arrived at church (or a church function), what they are doing behind the scenes, and will do later? Even more, this mindset would do well to ask itself, “Have I done an equal amount as God the Father in creating and ordaining all things (including my salvation), God the Son in upholding all things and redeeming me, and God the Spirit in drawing, regenerating, and sanctifying me?” And even if everyone in the world hates me and refused to lift a finger in serving others, I still get the high, exalted privilege of serving Jesus with everything I have because he is worthy (Rom. 12:1).
 - c) “So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done’” (Luke 17:10).
7. Meditate on how most people seem to have it easier and better than you.
 - a) Few things have the potential to snowball the misery of unthankfulness and bitterness like this. And the more we look around with this heart, the more people we will find who *seem* to have it all.
 - b) The idolatry of this thinking makes it progressively easier to spot circumstances superior to ours. After all, in some sense, we *want* to find people better off than us so that we can seek the self-pity attention we desire. Like Asaph, this attitude unchecked renders us akin to a wild beast in senseless raging (Ps. 73:22).
8. Prioritize little time for prayer and taking in the Word of God.
 - a) Flatter yourself with thoughts like, “God understands that I don’t have time these days for Scripture reading and prayer.” No doubt, he understands that life is a battle and we are busy. However, we would never make that excuse about our

physical diet: “God, I don’t have time to eat this week, but you understand. Just magically make food land in my stomach, OK?”

- b) When life is busy and stressful, we tend to make the excuse that we don’t have the time to read and pray. Yet, time is rarely a factor. It is about priorities and about our view of God. Do we really think of God as sovereign and in control? Do we really believe that He will hear my prayer and will respond according to His will as He sees best for me?

 - c) What is our view of the Bible? Do we view it as a sufficient and superior source of help and hope? Or do we use the Bible like a magic wand that we read in order to get what we want? Do we give up on prayer because we prayed for a few minutes and God didn’t change our circumstances yet?
9. Grumble and complain, especially about other people in your local church.
- a) Whether complaining behind closed doors to your spouse, to that undiscerning “friend” of yours who should be rebuking your complaining and not pandering it, or in your own mind (where no one can confront me), grumbling furthers your misery. Like a dirt-clod-encrusted pig who jumps into a muddy pit, grumbling furthers our spiritual filth.

 - b) Though grumbling sometimes delivers a quick buzz from “speaking my mind,” the longer-term effects of this sin are multiplied.

 - c) Interestingly, when the Israelites grumbled, it never made things better (e.g. Num. 11-13).
10. Meditate on how no one really understands how hard you have it.
- a) Our misery is sure to increase when we ponder how we are the only one to understand a particular level of hardship. It’s a reverse type of pride: it derives dark satisfaction, not from being the champion at the top, but at the bottom.

 - b) But like a drug, it demands more and leaves one wearied from its high level of idolatry.

11. When involved with interpersonal skirmishes and conflict, wait for the other party to initiate peacemaking.
 - a) During conflict, this approach refuses to admit fault or ask forgiveness until so-and-so makes the first move. It justifies its tactic in the name of “holding people accountable to do what is right.”
 - b) However, in acting like man’s judge, it is severely proud. In addition to intensifying your own misery, this is a sure way to propagate the misery of others around you.

12. When things get really hard and discouraging in life, distance yourself from the local church.
 - a) This is a sure way to boost your misery. On the front end, it promises things like rest, rejuvenation, and a needed break. But that mentality is like a soldier out in combat who concludes that, because the battle is taxing and wearying, he shouldn’t take time to drink water and eat food. Man shall not live on bread alone (Matt. 4:4).
 - b) Some of the most hazardous times to pull back from God’s church are when you feel hurt by someone at church, have normal relationship battles, or feel spiritually too taxed to go. The wearied animal needs its herd most when it is sick. Again, we will reap what we sow.
 - c) 40 one-another commands.

13. Rely on your own moral performance for forgiveness of sin and right standing with God.
 - a) Nothing wearies human beings like attempting to achieve, and maintain, acceptance with God through their own moral merit. And nothing is so deadly. Guilt will never go away. Sin will be exchanged for sin. It’s the ultimate spiritual suicide. This type of misery dangles a carrot in front of our nose, however, the carrot can never be obtained. The chase is perpetual, and wearying. And the consequences are eternal. “[B]y the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight” (Rom. 3:20).

- b) However, through his perfect life, death, and resurrection, Christ completed the work for favorable standing with God. Misery's solution is the suffering Savior and his cross. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:29).
- c) Because of the world, the flesh, and the devil, compounded misery is always waiting. But, by God's grace, we can be purged of the idolatry behind misery. And in the end, even if our experiential misery does not seem to escalate as we do any of these things, we still ought to repent since they are sin against our good God.