

2016-05-14

Emotionally Sick Christians #1

Hi all,

Did you know Paul wrote about emotionally ill Christians? He carefully outlined symptoms and what a person needs to do when dealing with such a person, and what that person must do to regain emotional health.

This subject is so important I'll be offering an audio teaching of it at the conclusion of this 3 part Weekly Thoughts - in the audio teaching I'm able to go into more detail and share real life situations which will help provide more in depth coverage of this important topic.

How Paul started talking about the emotionally ill Christian

Paul is writing to Timothy in I Timothy 6:1-6 where he brings up the subject of emotionally or mentally ill Christians. His statement that the people he is writing about are emotionally ill is the middle point of a 6 verse teaching - the first 3 verses define the condition of their heart, then he defines them as mentally ill early in verse 4, then through verse 6 outlines their actions. Today, those first 3 verses about the heart.

The first 2 verses teach slaves how to work under the yoke of slavery - God doesn't condone slavery as we are all equal in Christ, yet He had to deal with cultures that had slavery, the Lord being ever practical.

Verse 1: "All who are under the yoke of bond-servants (slavery) are to regard their own masters worthy of honor and respect so that the name of God and the teaching about Him will not be spoken against."

In our day this relates to believing employees who have unbelieving bosses. Paul taught that Christians should have a sense of responsibility to live with an awareness their actions could cause the Lord to be thought of poorly by non-believers, or glorified when they live properly in the work place.

This first verse is about our sense of responsibility in public to live godly lives knowing we have Christ in us.

Verse 2: "Those who have believers as their masters must not be *disrespectful* towards them because they are brethren in Christ, but they should serve them even better because those who benefit from their kindly service are believers and beloved. Teach and urge these things."

The Greek word translated 'disrespectful' is 'kataphroneo', literally meaning 'to think down upon'. It is sometimes translated as 'despise' because this compound word is made up of 'kata' meaning 'down' and 'phren' meaning 'mind' - to think down on about another, or to despise them.

This second verse is about our sense of responsibility to live godly lives within our relationships.

Verse 3: "If any man *teaches otherwise*, and *consent not to wholesome words*, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is *according to godliness*;

Paul says 'If any man teaches otherwise', which is 'heterodidaskaleo' - to teach other teaching, from 'heteros' meaning 'another' or 'different', and 'didaskalos', 'an instructor', 'a teacher'. In other words, these people have another teacher, a different voice they are listening to, rejecting Paul's teaching in favor of 'another master' that has taken precedent over Paul's sound wisdom.

Consider what Paul asks in the first two verses...

What person in their right mind would reject a teaching that says to be aware how you conduct yourself before an unbelieving boss, and to treat believing bosses with just that much more respect? Who would reject such common sense, logic, and such a reasonable instruction?

When he starts outlining the symptoms of an emotionally ill Christian, he starts here saying they reject this teaching. The steps towards emotional or mental illness begin, and are first seen here, with the rejection of common sense and a logical understanding of what it is to walk with Christ and godly relationships. Paul is talking about relationships in these first 2 verses, and people who reject common sense, social

skills and wisdom when dealing with others. Strained relationships, or withdrawing from relationships, are the first sign of a person on a path towards emotional or mental illness.

What most Christians understand as common sense and logic, they take issue with. They have other ideas, other 'voices' telling them to reject such things in favor of their own thoughts on the matter.

As we will see later, Paul identifies arrogance and stubbornness as major traits of someone emotionally ill.

Verse 3 continued: 'and consent not to wholesome words'

The word 'consent' is 'proserchomai' meaning 'to come towards', and is used in Hebrews 10:1 of those who 'draw near' to the Lord. In the negative here, it is used of people who refuse to draw near to the Lord. The word also means 'to nod the head towards (in agreement with)', as one who nods in agreement with the Lord will draw near to Him - and these people refuse to agree and draw near.

They are disagreeable when it comes to common sense, logic, and 'wholesome words', claiming to have amazing new revelation from God or their particular twist on old doctrine. Or, for other conditions, they become obsessed with 1 idea in particular, maybe about their self-image, maybe about their appearance, maybe focused on ending their life - or any obsessive thought in between.

Because they reject common sense and logic that everyone else does, they become spiritual islands, alone in what they believe, even in their marriages, unable to draw near to the Lord in their own hearts, let alone drawing near in relationships with others, or even partaking in the common faith with their spouse or friends.

'wholesome words'...

...is 'hygiaino', where we get 'hygiene' or clean - clean words. Healthy words, sound advice, healthy teaching. Notice what Paul is saying thus far: If any teaches otherwise, they have another master they are listening to, refusing to draw near to the Lord and His clean and sound teaching. Advice from family and friends don't help them. No one can persuade them what they are thinking is off-balance. They are convinced they are right.

These people are sliding further into emotional illness as they reject clean teaching in favor of other teachings and thoughts that prevent them from drawing near to the Person of the Lord. They hide behind their off-balance thoughts and doctrine often accusing others in arrogance, while refusing to personally draw near to the Lord - a facade of a spiritual life, often alienating those who love them the most, and in the context of the verse, also their bosses and fellow employees and other relationships - they pull away from others.

"...even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the teaching which is according to godliness."

Paul says they are in fact rejecting the words of the Lord Jesus even while claiming to be obeying Him in special revelation, or they can't leave their thoughts for His. Their thoughts hold greater importance to them than those of Jesus, which lead a person deeper into a closer walk in godliness.

Godliness is Christian character demonstrated by a lifestyle of love, transparency, humility, integrity, giving, and healthy relationships. These people are the opposite. They don't draw near to the Lord, nor to their spouses spiritually speaking, nor to their bosses nor fellow employees or friends.

You can see where Paul is going as he highlights the condition of their heart, for those who reject common sense and logic soon have no friends, but either seek a platform to be heard, or they withdraw into themselves. Often the underlying disorder has to do with lack of self-love and lack of a healthy self-image, compounded by rejection - in short, they don't know the Father's unconditional love, were never rooted and grounded in unconditional love growing up and/or in later relationships, nor do they truly know Him as Friend.

And I've run out of room for today, next week, 'wrapped in smoke'...until then, blessings,

John Fenn

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2016-05-21

Emotionally Sick Christians #2

Hi all,

Last week I shared how Paul laid out some pretty reasonable and logical instructions; Christians who have unbelieving bosses need to show the proper honor and respect to those bosses, and Christians who have Christian bosses need to show all the more respect because they are also brethren.

Yet some reject that advice in favor of their own ideas - And thus begins the road to emotional illness, through the rejection of reasonable and logical beliefs. I'm not talking about those with genuine chemical imbalances in the brain which cause unusual behavior, I'm talking about Christians where physically everything functions normally, but they are as Paul outlined, emotionally or mentally ill in an area of life.

But don't think Paul is talking about people who would openly teach it is wrong to be aware how we carry ourselves in public or how an employee should have a good attitude towards a boss - the people rejecting healthy words first do so privately, in their hearts, and then to others who they think may be open to what they believe.

They may find the anonymity of the Internet a safe place to find others with their same focus on the unhealthy. They may try to dominate a small group or make sure no matter the topic, insert their unhealthy view. They may write emails to strangers telling them about their belief, or how what those strangers believe is wrong. They may tell their spouse until either their spouse agrees or rejects their ideas as so laughable and sad it becomes off limits in the marriage to talk of it. But they won't allow anyone close enough to influence them toward change. This subtle rejection of common sense and maintaining a good attitude within healthy relationships is the first step in one's sliding towards emotional illness in an area of life.

Last week we only made it through the first 3 verses, where Paul said they reject 'clean' or 'healthy' teaching, and we pick it up from there, in I Timothy 6:4:

Verse 4: "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words..."

The word 'proud' Paul uses is 'tuphoo', meaning 'wrapped in smoke'. It is where we get typhoon, the word used in our time for hurricanes in the Pacific Ocean - that circular storm is what Paul used to describe these people, translated into English as 'proud'.

They are wrapped in a swirling smoke screen, hiding the real person of who they are behind the smoke. A person who is 'tuphoo' is a swirl of words and self righteousness often leaving a path of confusion and destruction in their relationships with loved ones especially, while at the same time because of the wrapped in smoke nature they present to others, seem to be righteous and godly.

Paul said in the previous verse the gospel and words of the Lord Jesus Christ lead us to godliness. Godliness flows from Christian character rooted in love and manifest in a lifestyle of wholeness in every area. But these people are actually dysfunctional in relationships as Paul stated in his first 2 verses.

The nature of pride

Pride isn't always the peacock strutting around asking all to pay attention to him, pride is very subtle and at its root is stubbornness, an insistence of sticking to one's way, one's own thoughts.

For instance, when talking of the origin of Satan, where the cherub named Lucifer rejected God, his sin of pride was manifest in stubbornness - insisting on his way. Ezekiel 28:16-17 tells us he was lifted up because of his authority and beauty, and internally he was filled with violence - there was a war in his heart and mind, a battle between God's way versus what he wanted.

Only the proud can change themselves

If you do a study on 'proud' or 'pride' you'll find that it is a sin that only the proud person can change - God cannot "make" them humble, He can't remove pride from them by an act of His will. As we saw with Satan, pride is about an internal battle for recognition.

He can and will however, turn them over to face the consequences of their actions - closed off or greatly limited relationships, even loss of job and more...in the hopes that in suffering the consequences of their

actions they will look at themselves and humble themselves before Him in admission of their error, thus regaining emotional and mental health.

Of all the sins, pride is the only one the Bible states God is actively 'resists'. The word here is 'antitasso', from 'anti', 'against', and 'tasso', meaning 'to arrange'. It was a military term to describe an army actively arranged in battle against another - and it is used of God arranging Himself against the proud Christian in a particular area of life - He loves them and blesses them in other areas in which they walk with Him - but in this one area, He is like a military commander arranged in battle against them.

Paul continues: "...knowing nothing, doting about questions and strifes of words..."

Paul's whole teaching revolves around this line - what goes before leads up to it, what comes after directs the reader to the end result. We are at the middle point of the teeter totter in Paul's teaching.

'Knowing nothing' is 'epistamai' meaning 'to understand' and 'meden' from 'no one' - these people know nothing as they should. The same phrase is used in Hebrews 11:8 to speak of Abraham going out to sacrifice Isaac 'not knowing' where he was going. Same concept, but in the negative here - they've started on a walk down this unhealthy path and they don't know where they are going - they say they do, they may honestly think they do, but scripture says they don't know, they don't understand.

This is where Paul calls them 'sick'

"...doting about questions and strifes of words..." The word 'dote' is 'noseo', 'sick', 'ill', used in the time to describe mental and/or emotional illness, specifically for someone having a morbid interest or craving for unhealthy things. Paul uses it is a spiritual and emotional craving for the unhealthy.

The term 'strifes of words' is literally 'word battles'. They are so off balance they seek out 'word battles' with other people. The English phrase "strifes of words" is in Greek, 'logomachia'. It comes from logos, 'word', and 'machia', meaning, strife, battles, working, and warring.

Think about the root 'machia' and the English word 'machine' - something that works using friction and hard work - this person works like a machine with questions and warring about words. These are people who actively search out others to have 'word battles' with, and he calls them sick for it.

Again, these can include people with 'pet' doctrines, but also those who withdraw for emotional reasons from healthy relationships and thoughts - the person obsessed with thoughts of depression perhaps, or thoughts of hurting themselves or others, or focused on a 'move of God' or leader. In the same way a 'stalker' might stalk a celebrity in singular focus, so too is this person singularly focused, and in this area, emotionally ill.

The summary of today is these people who have withdrawn from healthy relationships and healthy teaching, have dug in their heels insisting on going their own way. Outwardly they may appear godly, but in their heart a battle is raging, for their private lives don't match their outward expression of godliness. They are wrapped in smoke, focusing on wars of words, even actively seeking others to pick a word fight with - all of it a smokescreen - they are spiritual islands, using word fights to distract a person from their real issues.

And God is actively resisting them - in this area - He is all for them, will bless them in work, in life, in protection and provision. But in this one area, He has set the battle against them in resistance. They need to give up the internal battle and humble themselves, submitting to God purely and with their whole heart...

I've run out of room for today - next week the conclusion, and what the healthy can do to help. Until then, blessings, John Fenn, www.cwowi.org and email me at cwowi@aol.com

2016-05-28

Emotionally ill Christians #3

Hi all,

His roommate tripped over him in the middle of the night, that's how I heard about him. I was the Director of a Bible school that had student housing. As it is with dormitories, strangers are teamed as roommates and sometimes that fosters life long friendships, and other times 1 or both demand another roommate. This was just such an occasion.

It turned out the young man was sleeping on the floor, causing his roommate to trip over him in the middle of the night. He said he was called to the ministry of Elijah and John the Baptist, and because his ministry was so exalted by heaven, yet so difficult on earth, he could not partake in any of the luxuries of life - like a bed. So he chose the floor with no cover, to purposely 'chastise' the flesh...

He could not be convinced to sleep on the bed and fasted to the point of near starvation, but if we could have rounded up a locust or two I'm sure he would have gobbled them down - he was eventually handed over to a Christian based mental hospital for evaluation, released, and left the school for his 'ministry'.

Can function normally in life except for this one area...

Most emotionally ill Christians still have the ability to function in life, having the ability to put their illness in the background while they interact with others at work, school, and with their spouse and family. But like a computer program always running in the background no matter what program you are actually working in at the time, their obsession is always just below the surface, and all they need is an opening from someone...

As Paul stated in our text, I Timothy 6:1-6, these are people who in private withdraw from healthy relationships in favor of their own ideas, and pull away from other elements of spiritual health - they claim godliness yet don't have a spiritual closeness with their spouse, often don't go to church or any gathering of believers, and pick 'word battles' with people, acting as their own evangelist for their particular belief.

If not obsessed with a particular doctrine of the faith twisted to their off-balance view, it can be related to self-image or view in life. We once had a young lady visit our home who was a daughter of an internationally known pastor, and suddenly I saw my angel standing next to her, and asked what message he might have.

He said, "Since she was a child she believed the lie that she would die early, never marrying or having children, and the Father wants her to know it is not true and she needs to reject that lie in favor of the truth. His plans for her are a long and full life, and it is hers if she will believe it. Tell her that."

While she lingered in the living room as the others headed for the kitchen, the natural gathering place of college students I think, I told her what the angel had told me. She looked wide-eyed at me: "I've never told anyone that, but it is true, I've always believed no matter what people said, no matter what was prophesied over me, that I would die in my 20's. Thank you (as the tears flowed), I'm so relieved, I'm going to grow up and live a normal life!...(more tears)"

No one knew she harbored those thoughts, no one knew she had believed the lie. You'll recall last week I shared how Paul said these people hide behind a swirl of smoke, a form of pride, and in this case her status being a daughter of a famous pastor and all the activities of her life were the smoke screen, hiding her true emotional stronghold.

Envy, strife, 'railings', suspicions...

In verses 4 & 5 Paul continues describing how sensitive these emotionally ill Christians are to their particular subject, saying their condition leads to, in the King James Version, "...envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings, corrupt minds, destitute of the truth..." Let me put that into modern terms rather than English from the year 1609 when the King James Version was published:

Envy is 'phthonos', which is a feeling of displeasure one feels when hearing of the good fortune of others. Strife is 'eris' meaning hard feelings toward another, contention.

Railings is 'blasphemia', where we get the word 'blaspheme', meaning 'judging another wrongly by evil speaking'. Interestingly enough it comes from the Greek word 'blax/blapto' meaning 'stupid' or 'to injure' and 'pheme' which means 'speech'. It means (stupid and injurious) words toward someone or God - judgmental words abusive towards others, violating basic social etiquette and insistence on one's own way.

The Greek word translated in the KJV as 'evil surmisings' is 'hyponoiai' where we get 'hypnotize' and means 'suspicions', in this use it means 'malicious suspicions as to the honesty of those who disagree with them' - hypnotize means to focus so much on someone to be deceived and submitted to them. These people are both 'hypnotized' by their off-balance belief, and they want to 'hypnotize' others to that belief by arguing their point without any ability to focus on any other doctrine or thought, unable to let loose of it.

The next words to describe their behavior in the King James Version is 'perverse disputings, corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth'. 'Perverse disputings' is 'diaparatribai', where we get 'diatribe', meaning emphatic and obstinate insistence in a long and drawn out quarreling over words.

The Greek word 'corrupt minds' is 'diaphtkeiro', 'dia' is emphatic, and the 'keiro' part means 'destroys'. The word 'corrupt' is incorrect in modern terms, for this word is strong, indicating someone's mind and/or emotions in this area are being destroyed. It is used in Luke 12:33 to describe the work of a moth eating garments and ruining them, and in II Cor 4:16 of the decaying human body. These are minds destroyed gradually, as the work of a moth eating a bite here, a bite there...little by little they have become off balanced, and then emotionally, mentally, socially, sick/ill.

The Greek word translated as 'destitute of the truth' is 'apostereo'. It is where we get 'apostate' and means 'to defraud, deprive of, to leave the truth. In this area they've left sound and healthy faith. It was used in Paul's time of those who misappropriate trust funds. It means in this context they deprive themselves of something they have a right to, or truth that was once theirs but they took it away from themselves by misuse.

This next part has many applications, as Paul concluded in the KJV saying: "Supposing that gain is godliness..." The word 'gain' is 'porismos' and means 'gainful trade', so it would be more accurate to translate it as: "Thinking godliness is a trade in itself and a means to wealth."

In modern terms we think of the 'prosperity gospel' and the marketing of the gospel, but in context Paul is talking about emotionally ill people - okay, that still fits many in the prosperity gospel group, lol - but in his use these people think their doctrine, their belief, their area of focus is the means by which they will gain closeness to God, or change the world, or some other gain of some sort - rather than submit to true godliness seen in a humble and transparent heart, they push what they believe instead.

And Paul concludes: "From such withdraw yourself, for godliness with contentment is great gain."

As Paul said at the start, these people, in this area, are proud, wrapping themselves in a swirl of apparent godliness while eagerly arguing with anyone about what they believe - from believing they aren't loved by God to a genuine doctrine of God taken to an off-balance extreme, the proud must humble themselves. There is only so far a truly godly person will be willing to walk with them before it becomes evident this person would rather lose the relationship with them, lose the job, lose their Christian friends, lose their church family, and so they must stop trying to help. The ill think if you will just believe what they do and follow them, there will be great gain in all areas of life, there will be peace between you and them at last - but they are blind, and willingly so. From such Paul says, withdraw yourself.

We pray for them - Paul's prayers of Ephesians 1:17-18 and 3:14-19 in particular - but the person with this mental stronghold, this emotional illness in this area, must recover themselves as no one can change their heart but them. Often, while the Lord works on their heart, He will let them also experience the consequences of their actions, meaning those who love them are forced to take actions they really don't want to take - ending a friendship, ending their employment, ending their church membership, even ending their marriage. But they have become islands in a sea of people by their own choice...Truly, true godliness with contentment is great gain...and great peace to the emotional health. New subject next week, blessings,

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