



Introduction

“I feel very timid. My illness leaves one half frightened. I am a poor creature. Pray for me.”¹

Pastor Charles Spurgeon was a friend to those who physically and mentally suffered. He and his own dear wife, Susannah, suffered truly through years of physical and mental pains.

In this light, Charles preached transparently about sorrows and their many kinds, including depression in all of its forms. He was no trite preacher. He spoke as one who had been there.

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1. Charles Spurgeon, *Letters of Charles Haddon Spurgeon* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), 171.





THE SILENT SHADES OF SORROW

Perhaps because he so sorely needed God's comfort for himself, Charles dug deep for a robust biblical pathway for his sufferings. He found in Jesus, not only a savior, but a fellow-friend for the sorrowing. Over time, out of his own heartbroken miseries, he learned how to sustain with a word him who is weary (Isa. 50:4). He comforted others out of the comfort that he himself had received (2 Cor. 1:4).

This small collection of sermons offers a small but healing taste of Charles Spurgeon's larger body of writing and preaching for our sorrows.² I've introduced subheadings, not in the original, to aid the reader. As you read, remember that this pastor understood depression as having three individual or collaborative causes—biological, circumstantial and spiritual. It will help you if you are suffering to keep these categories in mind. Remember too, that in one or two of these sermons, for a few paragraphs, Charles will take a moment to speak harder words. These harder words are not for you who are broken hearted in your various humbled miseries as longing for comfort in Jesus. Instead, these few harder words are aimed at those who might be listening to the preacher but whose hearts had hardened.

In fact, I can introduce this pastor's abiding heart for the sorrowing no better than inviting you to read his own words. If you read right now as one who suffers sorrows and depression, take heart, this pastor defends you.

It is the duty of all men to be careful of the sons of sorrow. There be some who from their very birth are

2. See Zack Eswine, *Spurgeon's Sorrows: Realistic Hope for those who Suffer from Depression* (Scotland, U.K.: Christian Focus, 2014).





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marked by melancholy as her own. The silent shades of sorrow are their congenial haunts; the glades of the forest of grief are the only places where their leaf can flourish. Others there are who through some crushing misfortune are brought so low that they never hold up their heads again, but go from that time forth mourning to their graves. Some there be, again, who disappointed in their early youth, either in some fond object of their affections, or else in some project of their young ambition, never can dare to face the world, but shrink from contact with their fellows, even as the sensitive plant curls up its tendrils at the touch. In all flocks there must be lambs, and weak and wounded sheep; and among the flock of men, it seems that there must necessarily be some who should more than others prove the truth of Job's declaration, "man is born to trouble even as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7) ...

Alas, it is not every man that has learned this lesson. There are some who deal with others with rough-handed thoughtlessness. "Ah," they say, "if such a one be so foolish as to be sensitive let him be." O speak not thus; to be sensitive, timid, and desponding, is ill enough in itself, without our being hard and untender towards those who are so afflicted. Go forth, and do to others as you would have them do to you; and as you would that others in your hours of despondency would deal with you tenderly and comfortably, so deal tenderly and comfortably with them ...

For although religion changes the moral temperament of men, it does not change the physical. A man who is weak in health before conversion will probably be as weak afterwards, and many a spirit that has a tendency to despondency, has exhibited that tendency after conversion.





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We do not profess that the religion of Christ will so thoroughly change a man as to take away from him all his natural tendencies; it will give the despairing something that will alleviate that despondency, but as long as that is caused by a low state of body, or a diseased mind, we do not profess that the religion of Christ will totally remove it.

No, rather, we do see every day that amongst the best of God's servants, there are those who are always doubting, always looking to the dark side of every providence, who look at the threatening more than at the promise, are ready to write bitter things against themselves, and often put the bitter for sweet, and the sweet for bitter, erring against their own spirits and robbing themselves of comforts which they might enjoy.³

Among the many and silent shades of sorrow, the sorrowing have a Savior. There is hope for the broken-hearted.

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Webster Groves, Missouri
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3. Charles Spurgeon, Sermon 243 Delivered on Sabbath Morning, March 20th, 1859, the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.
[http:// www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0243.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/0243.htm)