Are You in a Spiritual Rut?

In this message I will preach on what to do when you find yourself in a spiritual rut. I could go to several places in the scriptures that deals with this issue, but I will start with II Peter 1 where we find instructions on how to get out of this kind of situation. But before we look there, let me read some of the Christian remedies that are supposed to help when you find yourself in a spiritual rut. Approximately 75% of the viewpoints preach something different then what I will share with you when dealing with this type of condition. I am not going to read all the suggestions and viewpoints put out by different preachers, but I will read a few.

First, “Shed an old skin. God may have a design for you that is even better than the life you have been living. A time of darkness may be His signal that you have reached the end of one stage in your life. Be flexible enough to turn over a new page and start the next chapter.”

According to this, it is what you are supposed to do when you find yourself in a spiritual rut. Maybe it is by God's design to let you know that you are at the end of one stage in your life and you have to be flexible to now move on and turn to a new page in your life. They are using the same psychological techniques that the secular world uses with Christian terms and phraseologies.

Next, “See the good, expect the best. Your mind is a powerful tool. Don't waste it brooding over what you don't have, aren't experiencing, didn't receive. That kind of negative thinking will only leave you feeling more discouraged, depressed and dissatisfied. A healthier approach is to see the good and expect the best.”

Yippee. Here is another one, “Name it and claim it. Remember that you are loved. In spite of how you feel, balance your negative feelings and thoughts with the reality that God is love. Remind yourself that you are loved deeply, permanently, lavishly by the God who created you. Claim for yourselves the many statements of Scriptures which declare that truth.”

Here's another solution: “Let your gifts and talents lead you. During a dark time it is difficult to know what to do or which direction to move. Let your God-given gifts and talents provide a cue... ‘If you have a beautiful voice, then use it some way for God's glory, and for your happiness. If you are a good teacher, then presume that God wants you to teach. Put your gifts at the service of others.’”

Now this is all fine and dandy, but Monday morning when all hell starts breaking loose, see how much of this you put into practice. You will remain in your spiritual rut because you really do not know what to put into practice because this nonsense peddled ‘as thus saith the word of the Lord.’ Here is another suggestion,

“Use the three healing words. ‘I forgive you’ are three of the most powerful words a person can speak. Ask yourself if your current spiritual situation is connected to feelings of anger, resentment and hostility over someone who has hurt you. If that is the case, consider extending forgiveness.”

Without being Christian, you can find that peddled in most life-coach sessions that people waste a
lot of money on to make a better them. And here is another one,

"Utter blessings. Even though you may be experiencing darkness, pray that all those with whom you have contact will experience God's blessings of peace, power, wisdom, love, joy, prosperity and health."

That is enough. I cannot take any more and I do not think you can either. These are just milk toast suggestions to get you out of your spiritual rut. But how did you get in that spiritual rut if that is what you are calling it? Maybe you feel empty, you feel your life is without purpose, or you feel you do not know what direction you should take concerning your future. Whatever frame of mind you are in, you seem to be in a spiritual rut. You do not know about the future and how to get your life into that future where you think God wants you to be. So look back and see how you got in that spiritual rut, into that frame of mind, to start with. Going outside of the Word will not get you out of it. You need the Word along with connection and communication with the Lord to put you in the right frame of mind to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ on the path He wants you on. Christ will not leave you on a deserted island somewhere without a purpose because I believe without vision people do perish. Your vision must be God grounded and the foundation of any purpose has to come from His Word. Some of you are so caught up in wanting to do everything God wants you to do that you even pray God directs you about how and when to go to the bathroom. I am being ridiculous to make the point. Many have become too super spiritual for their own good, and others just do not have any direction whatsoever. So with that go to II Peter 1:1,

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ," Peter is a servant, a slave, by choice and a messenger of Jesus Christ.

"...to them that have obtained like precious faith..." The word precious in this verse in the Greek is something that is valued and honored, which is what faith should be. With that translation, this verse really says, "...to them that have obtained something that is valued and honored." In addition, faith is the word pistis, the hearing of the Word of God, and becoming persuaded by which eventually leads to trusting the Word, meaning it is the hearing which leads to persuasion and puts you in the position where you are right with God.

"...with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:" No, it should read through the righteousness of God and Saviour.

"Grace and peace..." You see many times in different epistles by different apostles. Grace precedes peace because there can be no peace without grace, and there is nothing we can do to receive grace. Grace is not about our works, it is about the free gift Christ provided for us, and Peter is asking that it "...be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,"

Verse 3 goes on to say, "According as his divine..." Here the definition of divine is what is uniquely God's and proceeds from Him. So this verse should read, "According as what is uniquely God's and proceeds from Him power..." In the Greek, it is a dynamic or explosive power.

"According what is uniquely God's and proceeds from him an explosion of power [He has provided an explosive and dynamic power] hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness..."
This is where most of the church world wants to point out what godliness is like. They say, you cannot do this or you cannot do that because it is not godly. Or you have to dress a certain way, act a certain way, or talk a certain way, and if you do not, you will not be perceived as godly; you will be perceived as a heathen and God forbid that they associate with you. “all things that pertain unto life and godliness…” should really say, something that requires devotion and worship, not godliness.

So to going back over verse 3, it should really say, “According what is uniquely God's and proceeds from him a dynamic explosive power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and devotion….”

In other words, godliness is your devotion to God; you understand He is the only one who should be worshipped and He is the only one you are devoted to; there is no other god and there is no other way. Jesus is it! Also, the word pertain is not in the original.

“… hath given unto us all things that unto life devotion and worship, through the knowledge of him….”

Not only are we devoted and worshipping Him, but we understand it is important because of the knowledge we receive in our day through the Word of the Lord that will give us the knowledge,

“… of him that hath called us to glory [or hath called us by glory] and virtue:”

This is not the modern definition of virtue. Instead, the word carries the definition of a type of energy that brings valour and courage —valour and courage.

Now you see why when you just read this verse in the King James, it does not really provide much. However, when you read the whole verse, it has dynamic and explosive energy, with energetic valour and courage. It has the understanding that we are devoted and worship the only God and will receive the knowledge of why He is that God because of the knowledge that we have so easily available in our day compared to what they had in their day. These apostles did not even have the New Testament. Their knowledge was just by word of mouth or by letters that were read in the gathering of the out-called ones. Moving on the verse 4 we read,

“Whereby are given [are given is in the middle voice and is not passive, meaning God was actively involved] unto us exceeding great and precious [Something that has honor and value] promises:”

I am sure this meant a lot to the people who received and read this letter, but it really means much more today. We have seen the word knowledge twice in these verses, so there is no excuse inside or outside of this book if you have one teaching the rightly divided Word of God. It is proclaimed in the stars, it is proclaimed in creation, it is proclaimed in His Word. There is no excuse not to have the required knowledge which puts you in the position that you recognize the honor and value of hearing the Word of God and all the precious promises it provides. Verse 4 also tells us why He provides,

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers…” This conveys the idea of a growth and, of course, in this verse it is a spiritual growth in our life. God does not lead us into spiritual ruts; we lead ourselves into those conditions and
places, but God does not. He wants us to continue to rely on His great and precious promises that are something that has honor and value so we can grow and be partakers of spiritual growth.

“…of the divine nature...”

This is of the devotion and worship nature that we establish in our lives and our beings once we recognize what God has done for us. He saved our miserable wretched lives by sending His only begotten Son who spilled His precious blood and sits up there in the heavenly mercy seat continually removing our sins. Yes, all of them, even the sins of today, tomorrow and obviously the ones in the past. In our spiritual growth, if we are growing, we will find we are becoming more devoted worshipping a God who has done all this for us because we realize we escaped the corruption—and that is all it is—that is in this world through lusts; literally through desires. I have seen people who get into spiritual ruts because they do not see success in the desires of their lives. This is because with all the prosperity nonsense and the feel good messages, they think there is something wrong in their lives and the reason is because they are in a spiritual rut or not doing something spiritually right. Let me tell you right now, you might find yourself in a valley or a trial and tribulation for months, weeks, or years, but it does not mean you cannot be spiritually growing in that valley.

It has been an eye opener for me over the last years dealing with health issues. Hopefully, if I have been any influence in your lives, I pray you have seen that. I could have said program after program, “Woe is me. Why isn't God listening to me?” I know God is listening to me, but I have come to the conclusion, and I do not stop praying for a complete healing, but I know His grace is sufficient for me to get me through day by day and to keep doing the things that I need to do both in the secular world and more importantly in the spiritual world to keep proclaiming the rightly divided Word cut straight. Verse 4 concludes,

“...having escaped the corruption of the world through desires. And beside this [a better translation is this very cause], giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue...”

Or “add to your faith pistis, the hearing and hearing of the Word of God.” Just as Paul said, Pistis comes by hearing. Pistis is hearing that leads to persuasion of what you heard to be true so you can start acting on it and trusting that God's Word is true. It is not just quick promise box scripture picking, but becoming more grounded, having a better foundation, knowing what thus saith the word of the Lord is truly trying to declare in these modern days where there is so much confusion. “...giving all diligence, add to your faith” Add to is literally hearing and being persuaded, meaning with all diligence do not stop hearing and hearing and hearing.

You will find yourself in spiritual ruts because you stopped, you fall back, you get distracted, you do not believe God is listening to you, you do not believe God is working in your life, or whatever your sick excuse is. And it is a spiritual sickness when you stop diligently trying to add more hearing that leads to more persuading that leads to spiritual growth. After receiving the gift of salvation you must become a learning disciple of Jesus Christ. And it is a lifelong journey where you must continually give all your diligence to.

“...giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue;” Add to hearing and hearing, being persuaded, and then back again, add to hearing and persuading. It is a life devoted to God with devotion to add
to your faith worshipping God. There is no greater way of worshipping God than going to the Table of the Lord. That is where we show obedience to what He commanded us to do to remember Him and what He did on the cross, and that He came out of the grave. He also wants us to remember He is coming back. There is no greater way of worshipping Him than acknowledging what He commanded us to do.

Read throughout scripture in the New Testament gospel records and see what Jesus commanded us to do: remember Him. Giving, laying up treasures for yourself. Another commandment by Him is to love God and love one another. It is not that complicated. There really are not that many direct commandments from Christ that you could not continuously bring into your remembrance as a disciple of Jesus Christ. There are more than that, but there are not as many as in the Old Testament where there were over 600 rules and regulations in the law. Have you done that? I cannot answer that question for you. I can only answer for me. Have you done that?

Verse 5 ends with, “and to virtue, knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience [or endurance, enduring faith] godliness;” It sounds like Peter is going around in a circle to make this point. Again, godliness here is devotion and worship.

“And to devotion and worship brotherly kindness….” This is really the love of brethren. Peter is just relaying what he learned from Jesus and what Jesus wanted him to proclaim to others.

“For if these things be in you, and abound...” Not just be in you, but abounding in you by giving all diligence to it. Now some of these things are attributes of the fruit of the Spirit, but if you are pursuing God with all diligence and hearing and hearing the Word of God, let me tell you, the Spirit of God will do an amazing work in your life without you even having to produce any work that a lot of Christians think you have to do to show your godliness.

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren...” Some will translate that word as idle and that is fine, but a better translation is inactive. Lazy and useless can also be used. I have come across a few Christians in my life who claimed to be in a spiritual rut and I always found them to be inactive, spiritually lazy, and eventually become useless. In fact, I cannot remember when I have not come across one who did not have all those spiritual ailments.

“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall never be inactive, idle, lazy or useless nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things [or to whom these things are not present] is [spiritually] blind and cannot see afar off [you are short-sighted only wanting to see the things in the here and now forgetting there is a future. You need spiritual eyes to see the future, not spiritual blindness.], and hath forgotten [another reason for your spiritual rut] that he was purged from his old sins.”

The King James messed this verse up. There is nothing wrong in remembering that you are purged from your old sins. We are purged from our old sins, along with our present sins, and future sins, but that is not what it is saying here. It actually should read, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his former wrestling of ignorance. I know this is correct because the word knowledge is in verse 2, verse 3, verse 5, verse 6, and verse 8. Knowledge is one of the main themes in Peter's epistle in the first eight verses. It is a knowledge of Jesus that Peter is referring to.
Knowing that, verse 9 should read, “to whom these things are not present is blind, and cannot see afar off [is short-sighted], and hath forgotten that he was purged [or cleansed] from his former wrestling of ignorance that causes you to miss the mark.”

Verse 10 continues, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election [or selection] sure [a better translation is firm]: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall [No, it should be ye shall never stumble]: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things....”

In other words, I will not find myself inactive, I will not find myself lazy, and I will not find myself useless to remind you of these things that Peter has mentioned up to this point. See, as a preacher I am not allowed the choice of just letting you go and without reminding you that you might trip up and find yourself in a place where you are short-sighted and have become spiritually blind thinking that somehow you are in a spiritual rut because you do not know God's will. Do not think that just because things do not go the way you think they should if you get in the trap of comparing your Christian life with other Christian lives. No two the same; so stop comparing your journey with others. Your journey is yours. It is unique; as unique as your relationship is with God and that connection. There are no two the same and I would be derelict if I did not remind you.

I am teaching this because I read the messages and some of you are finding yourselves in a spiritual rut. Peter lays it out. You stopped giving diligence to hearing and hearing the Word of God; you stopped pursuing the knowledge you get from hearing and hearing the Word of God so that hopefully whoever you are listening to increases your faith. It allows you to grow spiritually to have a stronger connection and bond, and let me tell you the bond is strong and connected. Christ would not have a weak connection. He paid the price to have a strong connection and He wants a strong connection. We weaken it at our end. He does what is needed on His end and it is going to require temperance which is self-control, endurance, devotion and worship to Him, and loving the brethren in the process. If you have not done those things, you might find yourself in a place where you might feel barren or inactive, lazy and useless, and the things Peter mentions are not present in your life.

In verse 13 Peter writes, “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;”

Some of you will not need this and some do. Those of you who are not in need of this type of message, praise God that you do not find yourself in an inactive, lazy, useless life spiritually; that you are growing. Praise God you do not find yourself in a place where you are dwelling in the former wrestling of your ignorance. But believe me, there are a lot who slip into the former wrestling of ignorance, not understanding the basic necessities of a Christian journey is to keep active in your spiritual growth. I have already told you some of the ways that Christ said to stay spiritually active: loving the brethren, first and foremost, loving God, devoted to God, worshipping God, keeping that connection to God; giving and participating. If you are doing those things you will not find yourself in a spiritual rut, but do not confuse a spiritual rut with loneliness. Loneliness is a whole different subject matter and a lot of people like to combine the two. No, do not combine them. This is talking about inactiveness and why you get to that point. You need to be in
remembrance of the word of the Lord, the knowledge as Peter not once, not twice, but many times made the main theme of this first chapter to bring into remembrance what we must be involved with in our lives. We must stay in the scriptures. We cannot slip and say, “Well, I am going to take a month off of scripture reading. I am going to take a month off hearing and hearing so I spiritually grow. I think I can do this all on my own now without really relying too much on God's Word. I know what it says. After all, I am a super spiritual genius. I have learned everything that I can possibly learn in God's Word.” Do not think yourself as special as that. I believe I do not even know 1% of everything available to know in God's Word, if that much. I have proven that over these ten plus years.

Do not become a spiritual dud. Stay grounded in His Word. Keep trusting in what Jesus has done for you. Make a commitment to not slip back into the former wrestling of ignorance before you came to the knowledge of the truth of what Jesus has done for you. Try going to the Table of the Lord at least once a day. Even if you do not have elements, stop and just say, “Lord, I understand what you did for me. I am thankful that you purged and removed all my sin.” See if that does not refocus you. It also will give you the desire to give all diligence to connect with Him through His Word, through the hearing of His Word or whatever the source. Then you can claim the precious and great promises you will find in the Word that will help you along your journey no matter what you are facing; whether you need healing, whether it is finances, direction about a certain job that might be coming your way or maybe you need a job, or relationships. No matter what it is in your life, God's Word deals with it all. I am not saying to scripture pick. What I am saying is get grounded in His Word. Do not just memorize scripture so you can pop them off in the back of your head as your own internal promise box. That is not wrong. I just think you need a lot more than that. You need someone to present thus saith the word of the Lord faith that gives you some substance, not just cheap faith. Scriptures that you memorize and just pop up when the occasion comes do not last long. I have seen it in too many Christians. I have seen it in my own life in my early Christian days because it is what I was taught to do; just pop off some scriptures whenever a circumstance comes your way and try to remind yourself that you are going to get through it and the reason why is the promise of God is there for whatever scripture you are using. That was never really good enough for me. I wanted to see real life examples, so I found them in the scriptures along with real life instruction by Christ, His disciples, and Old Testament prophets. You name it; the Bible is full of example.

So what I am saying is if you find yourself in a spiritual rut, go back to the knowledge that you received. If you listened to this message you cannot say you do not know what you have to do to put yourself back in that relationship not only with God first, but with His Word. You must be devoted to it. You must give it some diligence, you must pursue it, you must hear and hear and hear, and you must be active as a disciple of Jesus Christ, not inactive. Disciples of Jesus Christ do not get in spiritual ruts if they are active; they do not find themselves in a spiritual rut if they are not spiritually lazy; and they definitely will not be spiritually useless. God is looking for disciples who will carry out His commission. That is really the commission He wants you to do in whatever capacity He puts you in, whatever talents and whatever you have, to put you in a place or in places that keep you involved and active in your disciple responsibilities.

I have seen too much inactiveness in the last few months. You have tripped up as the scripture says; you stumbled, as in verse 10. Well, get yourself back on the right path, get up, and point yourself in the right direction. Do not think that if you do what the Christian world has defined as a godliness type of work it will get you out of your spiritual rut. Their definition of godliness is totally different
than the definition the Greek uses for godliness. It is godliness really demonstrated by your devotion and worship of the true and only God. Do not find yourself in a place of being barren or unfruitful. Be active.

We are going into the summer months. Most people go out and forget that they are even a Christian, a disciple of Jesus Christ, because they have just play time on their minds; things that just make them feel good all summer long. Well, those types fall away. They stumble because they forget what should be priority, giving all diligence to the principles I have laid out in verses 5, 6, and 7 that Peter instructed New Testament saints who were facing the same problems and spiritual dead ends in their lives that we face today. Well, thank God for God's Word. It is there to remind us that there is no place for inactivity in your personal relationship with God and the outward things that He wants us to do as part of your journey as His disciple to get the true message out to a spiritually starving and dying world.

We have a lot to do. There is no time for inactiveness. It is time now to get active.

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In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it reads, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” The Greek word for cheerful is Hilaros which means when someone is prompt to do something, they are ready in mind, with a joyful heart. In the Septuagint it also means to cause to shine. Today I am looking for Hilaros Givers who are ready and full of joy for the opportunity to cause others to shine by hearing, learning, and growing in God's Word. Join with us today and participate as a Hilaros Giver. If you wish to participate use the following link: http://www.teachingfaith.com/giving

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