



Spirit of Grace

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Herald

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Vivien Leigh and Mental Illness

Recently I learned that the great actress, Vivien Leigh, who played Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, suffered terribly from mental illness. I was intrigued and read a biography about her, followed by two more biographies. For some time I have felt that mental illness is rarely addressed by the church. Below are the closing paragraphs of the devotional article I wrote about her life. (You can read the entire article on our website.)

...The problem with Vivien was not merely that she had a tendency toward depression and manic episodes. She could hardly have helped that. Her problem was that she had no spiritual resources

to fight these moods and the destructive behaviors they inspired. There is zero evidence that Vivien knew Jesus Christ. She did not have the Christian "weapons of our warfare," which are "mighty in God for pulling down strongholds."

The Bible speaks of a man who seemed to have fits and rages similar to Vivien's, King Saul. We are told that an "evil spirit" troubled

him. Young David was hired to play the harp for him. The Bible tells us that when the evil spirit was upon Saul, David would play the harp, and "Saul would become refreshed and well, and the evil spirit would depart from him." At times even David's harp playing didn't do the job however, and twice Saul hurled his spear at David, trying to pin him to the wall. What the Bible is describing here is rage: blind, irrational, illogical, rage that makes otherwise perfectly reasonable people do unthinkable things. In Vivien's day they labeled her "manic-depressive."

Today her condition would be called "bi-polar." Regardless of the label, the problem was essentially anger multiplied exponentially until it overrode all bounds of caution, reason, or self-control. Such anger is incredibly destructive, both to the person tormented by it and all those around him or her. It must be fought with every weapon available: medical, spiritual, psychological,

and any other legitimate means that can make a difference. For Vivien the shock treatments were all she had, and they provided very temporary relief. She had no Christian brothers and sisters to pray for her and encourage her. She knew no Bible promises upon which to stand. Worst of all she did not have that Good Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ who gives us grace to resist the evil one, and comforts us with His love even on our worst days. Vivien was defenseless before her enemy, and it ravaged her life, destroyed her marriage, sapped her strength, and ruined her reputation.

Once a friend asked her, "Have you any religion?" Vivien replied, "No, and I sometimes think I ought to get

one." But Vivien did not really need religion. What she desperately needed was Jesus Christ, and the powerful resources He provides through His indwelling Holy Spirit. No, it is not likely that receiving Jesus by faith would have brought an instant victory over her mental illness, but it certainly could have leveled the playing field – indeed more than leveled it, for He who is in the believer is greater than he who is in the world. And even if she had continued to struggle throughout her life, she could have looked forward to an eternity with Jesus at the end of her short, earthly life in that place where there is no mental illness, no suf-



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fering, no strange moods and inexplicable hysteria.

The Bible teaches us that when we receive Jesus as our Savior we are given a new heart. This includes new attitudes, new desires, a new perspective on life, and a keen interest in God and all that has to do with Him. It seems impossible to me that Vivien could have experienced such a transformation and been left the same. Had she received Christ in her youth, her life clearly would have taken a different path. She may have still struggled with emotional issues, but a church-attending, God-worshiping, Bible-reading, Scripture-memorizing Vivien surely would not have finished out her years in the pathetic and tragic way that the godless Vivien did.

There are some people who for unexplainable reasons are forced to carry the burden of mental instability throughout their days on earth. Like a heavy weight it hinders their careers, spoils important relationships, limits opportunities, and sours major accomplishments. Often people who are thus afflicted wonder, "Why me?" While that is a question only God can answer, if we are in Christ we have the joy of knowing that this life on earth is merely a warm-up for the real thing, a brief moment of time we must endure before entering eternity with God. With our compassionate Father there are divine and eternal consolations for those who suffer and struggle in this life through no fault of their own. And at the moment of our entrance into His presence, every weakness, every disability, and every handicap shall be stripped from us as we receive our new bodies, minds, and assignments which Jesus has prepared for us and made possible through His cross and resurrection. Knowing this, let us "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that (our) labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).



INVEST IN SOULS!

- Some invest in stocks
- Some invest in real estate
- Some invest in business ventures
- Some save their money and never invest

Jesus calls His people to invest in souls: “And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by how you use worldly wealth, so that when it runs out you will be welcomed into the eternal homes” (Luke 16:9).

In just a few weeks Dennis & Benedicta are scheduled to leave for Kenya, where they will be ministering in nightly evangelistic meetings, and conferences for believers during the day. Until now we have not received nearly enough to cover this mission. Your prayers and your generous donations to help us cover our \$10,000 budget are greatly appreciated.

Please put a generous check in the mail to help us with this mission, or contribute through our donation buttons on our website. As we did in our last Kenya mission, we have included money in our budget to provide at least 200 pairs of shoes for Kenyan orphans and poor children.

***THE GREAT INVESTMENT:
SOULS OF MEN & WOMEN***

