

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

January 11, 2019

Godly Sorrow

I was speaking to a man who was seeking to find his way back to God. He professed to once have known the reality of Christ, but turned away and found himself back in sin and darkness. Broken-hearted over the hurt and shame his course had brought to himself and others, he asked me, “How can I ever forgive myself?” My response was, “Why would you want to do that?”

I asked the man, “What if I had taken the life of your child and when we encountered one another sometime later, I said to you, ‘I know the terrible loss you have suffered, but I want you to know I have forgiven myself for killing your child.’”? The man looked at me and said, “That would make me upset.” “Yes it would,” I responded. Such is the fallacy and arrogance of forgiving ourselves.

I continued, “But what if we encountered each other and you said to me, ‘You took my child’s life and my heart breaks for my child every day that I live, but I want you to know I have forgiven you?’ If I was sorrowful for what I had done I would be overwhelmed by the love and grace of your words and actions.” Such it is to receive God’s forgiveness.

The Apostle Paul spoke of two kinds of sorrow; “*Godly sorrow*” and “*the sorrow of the world.*” He had written a scathing letter of rebuke to the Corinthians, insomuch that he questioned in his

own heart if they would be able to bear his words. Paul said, *“For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.”* I Corinthians 7:8. He knew that *“godly sorrow”* would be absolutely necessary if this church was to be rescued from the darkness it was plunging into. There was fornication, divisions, and strife in their midst. Their services had become social events, while at the same time they seemed to be competing to show themselves to be spiritually superior to others. The biggest shock of all was that they believed their acceptance of sinful things in their members proved their spiritual maturity. Paul said of this, *“And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.”* I Corinthians 5:2. In this condition they could easily excuse and forgive themselves of almost anything. The question Paul wanted to see answered was: *“Would they sorrow over their spiritual condition”* or *“would they sorrow only because they had been rebuked?”*

“Godly sorrow” did grip the Corinthians. Paul said, *“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner...”* II Corinthians 7:9. Their heart was broken at the realization of how far they had fallen. This *“godly sorrow”* was not an *“O God forgive me, now let’s move on.”* God could do nothing for them in their haughtiness, but *“godly sorrow”* tore them down to the place that God could once again move upon their heart. It brought true repentance to the Corinthians. Paul tells us, *“For godly sorrow worketh*

repentance to salvation not to be repented of..." 11

Corinthians 7:10.

The result of "godly sorrow" was evident in the Corinthians for all to see. Paul said, "*For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*" 11 Corinthians 7:11.

When "godly sorrow" over sin has done its work in a person, they will never again return to the works of darkness. The very remembrance of that darkened path will break their heart. God gave witness of this when he promised a redemption that would cleanse us from our iniquities and give us a new heart and a new spirit. Ezekiel 36:25-27. He said, "*Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*" Ezekiel 36:31. This is not condemnation, neither is it self-flagellation. It is a penitent heart that is ever present in the person who has now been "*redeemed from all iniquity.*"

Titus 2:14.

The Apostle Paul understood "godly sorrow" very personally. He never forgave himself for his persecution of the church. This is revealed over and over again in his writings, as he said things like, "*...I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*" 1 Corinthians 15:9. His "godly sorrow" over persecuting the church was

the reason he described himself as the “*chief*” of all sinners. | Timothy 1:15.

The end result of godly sorrow is “*joy unspeakable and full of glory.*” The person lives their life amazed at the mercy and grace of God to themselves. “*Rejoicing in Christ Jesus*” Philippians 3:3 is ever with them as they think on the one who delivered them from such darkness and shame. They identify with Paul’s words: “*And **such were some of you:** but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*” | Corinthians 6:11. Their heart may break when they think of their former condition, but their sorrow quickly turns to joy in their amazement at the love of Christ and the power of his salvation. Jesus said these “*love much*” because they know they have been “*forgiven much.*” Luke 7:47