

When Being Sorry is Not Enough

2 Corinthians 7:8-11, "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. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that he sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. 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."

The Bible teaches that there are times that being sorry is not enough. Jesus taught that repentance and belief in the gospel are necessary for salvation. He said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3) Repentance is a necessity, but repentance is not in us. It is a gift from the Almighty. "...If God peradventure will give them repentance..." (2 Timothy 2:25) God grants repentance, but He does not give it to people who are not sorry. Sorrow is what helps produce repentance. Being sorry and being repentant are two different things. will

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation..." Those who have a godly sorrow leading to repentance enter into salvation. They will never change their mind. There are many people who will tell you how to get to heaven without even being sorry. Everything is about getting to heaven; they say very little about your sin. They may tell you to acknowledge your sin, but acknowledging your sin is not the same thing as being sorry for what you have done.

There are many people, when something wrong has been done, who have no sorrow. They are not sorry that they did it. They will cover it, hide it, deny it, or they may brazenly acknowledge that they did it, but they have no sorrow. Such people will not be forgiven. "Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation."

There are also people who *say* they are sorry. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry." They say, "What more could you want? I said I was sorry."

Then there are people who *act* like they are sorry. I know of a woman who was known by the preacher to be in sin. She came to see him, and as soon as she got to the sidewalk leading to his house she hunched her shoulders, hung her head, and looked the picture of a broken, contrite woman. She went in and confessed everything to the preacher (at least, everything that she thought he knew) with much begging for forgiveness and weeping. When she was finished, she went out looking like a very sad and broken woman--until she got on the driveway. Then she

put her shoulders up, head up, pushed back her hair, and walked to her car. This woman did not just say she was sorry, she put on an extreme act of sorrow.

There are some people, though, who *are* sorry.

Here are some words to describe *sorry*: sad, grieved, heavy.

I have no hope for people who are just talked into a decision or who have been emotionally stirred into a decision. I believe that "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation." Being sorrow does not save you, but being sorry is the beginning of repentance. It is like wanting to learn bookkeeping. You start in kindergarten. That is a good start, but you have to go further than that.

I fear that the world is classifying sorrow over sin as depression and are trying to solve it with a pill. I had a relative who said, "Don't deprive me of my happy pills." She did not want to be sad or sorry; she only wanted to be happy. We act like any sorrow can be solved by pills. Sorrow is sometimes there to help you to repentance. How do you think you can repent of your sins without being sorry for what you have done? You cannot just *say* you are sorry or *act* like you are sorry; you must really be sorry.

There are two kinds of sorrow-- godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world. Godly sorrow ends in repentance, and the sorrow of the world ends in death(v. 10).Sorrow is not the end; it is the beginning.

You may, during a church service, become sorry for your sins, but when you go out the door you put it away from you. That sorrow is of no use to you because you did not allow it to work.

Old fashioned religion used to have an altar where sinners, sorry for their sins, could come and see before the Lord in repentance.

Have you ever been so sorry over your sins that you wanted God to give you repentance? "For he shall save his people from their *sins*."(Matt. 1:21) It is not just about skipping hell and going to heaven-- we must address the sin issue.

Some people are sorry, but it is not the right kind of sorry. It is too late to be repentant in hell. You may be sorry you are there, but that does not mean that sorrow will get you to repentance. It will be too late!

I think the rich man was sorry where he was. He was sorry for missed opportunities and concerned about his brothers going to such an awful place, but it was too late. There sorrow he had was too late, and he was not going anywhere.

Suppose someone holds you up and they get your money. Then as their leaving they say, "I'm sorry!" That is not genuine sorrow. They get what they want, say they are sorry, and go on.

It is not enough to know what being sorry is, say you are sorry, and act sorry. Many people think that when they say they are sorry, they are free and can go on. You should say you are sorry, but you need that sorrow to work repentance. You can not just apologize and say, "That's as far as I'm going to go."

I can tell you about a man that was sorry, but stayed lost. When Jesus told the rich young ruler what to do he went way sorrowful. He was not willing to give up his riches for Jesus. He was sorry, but that did not lead him to repentance. He was sorry because of what God told him, but he did not pursue what that sorrow should have done for his soul.

How about those that show up at judgment and say, "Lord! Lord! Look what we have done!" He will say, "Depart from me. I never knew you." They will be sorry then, but then it will be too late.

Esau was sorry for what he had done in selling his spiritual birthright. He cried and bemoaned his loss, but he did not come to repentance.

Jacob, his brother, received his father, and God sent him away. He had to confess his sin, but he also had to reap it. He had much to be sorry for, but he came out a better man because of the working of that sorrow in his life. It was a godly sorrow.

The ten brothers sold Joseph as a slave, and later they had to bow to him. They had to reap from their sins. Being sorry alone was not enough.

We could talk about King Saul, Peter, Job, Jeremiah, David, Daniel: all these men had sorrow in their lives, and dealt with it in different ways.

Matthew 17:22,23, "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry."

We know that the disciples did not understand about the resurrection being a physical resurrection. They were hoping Jesus would be the king and bring in the Kingdom, and that Israel would become a mighty nation again. Jesus told them He was going to die then rise again, and they were sorry. This was not a godly sorrow. This was a sorrow because they did not understand. There are times that the sorrow of the world is because they do not understand.

Matthew 18:31, "So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and

came and told the lord all that was done."

This story is about a very wealthy king, and one of his servants has run up an enormous debt, beyond anything he could hope to pay. He went to the king and begged for mercy, and the king granted it. Then the servant went out and found someone who he had loaned--we will say-- lunch money. He demanded the money immediately. The borrower said, "I don't have it, but give me some time and I'll get it." The servant had the man thrown in prison immediately. He did not understand mercy or forgiveness. When his co-workers saw what happened, they were very sorry-- sorry for what they knew would happen to the man, and sorry to see that was his true nature. They told their lord what was done.

You can be sorry over the delusion of people who you thought would have more sense, over people who are going to be in big trouble, but we are talking about a godly sorrow. Repentance is what will get you to salvation.

Psalms 38:15-18, "For in thee, O Lord, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God. For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin."

First, notice at the beginning of this passage that he did not place his hope in some plan or procedure but in the Lord. Also, we see that he was declaring his iniquity, not covering it. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1John 1:9) Have you ever opened up your sin, or are you hiding them and trying to forget? Sin has to be dealt with.

A sinner may acknowledge their sin and say they are sorry and act sorry, but without true repentance there is no salvation. God said that godly sorrow worketh repentance. Do not laugh off the sorrow over your sin. One of the most damaging things you can do is to mock or undervalue what God does with sin.

We are not saved by works, but by His working in us. If all you have is sorrow, that is not enough. You must repent of your sins!