

*Godly
Sorrow*



Godly Sorrow

“For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suf-

fered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you.”
2 Corinthians 7:8-12

The church at Corinth had a lot of problems. They were the kinds of problems that people tend to experience when they act selfishly and let their egos rule the day. Some folks from Chloe’s household reported to Paul that there were contentions among the saints at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11). Different factions were claiming various men as their champions, some claimed Paul, some Apollos, some Peter. Some even claimed Jesus Christ! Paul’s instruction to them is that they should all speak the same thing and be joined together in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10). Paul proclaims that Christ is not divided, and that Paul wasn’t crucified for them and they were not to be baptized in the name of Paul, Apollos, Peter or any other man. Jesus was the one who was crucified for the sins of the world, and we are



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Freedom Isn't Free

I watched the flag pass by one day,
It fluttered in the breeze.
A young Marine saluted it,
And then he stood at ease..

I looked at him in uniform
So young, so tall, so proud,
With hair cut square and eyes alert
He'd stand out in any crowd.

I thought how many men like him
Had fallen through the years.
How many died on foreign soil
How many mothers' tears?

How many pilots' planes shot down?
How many died at sea
How many fox holes were soldiers' graves?
No, freedom isn't free.

I heard the sound of Taps one night,
When everything was still,
I listened to the bugler play
And felt a sudden chill.

I wondered just how many times
That Taps had meant "Amen,"
When a flag had draped a coffin.
Of a brother or a friend.

I thought of all the children,
Of the mothers and the wives,
Of fathers, sons and husbands
With interrupted lives.

I thought about a graveyard
At the bottom of the sea
Of unmarked graves in Arlington.
No, freedom isn't free.

By Kelly Strong

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These birds are so common, no one puts any special value on them.

He then surprises us with this further information: "And not one of them is forgotten before God. ... Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Luke 12:6,7). In Matthew 10:29 Jesus is recorded as saying this about God's care for the sparrows: "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will."

Each of us deal with various trials and struggles, and they can sometimes weigh us down. But knowing God is watching us, helping us in unseen ways, can give us that brighter outlook.

You probably know of the famous hymn, "His Eye Is On The Sparrow", written by Civilla Martin in 1905. An entry in Wikipedia on the song quotes Mrs. Martin regarding her inspiration for the song. An older couple she visited were both burdened with serious physical afflictions, yet they maintained an amazingly cheery disposition. When asked how they could have such positive out-

looks, the wife responded, "His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me."

The truth Jesus spoke has the power to lift our vision. Each of us deal with various trials and struggles, and they can sometimes weigh us down. But knowing God is watching us, helping us in unseen ways, can give us that brighter outlook.

Unlike my viewing of the baby eagles, God is able to come to my rescue when He deems it necessary. As the song so beautifully says, "I know He watches me!"

...Timothy D. Hall
Lightgrams
March 31, 2016
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*Why should I feel discouraged,
why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely,
and long for heav'n and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My
constant Friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I
know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I
know He watches me.*

*Refrain:
I sing because I'm happy, I sing
because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me.*

baptized in the name of Jesus. Men should be united and in agreement on this truth.

Paul goes on to explain that he didn't come to them to exalt himself and his own wisdom (1 Cor. 2:1). Paul proclaims very clearly, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul declares that he and Apollos are just ministers that the Lord has given. One of them may plant and another may water, but it is always God who is at work and gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6).

The problems at Corinth are just like problems we still have in the world, and in the church, today. There were factions and cliques and power grabbing. There was sexual immorality. There were lawsuits and troubled marriages. There were abuses of the gifts that God had given to them. There were misunderstandings about the resurrection of Christ and disorderliness in the church assemblies. The church at Corinth had a lot of problems.

The good news is that the church at Corinth was worth saving. Paul states that he agonized over the letter of correction that he felt compelled to write to the Corinthians, but he only wrote it because of his love for them, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears,

not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you" (2 Cor. 2:4). It is not easy to confront people when they are wrong. Very often their first reaction is to look for some ulterior motive in the one who is attempting to correct the wrong. The focus shifts from the accused to the accuser. When this

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happens the chances for genuine repentance and change are hindered. The truth is all men are sinners. All men have weaknesses and flaws. Therefore, we must have some other standard than our own perfection by which we plead for correction. This standard is the word of God. Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We must apply this standard to our own lives before we attempt to apply it to others. It is hard to remove a speck from your brother's eye when you have a plank in your own eye (Matt. 7:5). That is why Paul agonized over

the letter he wrote to Corinth. He was hoping that it would be received in the spirit of love in which it was sent, but he wasn't sure that the Corinthians would be able to look past the painful hurt that his words of correction would produce.

How relieved Paul was when he discovers that his letter produced godly sorrow in the Corinthians. They were not just sorry that they were caught. They were not

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just embarrassed and ashamed for themselves, although they may have felt these emotions very keenly. Godly sorrow is a kind of wretchedness that can bring the repentant sinner to tears of grief. A good example of this is Peter at the time of Jesus' arrest and trials. When accused as being one of Jesus' followers, Peter disowned Jesus by cursing and swearing to his accusers that he did not know the Man. Upon hearing the rooster crow three times, he remembered the words of Jesus, who had prophesied Peter's very actions, and he went out and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:74-75). Peter's sorrow led him to repentance.

Jesus took Peter's confession on the shores of Galilee during a

fishing trip. John records the episode for us in chapter 21 of his Gospel. Three times Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" Each time Peter responded, "Lord, you know that I love you." And each time Jesus' reply to Peter was in some form, "Feed my sheep." Peter was back in the fold and there was kingdom work for him to do. Jesus told Peter, "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish" (Jn. 21:18).

Contrast Peter's response to his sin with that of Judas Iscariot. "Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' And they said, 'What is that to us? You see to it!' Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went and hanged himself" (Matt. 27:3-5). The chief priests and elders told Judas that his sin didn't matter to them; he could handle it himself. We wonder what different response Judas may have gotten if he had made the same confession to the Lord. As it stands, Judas was remorseful and felt ashamed, but his sorrow did not lead to repentance. In-

tians who still must deal with tragedy and other trials of life. But the key is that no one knows what hardship has been missed, what suffering has been avoided, due to the Lord's direction. "Many are the sorrows of the wicked..." Outward trappings of success have never been a guarantee of inward peace, contentment, confidence, and trust. The path of life is strewn with traps that will snare the naïve, the unbelieving, and the rebellious.

But as Christians, we will never grow strong or overcome trials by ourselves. Our strength comes

directly from God. David recognized that, and he ended his song of joy with, "Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart." Yes. Christians should echo that today, because in Christ, God has showered down upon His children blessings that are infinite in number. God wants us to pray to Him in time of need, but Psalm 32 also reminds us that prayers of rejoicing and "Thank you" are also very much in order.

...Jim Shelburn

San Antonio, TX

His Eye Is on the Sparrow

I love the fact that my office has a window. I often look out at beautiful sights. As I write this, a weeping cherry tree is in full bloom. I often see birds flying by, clouds in the sky, trees waving in the wind. What a blessing to look upon such beauty!

Recently I discovered a new "window" that I've been gazing through often. East Tennessee State University, located here in Johnson City, has mounted two "eagle cams". For the past few weeks we've been able to watch (up close!) eagles making their nests and brooding their eggs. Now each of the cameras show a baby eagle, and we get to see their parents feeding, caring, and grooming the little ones.

This "window" is limited, of course. If one of the birds were to get into trouble, I'd be unable to help (even if that were advisable - which it isn't). The locations of these eagles' nests are not pinpointed, so finding them would be a challenge. Really, all we can do is watch - and that's how it should be in this situation. (If you'd like to see these eagles, click on this link.)

Jesus spoke of a similar situation in Luke 12. In that passage the birds are different; He speaks of sparrows. Their worth, he said, was little; "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins?" (Luke 12:6). That was a paltry amount even in that day. His point:

pression is real, or imagined, guilt. David had experienced that, but then the weight was suddenly removed! How many people have said, "I'm glad that's over!", or "I feel like a big weight has been removed!" In Christ, the weight of sin is removed, and the child of God begins to walk the path that leads to spiritual maturity, and even greater blessings.

In verse 6, David wrote, "Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him." Christians are expected to search, to reach out to the Lord. It just makes sense. If a person truly loves the Lord, and entrusts his/her life to Him, then the automatic reaction to anything in life is to turn to God. And God will answer. How many storms and floods of life have been avoided, because of the Lord?

In verse 7, David looked at what the Lord had given him from another direction. "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble..." As he faced the trials in his life, David instinctively turned to the Lord for help and a place of refuge. Oh, how God's children need to remember that lesson today! Too often the Lord is the last place that people will turn to when facing trials. But Christians do have a special "hiding place", and that place, just like David, is the Lord.

When Jesus said that Christians are to become as little children, that included the instinctive unconditional trust in the ability of God the Father to protect His children. Most adults can remember when they had a special "hiding place" as a child. That place may have been found in the imagination of the child, or more often in the arms of that child's mother or father. How many times have we smiled at a little boy or girl who has seen something scary, and immediately turns around and heads for Momma or Daddy? Then from the place of safety that child peers around Mommy or Daddy's legs. That is the type of attitude that Christians can have – the feeling of never being alone and knowing that the Father is always there.

In verse 8, God Himself is speaking, "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, otherwise they will not come near to you." God gave every grown man and woman the intelligence to listen, consider, and decide on actions that will be taken in life. Willful ignorance is no excuse before the law, and it is certainly no excuse before the Eternal God.

Skeptics question the value of the Bible. They point to Chris-

stead of facing the other disciples and seeking forgiveness for his mistake, Judas takes his own life.

According to Paul, the sorrow of the Corinthians led them to repentance, and that is the distinguishing mark of godly sorrow. The sorrow of the world, just feeling sorry that we are caught, and our sin is exposed, does not produce repentance. There is a great example of this difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow in the Old Testament stories of King Saul and King David.

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When King Saul had conquered the Amalekites but disobeyed the Lord's instructions in sparing their king and herds, he was confronted by the prophet Samuel. Saul made excuses. He insisted that he had obeyed the Lord. He shifted the blame. He claimed that saving the flocks for sacrifice to the Lord was the people's idea. It was then that Samuel uttered these memorable words, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22). Saul admitted to the prophet, "I have sinned," yet he asked to be

honored in the sight of his elders. He wanted to avoid public reproach, to save face. He wanted his reputation to remain intact. He confessed his sin yet remained selfish to the end.

When King David was confronted by the prophet Nathan over his sin, his reaction was decidedly different. Surely his sin was grievous, for he had committed adultery with a married woman and then arranged the death of her husband as a cover up. At the moment his crimes were revealed, David became undone. He confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord!" He then cried out to the Lord, fasted, and lay upon the ground day and night for seven days, pleading for the life of his infant son. David was not concerned about himself. He cared nothing of what others thought. He grieved before God about the effect his sin had on others.

Here in stark contrast we see the difference between the worldly sorrow of Saul and the godly sorrow of David. One is completely selfish, and cares only about the personal cost of sin. The other is sorrow towards God, and cares about the offense to His holiness, and the impact of the sin upon others.

David's confession and repentance before God are vividly displayed in both Psalm 32 and Psalm 51. Here we see his heart, as he cries out "Against You, You only, I have sinned, and

done what is evil in Your sight” (51:4). And again, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise” (51:17). There is no trace of selfishness in David’s words. He was a broken man.

The Corinthians were grieved that they had sinned against God. They didn’t focus their attention on Paul, rather they allowed Paul to focus their attention on their own sins. As they investigated that mirror,

Thus, they became not just hearers of the word but doers of the word.

they didn’t go away and forget what kind of sinners they were. They looked into the “perfect law of liberty” and continued in it (Jas. 1:23-25). They let the word work in their hearts and produce repentance. Thus, they became not just hearers of the word but doers of the word. The word produced in them diligence cleansing, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, and vindication!

The best way to understand godly sorrow is to watch it in action. We have numerous examples of godly sorrow at work in the stories in the Bible, from King David to the Apostle Peter and others. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote in *The Strange Case of*

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, “It was no longer the fear of the gallows, it was the horror of being Hyde that racked me.” If we are left to wallowing in the sorrow of the world, the consequences of our sin will never be cured. However, when we experience godly sorrow that leads us to repent, newness of life opens for us and we rejoice in the blessed hope for our future.

...lsg

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.”

Psalm 51:1-4

Reflections of the Psalms: Psalm 32

In many of David's psalms can be seen the deep anguish that he felt as he wrestled with the problems and trials of life. One reason that the psalms are so precious is that they address the entire spectrum of human emotions and pain. Any person of any age can find comfort, because it's clear that David, and the other psalmists, had "been there" and could understand. There is comfort in knowing that someone has traveled a hard path first and made it. Added to that is the inspiration behind his words. Without that certainty, David's words would have been no more useful than the hundreds of "self-help" books that can be found in stores today.

But in contrast, Psalm 32 can only be described as a psalm of thanksgiving. In fact, "thanksgiving" is not strong enough! A better term would be "JOYOUS!" The reason for David's joy was his understanding that the Lord had pardoned his sin. To know that sins are forgiven is indeed a time to rejoice. David begins his psalm by stating, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!" One man wrote that the New Testament scrip-

tures are a commentary of Psalm 32; and in a very real sense, that is true.

Christians today have an assurance of forgiveness that David could only know through hints in the Old Testament scriptures, and through his own strong trust in the Lord. Today, Christians do live by faith and not by sight, but that faith is based upon a greater revealing of God's plan. Paul taught Christ and the "Good News," that in Him can be found the hope of eternal life. Consider this. If David could feel and express his joy over pardoned sins based upon what he knew about God's plan, how much more should Christians today be able to rejoice!

As David considered his joy, his thoughts turned back to his state before he felt the release of God's forgiveness. "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in heat of summer." Guilt can be a heavy burden for anyone. Most people can remember doing something wrong as a child and feeling the weight of guilt and dread as they wondered when their parents would find out.

That same weight exists for those with unforgiven sin. In many cases, the origin of de-