

How Sorry Are You?

When us kids got in trouble at Grandmother's house - yet again, we were usually quick to say, "I'm sorry," hoping that would spare us a lash or two from her hickory switch. She would often say, "No, you're not sorry. If you were sorry, you wouldn't do it again!" In today's Templates of Truth, we learn about a genuine sorrow that produces sincere change.

In II Corinthians 7, Paul compares two kinds of *sorrow*. He had recently written the Corinthian Christians a rather scathing letter confronting some of the unresolved problems going on in their church. By his own admission, it was a letter Paul did not enjoy writing and one they obviously did not enjoy reading (7:8). The letter caused sorrow in both Paul's heart and theirs. In the modern workplace, we call those kinds of conversations CRs – condition reports. In the parenting process, it is usually seen in some form of the expression, "this hurts me more than it hurts you." No matter what the application, the experience produces a certain *sorrow*, a word referring to heavy grief, remorse or distress.

In this passage, Paul refers to a *sorrow of the world (that) produces death* (7:10). We often see this kind of sorrow among many criminals in the courtroom. They're not necessarily sorry for the crime they committed; only sorry they got caught and sorry that they will have to spend a significant amount of time in prison as a result. Often, it is not the offense we feel such remorse about but rather the embarrassment & humiliation we suffer in our sin being discovered & exposed. There's more regret over not being able to continue in our deception than there is being guilty of it. Such sorrow produces *death* because it fails to produce the kind of change necessary to turn our life around. Inevitably, we return to those sinful ways, eventually suffering destructive consequences as a result of our folly.

Another kind of sorrow Paul talks about in this passage is a sorrow *according to the will of God* (7:9). This kind of sorrow *produces a repentance without regret* (7:10). It is never God's will for a believer to continue in wrongdoing. God's will always makes sure that our sin is eventually discovered & exposed (Numbers 32:23). If our heart is truly one that desires God and His righteousness, we will experience a sorrow & remorse over our sin that is not bitter or angry for having been discovered in it. Godly sorrow is one that holds no *regret* for suffering shame and consequences because it realizes the merit & value of both. Instead of death, Godly sorrow *leads to salvation* (7:10), because it leads to the kind of righteous indignation in our life that produces genuine change. We are *made sorrowful to the point of repentance* (7:9). We do a complete turn-around. We change our ways. We end our sin and begin once again to rebuild our relationship with God and others whose trust we have offended and betrayed.

Godly sorrow produces other lasting qualities that Paul identifies: *what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong* (7:11). When a believer is caught in sin and Godly sorrow is genuinely experienced, he finds his spiritual life inundated with these replaceable qualities. Rather than feeling pleasure over his sin,

he feels anger with himself over allowing the sin and the destruction it has produced in his life and in the lives of those who love him (indignation). Rather than wanting to continue in sinful ways, he now experiences a new passion for living holy, blameless and pure before God (zeal). Rather than fearing being caught, he now experiences a reverence & respect for God that intimately knows the application of God's divine judgment & discipline (fear). Rather than living the lies of deception that come with rebellion & disobedience, he now desires to see his wrongs made right (avenging), a restored relationship with God and His people (longing) and he feels a renewed ministry to exhort, encourage and warn others about the downfalls from living in sinful ways (vindication). All these qualities define a repentance that is without regret and one that leads to salvation, referring to renewal & restoration.

What lurks in the dark, secret places of your heart and life? Do you hate some of the things you are doing? Do you despise yourself for some of the ways you are so deceptive and hypocritical? Are you sorry enough to change, before the exposure of your waywardness produces that kind of sorrow? One way or another, God will assure the change comes, if you truly belong to Him. He loves you that much! The awareness of sin should produce a Godly sorrow. Just how sorry are you?

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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