

Godly Grief, Worldly Grief

“For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” (2 Corinthians 7:10)

We enjoy our best life when its stable, especially during those elongated times of emotional stability. We are shocked when we become aware that something is wrong about ourselves. We were not able to see it or we had judged it as not so serious, but criticism attacks our self-esteem, the deepest part of our soul. It profoundly affects us. Becoming aware of faults creates anger, defensiveness, and a sense of injury. That is the moment of self-awareness, or a “moment of truth.” Have you ever had that happen to you?

Once we held ourselves in high regard, but the mirror work of the Word of God tore us from our pedestal. We became sad to think that God was disappointed in us because of our sin. We had relied on the truth that He loved us; surely, that would do! We hadn't considered that He was also angry with us because we sin nor that we were on our way to judgment. Perhaps it was hearing a sermon, or through reading, we learned God held us guilty and worthy of judgment. We were sad because what we thought that God considered us a good person, but that was not true. God sized us up and His verdict (which is the only one that counts!) found us lacking- lost, sinful, guilty and awaiting judgment. That is a difficult truth and few of us are quick to agree with Him. It produced sadness and grief. We had seen ourselves as somewhat innocent, but after His sentencing, God sees us differently.

Criticism, whether from the Bible or from the mouth of others, usually produces one of two reactions. We feel hurt, but the question, of course, is, Is our response, “godly sorrow” or “worldly sorrow”? Godly sorrow motivates change, repentance, a turning from self-trust and turning to trust in God and His Word. Worldly sorrow over sin is sinful too, but it provides no energy or desire for change. Instead, its energy goes to defending oneself. In worldly sorrow, we remain in the courtroom where every time we remember the accusation, we rehearse the many defensive arguments we used to make us feel we were in the right.

Godly sorrow delivers us from the courtroom. We heard the sentence “guilty” but Godly sorrow accepts the verdict. We are a sinner. We have broken God's law. For those who embrace the truth, there is a remedy. When a person admits that God's criticism is indeed true, something surprising happens. When the sinner admits he is guilty, God is willing to forgive. How is that possible? God has sent a Substitute. He has provided a payment for sinners that the sinner does not pay. He gave His only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ as the payment for the sinner's sin debt. He has paid-in-full the debt of our sins by His death on the cross. Therefore, there is no condemnation. Sadness ceases. Joy replaces. “You are guilty” though true, is powerless to condemn, because God gave His own Son to die for sinners who receive the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus has taken the sinner's place. The wages of sin is death and Jesus paid that wage for us. Even more, He exchanges our death for His

NOTES OF ENCOURAGEMENT
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own. And He gives His own life to those who believe. That life guarantees the sinner who receives Christ will never perish. (John 1:12)