

Godly Sorrow Produces Repentance II Corinthians 7

Introduction:

- I. In the church today, we tend to boil down the meanings of certain aspects of Christianity.
 - a. This is nothing that should offend us, because we do this with almost everything that we do routinely.
 - i. For instance, on your drive home from work or school, after a while you notice the places where you turn, but not necessarily every house you pass, every time you make the trip, right?
 - b. On one level, this shows our maturity and understanding, to the point that we do not have to be given thoroughly specific details about matters of faith in order to understand them. We simply base what we are learning on what we already know.
 - c. The problem comes in when we forget the actual meanings of the fundamentals of Christianity.
 - i. If we do not use it, we lose it (The Hebrew name for God).
 1. They knew the name of God, but did not vocalize it, for fear that they might use it in vain. Simple principle, right?
 2. Later generations did not know the pronunciation of God's name.
 - ii. Likewise, even if we have a thorough understanding of something, and if we do not teach it thoroughly and correctly, meaning will be lost over time, and later generations will veer from the truth.
- II. This morning we are going to discuss repentance and its meaning for the Christian.
 - a. We often use this word referring to specific correcting of someone's sin.
 - b. We often use this word referring to what is done after a sermon.
 - c. However, repentance is more than an action. It is a mindset.
 - i. We have discussed before that both the English word ("re," do again, "pent," think) and the Greek word ("meta," after, "noia," thought) refer to the mind. How could something that has always had to do with the mind be boiled down to just an action?
 1. By that principle we talked about in the beginning of the lesson: we understand it, summarize it, and teach the summary to others, who understand the summary, summarize it, and teach their summary to others, and the cycle continues until there is a big difference between what they think it means and what it originally (and rightfully) means.

Discussion:

- I. "For the sorrow characterised by God leads to repentance, which leads to salvation, but the sorrow that of the world brings about death."
 - a. We often read this passage, and rightfully apply it to specific sins, but there is more, as evidenced in the next verse.

- i. It worked diligence.
- ii. Diligence resulted in taking responsibility.
- iii. Taking responsibility resulted in resentment for the sins committed.
- iv. The resentment resulted in fear (reverence of God, fear of judgment).
- v. Fear resulted in an intense desire to be like God.
- vi. That desire brought about a fervent zeal.
- vii. That zeal brought about correction of the sins committed.
- viii. That correction (with all other lifestyle corrections) resulted in purity of action.
 - 1. Do you see how we can boil this down into “a decision to stop doing wrong and start doing right?”
 - 2. However, you can see there is more to it.

II. Diligence (Carefulness)

- a. Once we realize that our actions have gone too far, we often are so upset that we are all the more diligent to make sure that we will get better.
 - i. Acts 9:8 – and Saul got up off of the ground, and when he opened his eyes, he saw nothing; and they led him on the road into Damascus, and he was there three days, not seeing, and he neither ate nor drank anything.
 - ii. He was shaken! Think about his conscience to this point!
 - 1. Everything he had lived his life for has been turned upside down, and the very “evil” he was fighting against was the God he was trying to follow by doing it! Now, as he turned his life around, what happened? Did he continue to live in fear and judgment? Did he become depressed and let his past life get him down?
 - 2. Acts 23:1 – “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.”
 - a. By this he does not mean that he was in good conscience until that day as we say it, but he meant that he had no regrets all the way up to that point in his life. How could this be?
 - b. He had made it right. He had done all he could to reverse or improve the actions he had done in the past. His intense diligence gave him no reason to regret what he had done. Everything he had done was done for God to begin with, even though it was wrong, so he only had to change his actions.

III. Taking Responsibility

- a. This word is the same Greek word used for giving a defense of something. In this context, it does not mean that we are to make excuses. When we give a defense, we first of all admit that we believe something or do something. Likewise, when we do something wrong, we first of all must admit our mistakes.
- b. One of the biggest problems in the world today is that people do not admit when they are wrong. They either shift the blame or make excuses. That is not a godly (or polite, for that matter) characteristic.
 - i. Dale Carnegie, author of How to Win Friends and Influence People, says that, in order to win the respect of people when we make mistakes, we

need to tell them “I know I made a mistake. I cost you time/money, and I am sorry. I will not let it happen again.” Then you need to make sure you do not do it again. It is that simple!

1. We often see taking responsibility is merely saying that we feel bad about the things we have done. However, we define “responsible” by saying that it is someone who does not do this type of thing. How can one take responsibility and be responsible at the same time? They can, if “taking responsibility” includes resolving never to let it happen again.
- c. It is during this time of having made a mistake that we often make another mistake. We do not want anyone to know what we did, or we do not want to show our faces in front of those we have let down. Then we hurt feelings and relationships, which is the very reason we do not want to confess in the first place.
- IV. In addition, something interesting happens when we admit our mistakes. We become so angry with ourselves for making those mistakes that we hate those mistakes, and for a while, it is easy to fight against it. We need to admit when we are wrong, because it helps us to move in the right direction.
- V. When we focus on this resentment, we realize the trouble we are in. If we are truly examining ourselves in light of this trouble, we will be afraid of judgment and of God, because we realize that we are deserving of punishment.
 - a. Romans 3:23 – All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
 - b. Romans 6:23 – The wages of sin is death.
 - i. What we have done calls for punishment. We should be afraid, right? To an extent, we should. However, the rest of 6:23 says that the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- VI. Romans 6:1-6 – Paul tells the Roman church that when we are baptized we become like Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. Therefore, we need to act more like he did.
 - a. That is the only way to save ourselves from that punishment we deserve. Therefore, that is what usually follows that fear. We have a strong desire to make things right again.
- VII. That desire to be more like him leads us to have a fervent zeal for doing his will. Think about when you were a child. Think of how you looked up to your older relatives or friends. Not only did you want to be like them, you wanted to do everything to make them happy. The same thing happens when we want to be like Christ and when we look up to him in that way: we want to do what he wants, even if it is costly to us.
- VIII. This desire to be like Christ and to do what he wants, which comes from our fear of punishment for the sins we have committed, leads us to keep ourselves from those sins in the future. It is at this point that we are most often tempted to fall back into those sins. If we overcome at this point, it will only get easier to overcome it in the future. However, if we succumb to the temptation to do those sins again, we fall back into the trap we were in to begin with, and the negative part of the situation (the resentment, the fear, the unwillingness to admit mistakes, and the unwillingness to try to get better) just gets more powerful. This is when we need to be the strongest spiritually, so that the road ahead will be easier to take.

- IX. As we persevere in this zeal and in keeping ourselves from the sinful ways of our past, we become perfect.
- a. James 1:2-8.
 - b. At this point, we are pure and no longer fear the judgment, for our lifestyle has divorced itself from sin!
 - i. Think again how we tend to view repentance: the changing of our actions, a sort of turning back.
 - ii. Compare that to what we have studied: We feel sorry for what we have done, admit our wrong, resent those sins, and understand that we are not right with God. Then we strive to be more like God, leading us to do more strongly what he wants us to do. It also makes us less desire to do the sinful things that we did at first. Persevering through this process leads us to purity, which leads us to a confidence of salvation.
 1. Is this not the more accurate definition of repentance as given in the Bible?

Conclusion:

- I. We can see some things from this:
 - a. Everyone has sinned and still sins, so there is no reason to feel embarrassed for having done wrong in the past.
 - b. The most important first step is to admit your wrongs and turn away from your past life.
 - c. Then you must grow in your reverence (fear) of God, so that you will zealously follow his teachings.
 - d. Become like him, in his death (turning away from your old life), burial (baptism), and resurrection (the life of repentance).
 - e. Then the temptation will truly begin. If you persevere, it will get easier as you go. If you give in, it will only get tougher.
 - f. Having persevered to the end, you become pure, able to stand up in the face of death unafraid of what will happen to you in the life to come.