

Lesson 3: A Mourning Heart

It proves to be a painful discovery each time we get a glimpse of our self-centeredness and the root of pride that makes it all possible. As we discussed in the introductory lesson, God uses trials and tribulations to expose our need for change in our hearts, as well as to challenge us to embrace the grace which alone can bring about the necessary changes. It is for this reason that Jesus said, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (**Matt. 5:4**).

Turn to **II Corinthians 7:1-12** and read aloud

The word “mourning” carries a negative connotation, because it is often a response to devastating, painful, and significantly undesirable circumstances. No one wants people they care about to hurt or die, nor do people want to suffer loss in other ways. However, in **II Corinthians 7:9-10**, we are introduced to two very different types of sorrow which both bear the fruit of mourning.

One type of sorrow, godly sorrow, is spoken of in good light. Godly sorrow is described as sorrow that leads to repentance and it ought not to be regretted. This type of sorrow lasts until repentance takes place, so that we may not come to the mirror, see ourselves as we really are in the light of God’s word, and then leave without turning from our sin (**James 1:22-25**). The other type of sorrow, worldly sorrow, is what much of the world associates with mourning. Whereas godly sorrow is God-centered and God-esteeming, worldly sorrow is man-centered. Godly sorrow says, “How could I have done this to You, Lord?!” whereas worldly sorrow says, “Why did this have to happen to me?!” or worse, “How could You do this to me, God?!” Worldly sorrow leads to excuse-making and victimization, and people experiencing it will attempt to escape accountability for their sin by blaming it on circumstances, people, or anything else other than self. Whereas worldly sorrow leads to mourning over the personal consequences reaped by sin and death or over difficult circumstances, godly sorrow leads to mourning over the grievance of God’s heart and the harm caused to others because of one’s own sin. One is devastated by the loss of closeness with the Lord brought about by sin, and trying circumstances are viewed as an opportunity to be humbled and carried by God’s grace.

Turn to **Romans 2:1-11** and read aloud

Whereas godly sorrow produces repentance, worldly sorrow produces impenitence. One who is impenitent closes off his heart to God and hardens it. Those who do not repent are said in scripture to despise the riches of God’s goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. It is the realization of God’s goodness which leads us to the godly sorrow that produces repentance according to **Romans 2:4**. In understanding the goodness of God, we can see our sin in its true light. Only then can we truly begin to see our need for His goodness to become manifest in our own lives.

A heart of penitence, on the other hand, is characterized by a will, intention, and desire to be sanctified from the worldliness that infects our lives through the flesh, and to be conformed to the image of Christ in sanctification by the Holy Spirit of God. It is produced and grown by a sorrow toward God for one's own sinfulness. Believers can have parts of their heart that are somewhat closed-off and hard, which is why penitence is not only involved in an initial surrender to the Lord, but it ought to continue as a heart attitude of more and more openness to God for deeper sanctification. The constant presence of the Lord is necessary both to deliver and to keep us from sin (**Gal. 3:3**).

Ways to maintain a heart of penitence:

- Fast, pray, weep, and mourn over your sin (**Joel 2:12-17, II Chr. 7:14**)
- Open your heart to God. Daily ask Him to search your heart and reveal it to you (**Jere. 17:9**). This is a scary prayer as you make your heart vulnerable and must see its grossness, but it is so worth it to have sin dealt with and forgiven!
- It is the truth that sets us free, therefore we must be honest (**John 8:31-32**).
 - Learn to be honest with yourself. Acknowledge your weakness and your susceptibility to sin and rebel against God and neighbor. Always be willing to believe you are in the wrong and know that God is always in the right no matter what.
 - Learn to be honest with God. “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to **forgive** us our sins and to **cleanse** us from all unrighteousness” (**I John 1:7-9**); see also **Prov. 28:13**
 - Learn to be honest with the brethren. “Confess your trespasses to one another, and **pray for one another**, that you may be **healed**. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (**James 5:16**).
 - Satan is the father of lies (**John 8:44**)
- Realize what you deserve (eternity in Hell) and be thankful for the death and resurrection of Christ and for all that you have and all that you don't have. Be content with where God has you and what He gives you, doing “all things without complaining and disputing” (**Phil. 2:14**). Some good phrases that may be useful in reminding yourself that you are blessed, even in the hardest of times are:
 - “It could always be worse.”
 - “At least I'm not in hell.”
 - “Grace is receiving the undeserved; mercy is not receiving the deserved.”
- Learn to boast in your shortcomings for God's glory (**II Cor. 12:1-10**)
- Always remember that you are a sinner saved by grace (**Eph. 2:1-3, Col. 3:5-7**)

Cry out to God! (Psalm 51, Ezra 9:5-7, Job 40:3-5, Job 42:1-6, Isaiah 63, Isaiah 6)

-All verses in NKJV unless otherwise specified