

DAY 30

► **May it please you to give us true repentance;** to forgive our sin, negligence and ignorance; to endue us with the grace of your Holy Spirit and to conform our lives according to your holy Word; *Hear us, good Lord.*

2 Corinthians 7:10-11

Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

To ascertain what godly sorrow is, we must compare it with “the sorrow of the world,” with which all of us are in some measure acquainted. The sorrow of the world may either relate to *that sorrow which arises from worldly troubles*, or *that sorrow which a worldly man may have in reference to his sins*. In either view it is a sorrow which “worketh death.” The troubles of this life often depress men, so as to indispose them for their proper business, and rob them of all their comfort, and destroy their constitution, and ultimately to bring them to the grave (Note: It is not uncommon to say of such persons, they died of a broken heart.)

Many also are greatly distressed in reference to their sins: they are filled with dreadful apprehensions of God’s wrath; they are harassed with unbelieving fears; they are even brought into the depths of despair, conceiving, that there is no mercy for them—that they are not of the number of God’s elect—that they have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost—and that it would be either hypocrisy or presumption in

them even to offer up a prayer to God. Now this sorrow, like that before-mentioned, worketh only death. It keeps us from God, instead of bringing us to him (Jeremiah 2:25); it leads us to cloke and extenuate, rather than to confess and aggravate, our sins; it stimulates only to self-righteous purposes and endeavours, which are invariably frustrated by the power of indwelling corruption; and sometimes it terminates even in suicide itself [Note: Judas.]. At all events it causes hard thoughts of God, and utterly unfits the soul for real humiliation and contrition; so that, whether it be more or less afflictive at present, it equally furthers our eternal condemnation.

In direct opposition to this is that godly sorrow which produces genuine repentance. The fore-mentioned sorrow consists of *unbelief*, *despondency*, and *fear* of punishment; but the most essential ingredients of godly sorrow are *faith*, *hope*, and *love*. The person sorrowing goes to God, *believing* him to be a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. He goes to God through Christ, *hoping* that for Christ's sake his sins shall be forgiven him. He goes to God *with love* in his heart, determining to justify God in whatever he shall do, yea, even in his own eternal condemnation.

Now this sorrow worketh repentance to salvation: it disposes a man to search out all his sins, and to humble himself for them in dust and ashes: it urges him to plead with earnestness the promises which God has made to returning penitents, and humbly to rely upon them: it causes him to seek after a conformity to God's image; and determines him to glorify his Saviour with all the powers that he has. Such a repentance as this no man ever yet repented of; nor would he ever repent of it, however distressing the means had been by which it had been wrought in him. Every sorrow, short of this, would only issue in everlasting sorrow: but this sorrow invariably works repentance to life.

(Discourse 2031)

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Spirit and to conform our lives according to your holy Word; *Hear us, good Lord.*

1 John 1:8-9

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.

The happy condition of the self-condemning penitent—

The “confession” which characterizes a true penitent, of course is not to be understood of a *mere* acknowledgment, but an acknowledgment accompanied with suitable contrition, and with a humble faith in the Lord Jesus. It imports such a confession as was made by the high-priest on the great day of annual expiation, when he laid his hands on the scape-goat, and confessed *over him* all the sins of all the children of Israel, whilst all of those whose sins he so transferred were “*afflicting their souls* before God” (Leviticus 16:21, 29-30). I may add, that this confession implies also a forsaking of the sins so confessed; as it is said, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

(Discourse **2432**)

Psalm 19:12-13

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Be prevailed upon, Brethren,

1. To regard sin as the greatest of all evils—

Such indeed it is, whether ye will believe it or not. You may be ready to think that suffering is the greatest: but suffering may tend to good: it may, like the furnace, purify us from our dross, and prepare us, under God’s gracious care, as vessels of honour for our Master’s use. But sin

defiles, debases, and destroys the soul. “Fools may make a mock at it;” but at last it will “sting like a serpent, and bite like an adder:” it may be sweet in the mouth, but it will be gall in the stomach. See, Brethren, from what a mass of guilt and corruption you need to be delivered! See also what judgments are hanging over your devoted heads! O that I could see you in earnest in fleeing from the wrath to come, and in laying hold on eternal life! Be ye not like that perverse and daring people, who, when remonstrated with by the prophet, replied, “As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth” (Jeremiah 44:16-17). Neither deceive yourselves by endeavouring to vindicate yourselves before God: for, whatever you may say to extenuate your guilt, your sins even of infirmity need forgiveness; and your sins of presumption, if not repented of and forgiven, will plunge you into remediless and endless ruin.

2. To improve the present moment in order to obtain deliverance from it—

Now you can offer the prayer of David: but how long that privilege will be continued to you, you know not. This however you know, that your views of sin will soon be changed, either in this world or in the world to come. Conceive of a presumptuous sinner, dying in his iniquity, and first having his eyes opened in the eternal world. What does he then think of all his past excuses, on which he once placed such confident reliance? What, if he were permitted to address you from his abode of misery, would be the scope of his admonitions? Can you doubt? And, if not, will you still go on in those ways, which your own consciences condemn? But, as the Rich Man was not suffered to return from hell to warn his surviving brethren, who were walking in his steps, so neither will any be sent from the dead, to instruct you. You have Moses and the prophets; and those you must both hear and obey: and, if you will not believe them, nothing awaits you but to “eat the fruit of your own doings, and to be filled immediately with your own devices.” Now, however, you are warned: now, I trust, your consciences attest the truth and importance of all that ye have heard: and now I conclude with that solemn admonition

of St. James, “To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

(Discourse 522)

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Romans 8:13

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

We can walk after the flesh without any difficulty: it is natural to us, as it is to a stone to run down a precipice. But to mortify the flesh, is impossible to man: it can be effected only by the mighty working of that power, which raised Christ himself from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-20 and 1 Peter 1:22 with the text.]: yea, the inclination, as well as the ability, to mortify it is the gift of God (Philippians 2:13). This however is no excuse for our subjection to the flesh, since the Holy Spirit shall be given to all that ask it at God’s hands (Luke 11:13).

(Discourse 1868)

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Psalm 119:9

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.

There is not a precept in the whole inspired volume which is not made also the subject of a promise. God has engaged to “give us a new heart,

and to renew within us a right spirit, and to cleanse us from our filthiness and from all our idols:” so that, however inveterate any lust may be, here is provision against it; and however arduous any duty be, here is sufficient strength promised for the performance of it. How effectual the word is, when duly improved, may be seen in the general description given of it by the Psalmist: “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psalm 19:7-11). Here, whether in respect of direction or efficacy, its sufficiency for our necessities is fully declared. But yet more satisfactory is the declaration of St. Peter, when he affirms, that by “the exceeding great and precious promises of Scripture we may be made partakers of the divine nature, and be enabled to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4). By the word, therefore, we may cleanse our way; not externally only, but really, truly, spiritually, and to the full extent of our necessities: so that the difficulty in our text is completely solved; and to the inquiry there made, we are prepared to answer, “Having these promises, dearly Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

(Discourse 696)

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and to conform our lives according to your holy Word; ***Hear us, good Lord.***

Psalm 113:5-8

Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy

out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.

The greatest discouragements of the saints arise from a view of their own unworthiness. But God, if I may so speak, loves to see you in the dust and on the dunghill. The lower you are abased before him, the more he delights to exalt you. He even derives to himself a glory from the very depths to which he condescends for you. Add not then to all your other sins, that most hateful one of limiting his mercy. If your “sins have ever so much abounded, his grace will much more abound,” if only ye seek it in Christ Jesus, your Mediator and Redeemer. If you attempt to measure God’s love and mercy by any created standard, you must of necessity dishonour him exceedingly: for there is nothing finite that will admit of a comparison with him who is infinite. As for his mercy, he most of all is grieved to have that disparaged, because it is the attribute in which he chiefly delights. Whatever then be your sins, or sorrows, or wants, or fears, cast them all on him, and know that you shall never be disappointed: for “as his majesty is, so also is his mercy.”

(Discourse **687**)