

## REALITY AND SORROW

- A. Introduction: We're talking about overcoming in this life by learning to see reality as it truly is or the way things really are according to God. Part of that process involves learning how to deal with our emotions.
1. Emotions are aroused by what we see and hear. They're spontaneous responses to the world around us.
    - a. Although emotions were given to us by God, as with every other part of human nature, they have been corrupted by the fall and must be brought under the control of God's Word.
    - b. In the last few lessons we discussed dealing with fear by remembering God's Word. In this lesson we want to look at how to deal with sorrow.
      1. The dictionary defines sorrow as sadness or anguish due to loss. A secondary meaning emphasizes sorrow for something that one has done wrong. There are degrees and kinds of sorrow ranging from minor disappointments to major crushing grief.
      2. Grief arises from losing someone or something you love and value. Disappointment is aroused when you don't get what you were expecting or it is less than what you expected.
    - c. Loss due to death and disappointment is part of the nature of life in this fallen world. Sorrow came into the world at the fall of man when the curse of death entered.
    - d. The word sorrow first appears in scripture in Genesis where God spoke to Adam and Eve and told them the consequences of their disobedience.
      1. Gen 3:16-19--In sorrow and toil shall you eat [of the fruits] of it all the days of your life...In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread until you return to the ground. (Amp)
      2. Ps 90:10--Seventy years are given to us! Some may even reach eighty. But even the best of these years are filled with pain and trouble; soon they disappear, and we are gone. (NLT)
- When we lose someone or something dear to us we experience the emotions stimulated by that loss -- mourning, grief, sorrow. There's no avoiding these emotions. But we must learn to deal with them.
- a. If not dealt with in a godly way sorrow can become overwhelming grief that turns into despair or despondency and hopeless. Prov 15:13--By sorrow of heart is the spirit broken (KJV); Prov 13:12 --Hope deferred, how it crushes a man's spirit. (Knox)
  - b. Christians generally fall into one of two ditches in regard to dealing with loss, sorrow, and grief.
    1. Some wrongly believe that a truly strong Christian who is full of faith never feels bad over loss. Others are passive in the face of grief or actually feed it and aren't able to move on.
    2. But God has provision for us in the face of grief and sorrow over loss that will keep us from being overwhelmed by despair. That is what we want to discuss in this lesson.
  3. The Apostle Paul was one of the strongest, most effective Christian we know of but he experienced sorrow and grief (Rom 9:2; II Cor 2:3; Phil 2:27,28 etc.). Paul spoke of being sorrowful yet rejoicing.
    - a. II Cor 6:10--Sad men that rejoice continually (Knox); as grieved and mourning, yet [we are] always rejoicing (Amp). When Paul speaks of rejoicing he is not talking about feeling good at the same time he felt sad.
      1. Rejoice means to be "cheer" full. It's a state of being rather than a feeling. BE glad not FEEL glad; REJOICE not feel JOYFUL. When you cheer someone you encourage and give hope.
      2. Paul wrote of rejoicing in hope (Rom 12:12). In the face and feeling of sorrow Paul cheered or strengthened cheered himself by calling to mind the reasons he had hope or an expectation of coming good.
        - b. Rejoicing is not emotional. It's the opposite of an emotional response to your situation. Emotions are spontaneously generated or aroused by what you see and hear. Rejoicing is a volitional action.
          1. By an act of your will you choose to rejoice. You choose to strengthen yourself, to encourage yourself, by recalling the hope you have in God. It can and ultimately will affect your emotions. But that's not where it starts.
          2. Because we serve the God of hope (Rom 15:13) there is no such thing as a hopeless situation for a Christian.

4. We could do entire lessons on this, but consider a few points about reality as it truly is. There is more to life than just this life. We mistakenly call life after death the afterlife. But this life is the pre-life.
    - a. We are eternal beings and the greater and better part of our existence is ahead. And there is reunion, restoration, and recompense ahead -- first in Heaven and then on the new earth (the kingdom of God established on earth after it has been renovated and restored).
    - b. All loss is temporary. Missed opportunities are postponed opportunities. The best is yet to come. Knowledge of our future lightens the sorrows of this life. Rom 8:18
      1. We deal with sorrow by learning to see reality as it truly is and remembering the way things really are when our emotions are reeling from genuine loss.
      2. That won't take away the pain of the loss. But it will give you hope in the midst of it. That hope will sustain you until your feelings calm.
    - c. To keep sorrow from becoming despair we must encourage ourselves with the fact that for someone who truly knows the Lord, all loss is temporary. There is some recompense in this life, but the bulk of restoration is in the life to come. When we learn to see things the way they really are it gives us hope in the midst of the pain of the loss. II Cor 4:17,18
  5. This is consistent with what Jesus said about the relationship between sorrow and knowledge of what is ahead. The expectation of coming good sustains us in the midst of loss and the sorrow it engenders.
    - a. John 16:6--The night before His crucifixion Jesus told His disciples He was leaving them. That news stimulated the emotion of sorrow (grief, heaviness) in them.
      1. But Jesus encouraged them with the fact that their sorrow would be turned to joy because this would be a temporary separation. He would die and be raised from the dead. Then He would return to Heaven but return to earth one day to set up His eternal kingdom.
      2. Jesus compared the process of dealing with their sorrow to how women deal with the pain of childbearing. v16:20-22--Knowledge of what is ahead (the birth of the baby) sustains them in the midst of the pain.
    - b. The expectation of coming good sustained Jesus on the Cross. For the joy set before Him He endured the Cross, seeing the end result. Heb 12:2--For he himself endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy he knew would follow his suffering; and he is now seated at the right hand of God's throne. (Phillips)
- B. What does this look like in real life? How does it play out in the tragedies of life in a fallen world?
1. Job lived in the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He experience great calamity and loss in his life. None of it was from God or "permitted" by God. It was simply life in a sin cursed earth. That's another lesson for another day. Note these points in connection with our present discussion.
    - a. Although he knew his body would die and disintegrate in the ground, he knew he would one day again stand on this earth in his body with his Redeemer. Job 19:25,26
    - b. Job's story is one of redemption. God delivered him from captivity and restored to him what he lost over and above what he lost. God gave Job double. Job 42:10,12; 1:2,3
      1. Job lost all his children when they were killed in a house collapsed by a wind storm. Yet he only had ten more children in this life. How is that double?
      2. Because some restoration came to him in this life and some in the life to come. Job had ten children in addition to the ones in Heaven, temporarily gone from him but not lost forever.
  2. Jesus' original disciples left all to follow Him -- families, homes, careers. All of them faced great persecution and all but one was martyred for his faith.
    - a. Matt 19:27--When Peter asked Jesus what reward they would receive for what they had given up Jesus told them that they would get back all that they lost in the life to come.
    - b. v28,29--You'll have positions of honor and get back over and above what you gave: shall be many times repaid (Rieu); refunded a hundred times (Berkeley);
      1. They knew from the writings of the prophets that the Lord will one day establish His visible,

eternal kingdom on the new earth -- this earth renewed, regenerated, restored.

2. Not only would they get back what they gave up they would have everlasting life -- unending life on this earth. No more loss! Dan 2:44; 7:27; etc.
3. Heb 10:34--Paul wrote about some people who took joyfully the loss of their material possessions due to persecution.
  - a. Joyfully, in the Greek, is the same word Paul used when he referred to himself as being sorrowful yet rejoicing. It means "cheer" full. Heb 10:34--You bore cheerfully (Heb 10:34, Amp).
  - b. Remember, this isn't a feeling. It is a state of being. This word has a preposition on it that means in the midst. In the midst of loss which no doubt caused them real pain they rejoiced.
    1. Why? Because they had hope. They knew that there is more to life than just this life. They knew that what they lost would be restored in Heaven and it could never be taken from them.
    2. v34--(in heaven) you personally have (Berkeley) a better property and one which you will keep for ever (Basic).
4. Paul established the church at Thessalonica. He had to leave after three weeks when persecution broke out. He'd had time to tell them Jesus was soon returning to earth (I Thess 1:9,10). But the people had concerns about loved ones who died before Jesus' return and Paul wrote to answer their concerns.
  - a. We weren't meant to lose people we love. Death is an enemy, the last enemy to be put under foot (I Cor 15:26). Death is a painful separation that activates real sorrow and grief.
    1. Note how Paul answered those who had lost loved ones to death. He told them: We are not hopeless in our sorrow. I Thess 4:13
    2. Prov 14:32--The wicked is thrust down in his misfortune. But the righteous, even when he is brought to death, hath hope. (JPS)
  - b. Paul then gave them information about their loved ones that was designed to give them hope or an expectation of coming good.
    1. They have not ceased to exist. They are living in a real place called Heaven. They are simply separated from their physical body. We will be reunited with them when we die and go to Heaven. Or, when Jesus returns to earth, He will bring them with Him. I Thess 4:14-17
    2. Separation from the body is temporary. At the return of Jesus all who have died in the Lord will be reunited with their original body (raised from death and glorified) to live a physical life in a physical world in the kingdom of God established on this earth. I Cor 15:51-56
  - c. Paul told them: This not a hopeless situation. It is a temporary situation. That doesn't take away the pain of the loss but it gives you hope in the midst of it to keep you from moving into despair.
5. When David had an affair with Bathsheba she became pregnant and gave birth to a son who soon died.
  - a. People misuse incident this to say that God doesn't always heal. In fact He might take your loved one for a higher purpose. But that contradicts what Jesus showed us about God (John 5:19; 14:9,10). This is a whole lesson for another day, but consider these brief points.
    1. This was a unique situation. As the king of Israel David was responsible for leading the nation in godliness and charged with showing the True God to the people groups around them. David failed miserably in his duty as king by his blatant disobedience of God's Law.
    2. Through his actions (the affair with another man's wife, arranging the death of that man) David brought great reproach to Israel and the Lord. II Sam 12:14--You have provided by this action such an opportunity for the enemies of the Lord to ridicule. (Berkeley)
3. In the Hebrew language there is a verb tense where God is said to do what He only allows. When the child became sick God did not intervene. Through the prophet He directly connected it to Himself and David's disobedience so all would know: I am the Only True and Holy God. I am separate from all evil David reaped the consequences of his sin.
  - b. Note the point that relates to our discussion. David sought God desperately to change the outcome but the child died. His servants feared to tell him because they thought he might do something desperate to himself in his grief. Sorrow with no hope can drive a person to that point. v16-19

1. Instead, David “washed himself, put on lotions, and changed his clothes. Then he went to the Tabernacle and worshipped the Lord” (v20, NLT). In his pain, David acknowledged God. God is due worship no matter how we feel or what is going on in our lives.
  2. His servants asked him about his actions. David responded: I can’t bring my son back but I will go to him (v23). Acknowledging God and remember the hope we have in God kept him from doing something crazy. David recognized that he and his son would one day be reunited.
6. We need to make a few comments about the loss of a loved one before we move on. When someone you love dies you experience pain. The closer the person the greater the pain. That is normal and natural. You don’t have to apologize for real feelings.
- a. Grief is a very personal expression. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. If you need to sleep with your loved one’s shirt every night or if you don’t want to throw their Kleenex away, it’s okay.
  - b. In the initial pain of grief being told -- Isn’t it wonderful that your loved on is in Heaven? -- isn’t really a comfort because that’s actually the problem. And its okay to feel like that.
  - c. We can’t go around grief when we lose someone we love. We can only go through it. You don’t “get over it”. You adjust to life without them. You make it through the first year, 365 days of “firsts” without them.
  - d. There is truth to the saying that time heals all wounds. We are made in such a way that with the passage of time the intense pain of the loss goes away and is replaced by the wistful awareness of the loss and fond memories of your time with them.
  - e. But if you have an accurate view of reality, as that initial gut-wrenching pain subsides, you’ll begin to “feel” the anticipation of reunion with that person and even reach the point where you would not bring them back to earth as it is even if you could because you recognize that the best is ahead for all of us.
- C. Conclusion: In this sin cursed earth loss and the pain of loss are very real issues. In the face of loss, in the midst of the pain, it’s easy to let our emotions dictate the conversations we have with ourselves in our head.
1. But we must bring God’s Word into the discussion: As painful as this loss is, it is temporary. Because we serve the God of hope there are no hopeless situations only temporary separation and loss that will be made right either in this life or the life to come.
  2. We need to remember our hope in the face of our loss. We’ve got a lot more to say next week!