

MORE ABOUT REALITY, GUILT, AND REGRET

- A. Introduction: We are discussing what the Bible says about emotions. If you don't learn deal with your emotions in a godly manner then how you feel will dictate your actions rather than what God's Word says.
1. For the past several weeks we have been addressing the emotion of sorrow which expresses itself as grief, regret, and guilt and want to continue that discussion in this lesson.
 - a. Grief is aroused when we lose someone or something dear to us. Regret and guilt are aroused when choices we make produce negative results we can't change (bad decisions that hurt ourselves and/or others; decisions we presumed were good but didn't turn out well; sinful decisions).
 - b. Grief, guilt, and regret can become overwhelming and turn into despair or hopelessness if they are not dealt with according to the Word of God. II Cor 2:7
 - c. Regret and guilt give rise to "if onlys" and we torture ourselves with "If only I had done this or had not done that...".
 1. Although this is a completely natural response, focusing on the "if onlys" further feeds the emotional pain of regret and guilt.
 2. Looking back at what you've done or should or shouldn't have done produces no positives. What's done is done. You can only deal with the situation as it is, not as it should have been. 2.
- Everyone experiences sorrow in this life. There are two ways to go through the pain of loss, regret, and guilt -- with hope or without hope.
- a. Even though we truly experience pain or sorrow over the loss of someone or something dear to us, even though we truly experience pain or sorrow over choices we've made that produce regrettable results, we can have hope in the midst of our pain and sorrow.
 - b. Hope is confident expectation of coming good. Hope won't change your present circumstance but it will sustain you until the pain of loss and regret eases.
 1. The Apostle Paul established a church in the city of Thessalonica on his second missionary journey. After just three weeks persecution broke out and Paul was forced to leave town.
 2. Before he departed Paul shared with these new Christians that Jesus was returning soon. But they were unclear as to what would happened to loved ones who die before Jesus returns.
 - A. Paul addressed their questions in his first letter to them (I Thess 4:13-18). He told them that we are not like those who sorrow with no hope (v13). We have hope in the midst of sorrow over loss of someone dear to us.
 - B. Paul told them why: Your loved ones are presently with Jesus and will be with Him when He returns. We'll all be reunited with each other and with our original bodies (resurrected and glorified) to be together forever. In other words, we have hope.
 - c. Freedom from the emotional pain of loss, guilt, and regret comes from dealing with the situation as it is and as it can become in the hands of Almighty God.
 1. By this statement we do not mean that the pain of your loss will instantly stop. But hope in the midst of your pain will keep you from sinking into despair.
 2. And it will help you keep you from feeding your pain by focusing on the "if onlys" so that with the passage of time, as you adjust to your loss, the pain will lessen.
3. For a Christian all loss is temporary. All failures and mistakes are forgivable and fixable either in this life or the life to come. We have hope in the midst of sorrow over loss and regret.
 - a. The hope in grief is reunion and resurrection. The hope in guilt and regret is remission (wiping out) of sin and restoration of loss. We serve the God of hope. Rom 15:13
 - b. May the God who inspires our hope (20th Cent) fill you will all joy and peace in your faith that by the power of the Holy Spirit, your whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope (Phillips).
 1. Notice that Paul refers to your outlook being filled with hope. Your outlook has to do with how you view reality. Effectively dealing with emotions comes back to your view of reality.
 2. We must learn to see past the way things look to the way they really are according to God.

- c. God did not make the world to be as it is (in bondage to sin, corruption, and death) and it is not always going to be this way. The ultimate goal of salvation is transformation of man and the earth or complete deliverance from sin, corruption, and death (whole lesson for other days).
 - d. If not in this life, in the life to come there will be restitution, recompense, and restoration. That is our hope in the face of hopeless situations. Rom 8:18; Matt 19:29; Rev 21:4; etc.
4. For the rest of this lesson we want to look at examples from the Bible of what the pains, losses, guilt, and regrets of this life can become in the hands of the God of hope both in this life and the life to come.
- B. Rom 15:4--Much of what is written in scripture was recorded to give us hope. The Bible shows how God worked in the lives of real people facing real issues to bring real results. We see what God is able to do with unwise and sinful choices that produce loss, pain, suffering, and regret.
- 1. Gen 37-50--Joseph was greatly wronged by his brothers. They sinned against him by selling him into slavery because they were jealous of him. Then they lied to their father about what happened to him. They literally stole years of Joseph's life from him.
 - a. God did not cause, nor was He behind, any of this. The brothers' actions came out of jealous and murderous hearts. But the Lord took their sinful actions and brought genuine good out of them.
 - 1. Although lost to his family and homeland, through a series of challenging circumstances, Joseph ended up in Egypt in charge of a food gathering and distributing program that sustained thousands (including his own family) during a severe famine.
 - 2. God was greatly glorified as multitudes of heathens heard about the One True God and thousands were saved from starvation, including the family through which Jesus would come.
 - b. When we examine Joseph's story we find that freedom from the emotional pain of loss and regret comes from dealing with your situation as it is and as it can become in the hands of God.
 - 2. There is no indication that Joseph focused on the "if onlys" in his situation: If only I hadn't been Dad's favorite. If only I hadn't told my brothers about my dreams. If only I hadn't gone to check on them the day they kidnapped me. If only I hadn't been alone with Potiphar's wife; etc. Gen 37:5; 12-14; 39:7
 - a. No amount of agonizing over "if onlys" could undo Joseph's plight. His only option was to deal with his situation as it is. If Joseph would have focused on the past instead of living in the present moment he would have limited God's help in his circumstances.
 - 1. Reality is: God was perfectly present with Joseph to help him every step along the way throughout his ordeal. Gen 42:5--My present Salvation and my God (Spurrell); Ps 46:1--(God is) a very present and well-proved help in trouble (Amp).
 - 2. Joseph grew up hearing his father, Jacob, tell the story of how the Lord opened Heaven to him, promised to be with, protect and provide for him, and bring him home again. Gen 28:15
 - 3. When we read Joseph's story we see that God was with him throughout his challenging ordeal and losses and caused him to flourish as he acknowledged God. Gen 39:2,21; 40:8; 41:16; etc.
 - b. Joseph's attitude gave him peace. He married and had children in Egypt. Their names show us Joseph's interior world: Manasseh means forgetting and Ephraim means fruitful. Gen 41:51,52
 - 1. Each time he spoke their names he declared: God has made me forget all my troubles and the family of my Father; God has made me fruitful in this land of my suffering (NLT).
 - 2. Had Joseph focused on a past events he could not undo instead of focusing on God with him and for him in the present moment he would not have experienced that kind of peace.
 - 3. Joseph was able to say of his brothers and what they did to him: As far as I am concerned, God turned into good what you meant for evil (Gen 50:20, NLT). The evil intent of their sin was wiped out and transformed in hands of God.
 - 4. When Jacob died the brothers feared that Joseph would now retaliate. However Joseph was so free of the effects of the harm they did to him that he assured them: Gen 50:21--No, don't be afraid. Indeed, I myself will take care of you and your families. And he spoke very kindly to them (NLT).

- c. Joseph was reunited with his family but never returned to his homeland in Canaan. Yet he knew there is coming a day of ultimate restoration. That helped him get beyond what happened to him.
1. Before he died Joseph told his family: When you return to Canaan take my bones back with you (Gen 50:24,25; Ex 13:19). He knew that when his body is raised from the dead the first place he'll stand is Canaan. God will have brought him home.
 2. Not only did Joseph have the assurance of God's present help he had the hope of future full restoration and that helped him get past the pain of sorrow and regret in his life..
3. In this account we see the wiping out of sin and its effects as God turned genuine evil into genuine good. We see reunion, restoration, and recompense in this life and the life to come. This account was written to give us encouragement and hope. In the face of sorrow over loss, in the face of regret over poor or sinful choices, we have hope.
- C. David orchestrated the death of Uriah, husband of Bathsheba, a woman who became pregnant with David's child due to an affair. Then the child died as a consequence of his sin (II Sam 11,12). What kind of guilt, regret, and sorrow did David have? How did he deal with it? He can't undo any of his actions. He can only look to God in the present moment and find hope in the future.
1. Let's briefly restate a few facts about the death of the child. This incident is not "proof" that God may take your loved one to teach you a lesson. This is a unique situation.
 - a. As 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. Through his sinful actions he failed that responsibility and brought great reproach to Israel and the Lord. II Sam 12:14
 1. The child became ill and died. God didn't intervene and, through the prophet Nathan, He connected the event to Himself. God's own law required a death to satisfy justice (Ezek 18:20). David deserved to die for his sin.
 2. But he still had to father Solomon. Had David died the redemptive line through which the Messiah will come would have been thwarted (Matt 1:6). The child's death was the price paid for David's sin. God upheld His Law in the face of the heathen world.
 - b. Jesus has since paid the full price for sin. No more death is required from those who know Him.
 2. David's failures were sinful in that he murdered and committed adultery. They were relational as well. His choices robbed his infant son of life in this life.
 - a. In regard to the child, David said: He can't come back to me but I'll go to be with him (II Sam 12:23). David had hope in the midst of sorrow because he knew there would be reunion.
 - b. When David died and was reunited with that child he did not meet his father with: How could you have done this to me? How do we know?
 1. People in Heaven are perfected. It's part of God's plan of salvation to remove the effects of sin from His creation. Heb 12:23 describes people in Heaven as--just men now made perfect (Knox); upright men now at last enjoying fulfillment of their hopes (Goodspeed).
 2. Luke 15:11-32 is a picture of Heaven's response to a wayward son coming home. The son had sinned against Heaven and greatly wronged his father. Yet there is no hint of: How could you do this to me? The hurts, pains, wrongs, and injustices of this life will be forgotten.
 3. Psalm 51 gives us insight into David's mental processes as he dealt with his sin, guilt, and regret. We aren't going to study it in detail, but consider some key points in connection with our discussion.
 - a. We know David had the same kind of mental and emotional battles we all face when we do wrong. v3--My sin is never out of my mind (Moffatt); they haunt me day and night (NLT).
 1. He confessed his sin and looked to God to wipe it out and deliver him from the guilt. v1,2,4,9 --Obliterate my transgressions (Septuagint); wipe out my offense (NEB) all my guilt (AAT).
 2. David had to know and believe he was cleansed by God (v7) and that God would not reject him. v17--You will not scorn this crushed and broken heart (Jerusalem).
 - b. David had hope in the midst of his sorrow. He knew joy would be restored to him. He knew God

would produce transformation in him. He knew God would work good out of it all.

1. v8--Thou wilt make me hear joy and gladness (ABPS); v9--Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. (NLT)

2. v12,13--Restore to me again the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to sinners, and they will return to you (NLT).

c. What good came out of David's sinful, regretful, guilt worthy actions?

1. David's relationship with the Lord was so restored that when his next son, Solomon, was born to Bathsheba the Bible says: And the Lord loved the baby, and sent congratulations and blessings through Nathan the prophet. David nicknamed the baby Jedidiah (meaning "Beloved of Jehovah") because of the Lord's interest (II Sam 12:24,25, Living Bible).

2. When David died the Lord welcomed him into His Heavenly home. David has been reunited with his son. If Uriah is in Heaven all is forgiven and forgotten.

3. David's story has shown thousands of Christians through the years the danger of taking little steps away from God (David not going out to fight with his men, not looking away when he saw Bathsheba bathing, not resisting the urge to bring her to his home; II Sam 11:1-5). Those little steps set the stage for big sins of adultery and murder. They were just the next two steps.

4. David's psalm of repentance has shown generations of people that a broken and contrite spirit is what the Lord desires of us in our failures. v17--[broken down with sorrow for sin and humbly and thoroughly penitent]. (Amp)

D. Conclusion: We are not advocating for or encouraging sinful choices, unwise actions, or loose living in this lesson. If you're looking for excuses to sin and get away with it, it's likely that you are not truly born again

1. We are recognizing that in a sin cursed earth populated with fallen men and women those kinds of things happen. All of us have done things we regret, things for which we struggle with guilt. We need to learn to deal with it according to the Word of God.

a. Confess your sin to God. Believe and accept His forgiveness. If there is a relational situation that you can make right by asking forgiveness, do so. But if something has happened that cannot be undone for whatever reason, recognize that you are not without hope.

b. The Bible is clear that there is restoration, recompense, and reunion in the life to come. When we are all fully perfected in Heaven that damaged relationship will be made right.

2. We are part of something bigger than just this life. We have a future and a hope in the life to come. In the face of your failures and regretful choices, don't focus on the past. Don't look back. Phil 3:13,14

a. God is perfectly present with you loving and reigning. If the consequences of your choices or someone else's have brought trouble into your life, it's not bigger than God. He will get you through until He gets you out. He can cause your to flourish in the midst of it.

b. If those choices have created a circumstance that cannot be rectified in this life remember that it is temporary and subject to change by the power of God in the life to come. More next week!