

Godly Grief, Worldly Grief

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Preacher: Paul Barker

[0 : 01] And let's again pray. God, our Heavenly Father, you teach us in the Scriptures so clearly and so powerfully, and we pray that your powerful Spirit will write these words in our hearts so that we may believe them, obey them, live lives to your glory, and ultimately stand before your presence in righteousness on the final day.

For we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. It takes a lot to say sorry. John Howard seemed to balk at that word, and it plagued his Prime Ministership, really, in some ways, for quite some time.

Sorry is not always an easy word to say. Frank Sinatra didn't think that he needed to say sorry. Regrets, well, I've had a few, but then again, too few to mention.

And Edith Piaf, for those who speak French, also agreed with him. Je ne regrette rien. A famous, and from that song, that famous French expression, je ne regrette rien, was used in 1992 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the English Government, in John Major's government then, just, and Norman Lamont.

And it was after the expulsion of the English pound from some currency rate mechanism thing that I don't quite understand. And it was throwing the country into some economic turmoil.

[1 : 30] And he was asked if he wanted to apologise to the people about it. And he said, je ne regrette rien. And soon after, well, not that soon after, but a bit later, eventually was no longer the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Of course, sorry is a hard word to say. Corey, the party organiser, he didn't like that word, it seemed to me, from what I heard on the radio. Rather, instead of apologising, saying sorry, or even repenting, he simply boasted that it was the best party ever.

And of course, there are plenty of convicted people on trial, when the sentences are handed down, who show no remorse, no apology, no sorry word at all. But then, there are plenty of sorries that, if you listen carefully, are actually stunningly shallow.

So, Ray Williams, HIH director, just out of jail, taken off in his car to a \$4 million house, conveniently owned by his wife or daughter or somebody else, after leaving jail and seeing many people around Australia bankrupted or economically in some turmoil, no doubt not living in \$4 million houses.

His apology was, well, I thought fairly shallow. Really. I mean, if he was really sorry, why is he going to a \$4 million house, for example?

[2 : 50] And there's the US thief. I didn't write down all the details of this. I can't remember where. He stole hundreds of millions of dollars. And his apology was, well, I'm sorry for my poor judgement. And then there was a congressman.

And I'm not quite sure. I couldn't work out when I saw this story whether it was actually true or a spoof. But if it's a spoof, well, there's plenty of true ones that parallel it. He'd been shooting various things that he shouldn't have been shooting.

And he said, well, if anyone's offended, I'm sorry. Didn't sound all that sincere from what I read to me. Well, if anyone's offended, then I'm sorry. As though nobody really should be offended if I go around shooting things.

And then there's this story. Dad says to his son, Tommy, you broke the window. I'm sorry that I failed to judge correctly the wind and distance and that the ball made contact with the window.

You broke the window. I've told you time and time again to be more careful. Well, I take full responsibility for the damage to the glass.

[3 : 57] Does that mean you'll pay to have the window fixed? How much would that be? \$100. Actually, Dad, how about if I just work really hard to regain your trust?

Well, saying sorry, expressing sorrow, even apology, can sound very shallow indeed. In essence, from my memory of Shane Warne five or so years ago, basically it is sorry that I got caught and therefore my wife was hurt.

Monica Lewinsky said of Bill Clinton, I think he is sorry he got caught. And if you go to www.zazzle.com, you can order online and pay for a T-shirt that says, you ain't sorry, you just sorry that you got caught.

Well, people say sorry. The depth of meaning behind it varies. From paper thin, perhaps to deep and substantial. I guess the issue is, what is the sorrow about?

What has caused in the person's mind the sorrow? What are they sad about? I mean, Judas was sorry after Jesus was crucified.

[5 : 25] Indeed, some translations say filled with repentance. But throwing down 30 coins and going and hanging yourself doesn't quite sound like repentance. It might be remorse.

It's probably sorrow. It's probably sorrow. It's certainly despair. But is it proper repentance? And compare that to Zacchaeus, who paid back multitude of times what he defrauded people of in Luke 19.

Well, in Corinth, there was a problem. And those who've been part of this whole series will have detected that from earlier chapters. We're not sure exactly the details.

There is certainly, it seems, some problem of immorality within the church. Not just from reading 1 Corinthians, but somebody in the church has wronged somebody else in the church.

And as well as that, maybe the same incident somehow, or maybe completely independent, there is certainly attack going on Paul and those who we might say have wronged Paul the apostle.

[6 : 35] Because of this issue, especially the wronging of somebody else by somebody within the church, Paul had made a second visit to Corinth, which turned out to be rather unsatisfactory.

We glean, probably, that he was pushing the Corinthians to bring about some correction and restoration over this issue, rather than turning perhaps a blind eye to it. And that visit had been unsatisfactory, hadn't resolved the issue, was rather painful.

And as a result, Paul decided to put off a planned and proposed third visit back to Corinth. And the reason he'd done that, though the Corinthians, or at least the people in the Corinthian church infiltrating it, had said, well, you can't trust Paul's word.

He said he would come again, and he hasn't. The reason, Paul says, that I haven't come again is because I want to spare you pain. And we found that and saw that back in chapters 1 and 2.

In chapter 1, verse 23, I call on God as witness against me. It was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. And then at the beginning of chapter 2, so I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit.

[7 : 45] But instead, it seems, he wrote a severe letter. A letter that was strong in its rebuke of the Corinthian church, not just the person who'd wronged somebody else.

But it seems strong in rebuke of the Corinthians for not dealing with the issue of immorality or whatever the issue was properly and strongly. So, for example, again near the beginning of chapter 2, Paul said, Well, Paul, it seems, is anxious to see what the Corinthian response to that severe letter will be.

That letter seems to have been written probably from Ephesus, where Paul had been afflicted with problems in Ephesus and persecution and opposition to him.

He's commented on that in the opening paragraph of the whole letter. And then we know that from Ephesus he went then to Troas, which is just inside Europe, more or less, as he's making way to Europe.

It's still just in Turkey as it is today. But when he gets there, though there are opportunities for ministry, he remains distressed. So you might remember again back in chapter 2, this time verse 12, When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord, but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there.

[9 : 28] Now, the reason why Paul is anxious, because he hasn't yet found Titus, is it seems because Titus has been his envoy to Corinth, maybe with the letter, but certainly to find out the response to the letter.

And Titus had not got to Troas, and Paul, though the opportunity for the gospel was there, is showing here how deeply worried he is about the Corinthian church, how anxious he is for their response about this issue that he's rebuked them on.

And so he decides not to labor in Troas, but instead goes to Macedonia, to northern Greece as it is today, quite possibly to Philippi, but maybe not necessarily to that city, but that's the area probably.

And so in chapter 2, verse 13, it ends, So I said farewell to them, and went on to Macedonia. And in today's passage, in verse 5, it picks up.

It's almost as though you could lift out the chapters in between and go straight from chapter 2, verse 13, to chapter 7, verse 5. Paul says, We don't know the detail of that.

[10 : 43] Disputes without may have been with other Christians. They may have been with pagans. We know that when Paul was in Philippi, of course, the first time, there were riots and imprisonments, and he was sort of escorted out of the city, so to speak.

Maybe those problems are still existing, and so his arrival in Macedonia has prompted some memory of that, some reaction against him. The fears within, again, we don't know whether that's fears of the Macedonian church, or most likely in this context, it certainly includes his fear of how the Corinthian church is going to respond to this issue, to the letter, and to Titus' visit.

So he's still distressed in Ephesus, in Troas, in Philippi, or at least in Macedonia. There's this distress, opposition, etc., going on all the time.

Paul's, in a sense, reflecting here back to the Corinthians in this letter how deeply in his heart he feels for them. Now, I guess there's a sense in ministry where, if there aren't times when we're deeply anxious, worried, troubled in our hearts about those to whom we minister, it may betray a lack of love.

Not that, of course, we must not consider, you know, cast your cares on him, he cares for you, and do not be anxious about anything, etc. But I think they're in slightly different contexts there.

[12 : 03] They're in the context of God's sovereign love and so on. But it seems to me that Paul is reflecting here that the depth of love for those to whom he ministers will sometimes cause a depth of pain and a depth of some anxiety or distress as he worries about how they'll respond.

Well, Paul, in between the middle of chapter 2 and here, has been defending his ministry. I don't think that somebody's just plonked in these chapters in between.

I don't think, really, technically, what's in between is a digression either. Paul has been defending his ministry at all sorts of different levels about his motives, his methods, his identification with the death of Christ, the clarity and purity of the gospel that he's preached, his love for the Corinthians, his deep love still for them, etc.

Paul's defense of himself is because he's defending the gospel. And we'll see again tonight how that really lies at the heart of what's going on. So the beginning of this chapter tonight, from verse 2, reiterates his love for the Corinthians.

And we must keep that in mind. Paul is the one who wrote a severe letter, was anxious about how it would be received. But it's not a severe letter written without love. It's written in love.

[13 : 25] Paul says in verse 2, make room in your hearts for us. In a sense now, he's echoing back to chapter 6, verses 11 to 13. We've spoken frankly to you, Corinthians.

Our heart is wide open to you. And there is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. In return, I speak as to children, open wide your hearts also.

And then he went on with some strong words about fleeing idolatry, in effect, and reiterates now, make your hearts wide open to me. Not because he's sad that he's lost some friends, but rather as he woos them back to himself, he's wooing them to the gospel and to the sanctification that the gospel brings.

That's behind all of this. So he says, we've wronged no one. We've corrupted no one. We've taken advantage of no one.

We've seen a few times in this letter, Paul stressing his integrity in ministry, presumably responding to attacks by the false teachers in Corinth. Presumably that's what he's responding to here.

[14 : 36] We've not wronged anyone, that is, misled them or wronged them financially or something like that. We've not corrupted anyone, that is, leading them to immorality or deceiving anyone.

We've not taken advantage of anyone, again, probably with financial things in mind. That is, we've not gained money out of this. Remember his earlier words, we've not been a peddler of the gospel. That is, by making money out of it or tampering with it.

So here Paul again is stressing his integrity. And he's saying, I sincerely open my heart wide to you. I haven't wronged you. I'm not in this for the money.

I haven't defrauded you. I've not taken advantage of you. I sincerely, openly, genuinely am opening my heart to you in love.

I do not say this to condemn you, he says in verse 3. That is, me saying I've not wronged you or disadvantaged you or whatever, taken advantage of you. I'm not by that implying that you've acted badly.

[15 : 37] I'm just simply saying this is what I've done. I've acted with integrity. So I'm not saying it to condemn you. I'm not wanting you to feel guilty. I'm simply wanting you to respond to me with brotherly love, in effect, as fellow believers and fellows in the ministry of the gospel.

For I said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. Well, the end of that verse, verse 3, picks up an idiom that's used in the ancient pagan world.

But Paul turns it on its head. Their idiom was to live together, to die together, as an expression of affection. But Paul puts it the other way around. And isn't that simple and yet profoundly Christian?

To die together, to live together. Because Paul has picked up that analogy earlier on in this letter, if you remember. His sufferings is like carrying around the death of Christ so that the life of Christ will be evident in him and in them.

So that the power of the resurrection will already have been felt in their lives and in his. So he turns around what seems to be a common idiom with a Christian implication.

[16 : 48] That is, our brotherly affection as Christian believers together will be that not only do we live on earth, but dying together, we will live beyond in the resurrection life together.

It's much deeper than a mere pagan idiom about brotherly affection. And so he says in verse 4, And it's the verses that follow that explain here his joy flowing over.

Paul finally in Macedonia is reunited with Titus. And so jumping to verse 6, He said in verse 5, as I've commented, That in Macedonia he again was anxious with disputes without and fears within.

But God, But God who consoles the downcast, Consoles us by the arrival of Titus. Now we could dismiss that verse and simply say, Hang on, Paul.

Titus was coming back anyway. You've met him now. Why say, But God comforts you? I mean, You know, This is just human, You know, Travel in effect.

[18 : 09] At one level, That could be a response. Why is simply the arrival of Titus and the reunion of these two people, The comfort of God? The reason why Paul could load that expression in verse 6, So substantially with theology, But God who consoles the downcast, Is not just because Titus is there.

I mean, There's joy in Paul seeing Titus again. But it's actually in the news that Titus brings. And that news definitely shows the comfort of God.

And that's really the heart of what's going on here. So Paul is acknowledging that God is a God of comfort. Those are his opening words after his greeting in chapter 1, If you remember.

Back in chapter 1, Verse 3, He said, Paul there was acknowledging that God is a God of comfort.

That's a theme throughout the Bible. It's there several times in the Old Testament. For example, The name Noah means comfort. The name Nahum, The same thing.

[19 : 26] The Noah, N-H, Or the N-H-M words are comfort words. And probably you get that as a peak in the Old Testament. In the famous words at the beginning of Isaiah 40, Comfort, Comfort my people.

But of course, Jesus picks up the comfort language as well. Come to me all who are weary and I'll bring you comfort and so on. So the theme of God being a comforting God, a consoling God, is a biblical theme.

It's an essential part of the attributes and character of Almighty God. And Paul here is acknowledging that and giving God thanks and praise for it. Not just because Titus has come back, but especially because he sees that in the news that Titus brings, the hand of God has been definitely at work.

Notice then how, how Paul is saying is he could simply have said, Oh, well, I've been comforted. Passive verb. He could have said, you know, it's great. Titus has come back and I'm really pleased to hear what, what news he said.

And it's, and it's brought me comfort and joy. And that would be true, but it would fail to detect the source of the real comfort. So he could say, you Corinthians, your, your, your change of heart has brought me comfort.

[20 : 38] That's great. Fantastic. But God, but Paul doesn't do that. God is the one who's brought me comfort. by the news that Titus has brought me of you, Corinthians, which is acknowledging that God has worked in the Corinthians and that Paul's joy is directed primarily to God and not to the Corinthians.

I think we see that same sort of thing time and again in the scriptures. And it ought to be for us, uh, an important sort of dimension of our life that as we encourage each other, as we express things to each other, we are expressing ultimately our thanks and praise to God.

And by doing that, we're actually encouraging other people. So we're not saying Corinthians, I'm really pleased what you've done. That's fantastic. That's really brought me comfort. That's simply the horizontal. And it fails to get the deeper dimension of God is the God of comfort.

And what he has done in you has brought me consolation and thanks to God for that. So there's something there, I think about how we express our Christian joy, our faith, our hope, our encouragement, our thankfulness within Christian fellowship, but in a God directed way.

And that's what I think Paul is modeling for us in these words here in verse six. Well, as I said, it's not simply that Titus has come back.

[21 : 55] So in verse six, he says, he's consoled us by the arrival of Titus and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you.

As he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoice still more. That is, here is a model again of what Paul was saying back in chapter one.

I'm afflicted with things so that when God consoles me, I can console others and they can be encouraged and help directed towards God, the God of comfort. So here Paul is saying, I've been consoled and comforted by what Titus has said to me because he was consoled and comforted by what had happened in Corinth.

And now Paul, Paul, in a sense, is throwing it back to them so that they will be encouraged by what God is doing in this whole episode. Well, it challenges us then that when we receive comfort from God, when we receive some consolation, whatever that may be, in our afflictions, not out of them, do we receive that greedily or selfishly?

That is, God, I've been wanting you to comfort me in this and now I'm comforted. Or do we receive it generously in the sense that we get others to praise God?

[23 : 21] I haven't got time to go back in detail in chapter one, but again, in that opening section, Paul had said back in verse 11 or 10 and 11, That's what Paul's modeling here.

By showing how Titus's consolation has led to him to be consoled, and his consolation is now going back to the Corinthians in giving thanks to God, so that many will give thanks to God.

That's a generous receipt of consolation. But sadly, sometimes nine out of 10 of us are like the ones healed by Jesus. Maybe only one comes back to thank him.

Here it's the sense of, as we're consoled by God, we should be leading other people to give God thanks for such consolation. It's a God-directed life and ministry.

Well, what is the news now that Titus has brought? And as I've said in verse seven, it was that he told us of your longing, your mourning, and your zeal for me.

[24 : 43] It sums up their response to the severe letter, to the issue, the correction that was asked for, et cetera. They could be longing for all sorts of things, but here it's positive.

Their longing is perhaps for Paul. It's perhaps for restoration, for glory, for holiness, maybe all of those things. Maybe Paul is deliberately not specifying what that is.

Their mourning is their grief, their sadness at the situation they were in. Their zeal for Paul. That is, they've responded warmly to his letter rather than further and further against him.

And as a result, Paul is rejoicing. And as a result of that, he's telling the Corinthians that he's rejoicing to encourage them even further in this whole episode. Well, many times ministry is tough.

And I think biblical ministry requires strength to rebuke and correct where needed. It's the hardest thing probably for a Christian pastor or minister or Bible study leader or leader of a group or whatever to do.

[25 : 50] Most of us shy away from confrontation. Most of us don't like to be confronted or to confront. And there are times when I've had to act to rebuke and correct in ministry.

There are probably more times when I ought to have done it than I have, I must confess. But there are plenty of times when I have. They have some of the hardest things. Sleepless nights, sweating and anxiety about how people are going to respond.

Sometimes, sadly, the result has been hostility, broken or fractured fellowship, people leaving the church, some great pain personally.

But sometimes, the correction leads to restoration and joy. Paul has been in anguish over the Corinthians because he loves them.

He's been in anguish about how they'll receive his severe letter. He's made a visit that was unsatisfactory and painful. It's why he's put off a second visit. He's worried about where they're going to go.

[26 : 57] In some senses, this is like a litmus test. Are they going to come back to the gospel and gospel discipline? Or are they going to spurn that and receive the grace of God in vain, to use his expression at the beginning of chapter 6?

Was his letter too harsh, he wonders, probably. It seems to have been a time when he regretted sending that letter, at least initially. No doubt, he'd prayed and prayed about how they would respond and praying that they would respond with godliness and repentance and act aright.

In verse 8, we read, even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly.

That is Paul's having written it and sent it. At some point there, he regretted it, maybe because he thought the Corinthians were going to react badly to him and to what he'd said in that letter.

But now he says, I don't regret writing that letter. Rather, now I rejoice, the next verse says. Not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance.

[28 : 08] Paul's not apologizing for causing them grief. He's rejoicing that the grief that he caused has led them to repentance. For you felt a godly grief so that you were not harmed in any way by us.

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret. But worldly grief produces death. In this case, the outcome of their grief and sorrow was repentance.

It's a sorrow that Paul has caused. I made you sorry with this letter, he said. Repentance is to turn away from wrongdoing. Not simply to have sorrow about it or to say sorry for it.

Repentance is not simply an emotion. It's a changed mind, a changed heart, and changed behavior as a result. Whatever that problem was, and we don't know the details, it's now resolved happily.

We saw back in chapter 2 that the wrongdoer was to be loved and brought back into the fellowship so that he is not overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

[29 : 23] Chapter 2 verse 7 said. Sometimes sorrow doesn't lead to repentance, and the danger there was that the punishment on him for whatever he'd done wrong might actually lead him in sorrow, away or drown in sorrow, rather than restored to Christian fellowship.

So happily in this case, the pain of rebuke has led to the gain of godly repentance. But of course it's not always like this. The pain of rebuke can lead to anger, bitterness, resentment, division, argument, fracture, further immorality, the breaking of fellowship.

That's why Paul stresses so succinctly in verse 10 the distinction between godly grief and worldly grief. Worldly grief which produces death and godly grief which produces a repentance that leads to salvation, that is to life, and ultimately to no regret.

And it's worth exploring the difference between these two types of grief. Worldly grief is sorrow, sadness, remorse, and regret.

In themselves, they're not bad things. But worldly grief is a useless remorse, sorrow, or sadness, or regret. It doesn't lead on to anything constructive.

[30 : 54] It doesn't lead to anything better. Ultimately, it produces death. I think because it doesn't actually deal with the sin that's produced the guilt in the first place. I think that's the connection.

So it is a sorrow that is despairing, and it's self-pitying. It's often bitter. And in a sense, I think, its root cause is that it is self-focused.

It is sad for oneself. You see, it's sorrow that I've let myself down. It's sorrow that I've failed my own standards.

It might be expressed as sorrow that, well, I didn't get away with it, that I didn't get caught. Worldly sorrow is grief that they're being confronted and being brought to account.

Worldly sorrow is a sadness that is sometimes blamed onto others. And we see examples of that in the scriptures, not least in the first few pages, of Adam and Eve who pass on the blame to others.

[32 : 00] Their grief doesn't lead to repentance, but rather passing the blame, which is also common. Australians, but probably not just Australians, we're very good at it.

We're especially good at blaming the government. And we're not bad at blaming our parents either. And we're not bad at blaming our neighbours. And we're not bad at blaming anyone and everyone else that we can think of.

So that's an expression or part of worldly grief. It is self-justifying often. So in effect, it's saying, well, actually, what I've done wrong is really just a lapse, an error, a mistake of judgment.

I just failed to calculate this right or I didn't realise that I was going to get caught, for example. It's sadness that dismisses our sin as a sort of little slip-up, a peccadillo at most.

Often it's a sadness for the consequence, I'm sorry that my wife got hurt by my adultery rather than actually a sorrow or repentance for the cause, that is, my adultery.

[33 : 13] And it's fascinating to listen to people when they're interviewed by the media at how they express their sorrow. Of course, they have to say something that sounds like sorry or an apology, but listen carefully to what they actually apologise for.

And it's rare, it does happen actually, but it's rare that people actually apologise for their sin. I'm sorry my wife got caught, I got caught and my wife's got hurt.

I'm sorry if I've offended somebody. I didn't mean to offend anyone, but I actually meant to do what I did, etc. Well, godly grief is actually differently centred than that.

Worldly grief is centred on yourself. Godly grief is centred on God. Godly grief is pained and sorrowed because our sin has offended God.

It's not simply at the internal psychological level, nor even at the horizontal I've hurt another person level. In the end, godly grief is sad because my actions have saddened Almighty God.

- [34 : 25] Godly grief is sorrowful that others are affected, not because they're sorrowful simply of the consequence, I'm sorry they got hurt, or if anyone got offended, they're sorry because my sin has caused you harm.

My sin has failed you. My sin has offended you. You see, sin is not simply something between me and God. It is something that affects other people. So it is, it's not simply a vertical dimension, but the vertical dimension is essential.

The horizontal is also there, but it's not simply, godly grief is not simply, well, I'm sorry that someone got hurt in the process, you know, collateral damage, but rather, my sin has caused that.

That's my sorrow, and my sorrow is to God because I've offended him and saddened him. Godly grief takes responsibility and owns up for our sinfulness, you see.

Godly grief says that sin is sin, not a mere error of judgment or a lapse. Godly grief is Zacchaeus, not Judas, somebody who repents and seeks to restore or recompense or turn around what they've done.

- [35 : 39] Godly grief is David in Psalm 51. Worldly grief is Pharaoh in the book of Exodus. You remember, Pharaoh says these sorts of things a few times.

He says, this time I have sinned, the Lord is in the right and I and my people are in the wrong. So Moses prays, the hailstorm and thunder end and then what happens?

When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned once more. How deep is that grief? That's not godly grief. He might even have said, yes, I've sinned but actually his sorrow is sad for the situation that he's in, basically.

And so he's called God's bluff in a way. Edith Piaf was right. I'm not quite sure if this is the exact translation but no, no regrets.

No, I will have no regrets for the grief doesn't last. It is gone. I've forgotten the past. That's worldly grief which like Pharaoh's is fairly forgetful and very insincere.

- [36 : 55] As soon as the situation is passed, worldly grief is gone. It's lost to the memory. That is, the clamors died down, the media are off the doorstep and I'm back to the cell phone, the text messages or whatever it is.

Worldly grief says, I feel bad about myself, what I've done. Godly grief says, I feel bad because I've offended God and I've offended others.

Worldly grief is ultimately simply being sorry for yourself. Godly grief is sorry for sin. You see how the centers of these two griefs are so different.

Worldly grief acts out of humiliation. Godly grief acts in humility. Worldly grief is a tearful emotion, sometimes manipulative.

But godly grief is corrective action. It bears fruit. It seeks restoration. In modern times, we have a great aversion to guilt.

- [38 : 03] I think that's one contributing factor to the worldly grief that we see expressed so often. The removal of guilt, we're told, well, you need a psychoanalysis and that'll get rid of it for you.

Psychiatrists attribute all our grief to parents and governments and bad experiences. There's quite a funny little poem that I'll read you just for some slightly light entertainment, but it expresses this quite well with apologies to psychiatrists in the congregation who hopefully aren't here tonight.

And now I've got to find it. I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalyzed, to find out why I killed the cat and blacked my husband's eye.

He laid me on a downy couch to see what he could find, and here's what he dredged up from the subconscious mind. When I was one, my mummy hid my dolly in a trunk, and so it follows naturally that I'm always drunk.

And when I was two, I saw my father kiss the maid one day, and that's why I suffer from kleptomania. At three, I had a feeling of ambivalence towards my brothers, and so it follows naturally I poisoned all my lovers.

[39 : 13] But I'm happy now. I've learned the lesson this has taught. Everything I do that's wrong is someone else's fault. Well, that's where our world is now.

Guilt's a bad thing. And sometimes, sadly, even in theological places where we ought to know much, much better, guilt is something that we should just be removing out of our subconscious or conscious.

Some of you may know the advice that was given to Macbeth about his wife. Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, raise out the written troubles of the brain, and with some sweet oblivious antidote cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart?

And the doctors reply, therein, the patient must minister to himself. They're worldly answers to worldly grief.

Paul's shown us a model of godly correction. He's defended his motives, his ministry, his integrity. He's demonstrated that he has practiced a love that is prepared to carry pain and hurt.

[40 : 29] A love that has rebuked. He hasn't rebuked out of malice, but he's rebuked out of love. Not a weak love that keeps silent when it ought to speak, either. His rebuke has been motivated by godly intention and God-honoring intention.

What matters uppermost for Paul is not the pain that the rebuke will cause, but the longer-term outcome. His object is to bring people to God and not to sustain friendships at all cost.

And he knows what the answer to guilt is. And this lies at the heart of the distinction and the heart of this whole issue. It's not psychoanalysis. It's not a worldly answer to worldly grief.

Rather, it's the gospel of Jesus Christ that he made so plain back in chapter 5. If only psychiatrists all knew this. There are a few who do.

If only Shakespeare knew this. If only Corey, the party organiser, knew this. If Shane Warne and Bill Clinton and Ray Williams and Wayne Carey and, well, the list could go on and on, of course.

[41 : 46] If they all knew this, then we might see a godly grief that leads to repentance and salvation Allah's akias rather than the parade of shallow sorrow that we sometimes get in the doorstep interviews on TV.

The Corinthians' godly grief has led to change and Paul rejoices. He says in verse 11, for see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment.

At every point you've proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. It's worked. Godly grief has produced repentance and the fruit of repentance leading to godliness and Paul is rejoicing.

So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong. That wasn't the prime motive in writing that letter. The person who did the wrong nor on account of the one who was wrong. That's not his primary motive either.

But rather in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God. In this we find comfort. That is, I've written this letter for your benefit, Corinthians. And I'm rejoicing because the God of all comfort has comforted me because he's worked in you to bring about the fruit of repentance towards salvation and life.

[43 : 08] That's why Paul is overjoyed and that's why he is so God-directed in his joy and in his comfort. In addition to our own consolation, we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus because his mind has been set at rest by all of you.

For I've been somewhat boastful about you to him. I was not disgraced. You can imagine Paul saying to Titus, Titus, the Corinthians are really great people. When you go there, they'll love you, they'll welcome you. And no doubt Paul probably thought, oh, I hope this is right.

And it was. And Paul's expressing his joy. And he's saying, I boasted about you to Titus and my boasting did not fall apart. I was not disgraced. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus has proved true as well.

And his heart goes out all the more to you as he remembers the obedience of all of you and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. And I rejoice because I have complete confidence in you.

You can feel Paul's relief, can't you? It's still coming through the words of this letter. You can imagine all that buildup of anxiety. It would have been over many months from the first hearing of the issue, the unsatisfactory visit, the sending of the letter with Titus probably, waiting for Titus to come back.

[44 : 24] And in the midst of it, all the affliction in Ephesus, the strife and sleeplessness in Troas, the beatings or opposition that he got in Philippi or Macedonia, wherever he was in Macedonia, and then finally, you can imagine that relief when Titus comes and he says, this is how they've responded.

Thanks be to God is in effect what Paul is saying here. At the heart of all this is not Paul's concern for his reputation. And though he comes out with strong defense of his integrity, motives, ministry and methods, ultimately that's not his aim.

He's defending the gospel and he's wanting the gospel to have impact on their lives and he's rejoicing because it has. Because the God of all comfort has corrected this situation, has strengthened the hand of the Corinthians in godliness and so on.

And at the heart of all of this is that it is the gospel that takes away sin and guilt. Nothing else does. No psychoanalysis does. Media, opera and all those sorts of shows, they don't deal with it all.

They might think they do, but they don't. They're worldly answers to worldly grief. The godly answer to godly grief is the death of Jesus Christ, which lies at the heart of Paul's message, at the heart of his motive, and at the heart of his life.

[45 : 46] And as he said at the beginning of chapter 2, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. And he's rejoicing that under God's merciful hand, they haven't.

Amen.