

SORROW AND SORROW

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*“For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be repented of:
but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”*
2 Corinthians 7:10

MANY years ago, and indeed in some measure to a later date, preachers of the Word seemed mainly to dwell upon the inner experience of men. They both preached sermons and wrote books in which they set forth the condition of convinced sinners, describing what they usually felt before they found peace with God. They were very strict in their search for the genuine tokens of true repentance, and the internal evidences of regeneration.

They preached continually upon the work of the Spirit of God in convincing sinners of their lost condition, but they were not accustomed to say to them so baldly and so boldly as we do now, “Believe, and live,” and the consequence was, that a large number of truly awakened persons were kept in bondage, and did not come into the liberty wherewith Christ makes believers free—at least, not so soon as they do nowadays.

I believe that under God’s blessing, those experiential preachers were the means of producing very sturdy Christians. They did a great deal of deep ploughing, with a very sharp ploughshare, before they began to sow the good seed of the kingdom. They took care to use the pointed needle of the law to make a way for the silken thread of the Gospel, so that what they did sew was well sewn, and the garments which they made did not tear quite so easily as much of the spiritual raiment does which is made in these days of more showy, but less substantial, labor.

Still, there was this defect about that style of preaching, it led men to look too much within instead of looking away from self to Christ. No matter how faithfully they proclaimed the grace of God, they preached some sort of preparation for the reception of that grace, and therefore, sinners often looked to themselves to see whether they had that preparation rather than to the grace which it was most desirable that they should seek.

I believe you may say so much about the disease of sin, that instead of leading the sinner in despair to turn his gaze to Christ, as the bitten Israelites looked to the brazen serpent as the only remedy—you may merely make him sit down, and study the disease, and look, and look, and look again for the various symptoms you have described, and though he will be well acquainted with the disease, he will not in that way find a cure for it.

You may dive as far as you like into the sea, but you will not find any fire there, you may rake as long as you please in the burning fiery furnace, but you will never reach any cooling blocks of ice, you may hunt for many a day, in the human heart’s natural death, but you will not there discover any signs of life, and within the charnel house of man’s corruption, you shall never be able to discern any remedy for a sin-sick soul. It was in that particular that the experiential preaching lacked an important element.

But now, times have changed, and many of us, who are ministers of the Gospel, do very plainly proclaim to sinners the message, “Believe, and live.” This plain declaration rings out from almost every part of our land—not yet quite in every place, I would that it were so, but still, there is a large company of evangelical preachers continually repeating the apostolic message, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

I am sure that much good must result from this proclamation of the truth, for this is God's ordained way of blessing the souls of men, and yet—and yet—I sometimes fear lest there should be all sowing and no ploughing—lest there should be the preaching only of the remedy, with almost an entire ignoring of the disease—and lest the message “Believe, and live,” should take the place of that other great truth, “Ye must be born again.” It will never do for men to be led to think that they are healed before they know that they are sick unto death, or to imagine that they are clothed before they see themselves to be naked, or to be taught to trust Christ before they are aware that they have anything for which they have need to trust Him.

It would be a happy circumstance if in our preaching, we could have a blending of these two elements, so that we could have somewhat of our forefathers' deep experiential teaching, and with it, and growing out of it, a plain, unfettered delivery of the Gospel declaration, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”

“How are the two things to be reconciled?” someone asks. My dear brother, I have long ago given up trying to reconcile friends who never fell out. These two truths are both taught in Scripture, and therefore they cannot be at variance with one another. You would be as much puzzled to prove where they differ as I should be to show that they agree. I am confident that they do agree, because I find them both in the Book. Therefore, let them both be preached.

Somehow, we are constantly coming across truths that lie side by side, like the metals on which the railway carriages run. If we only preach one of them, it will be like trying to run the train on a single rail. You know that there are often two truths, if not three, closely connected with one another. I am frequently led to see that there is a trinity of truths as there is a Trinity in the Godhead, and if they are all preached, in due proportion, they will balance one another, and prevent any one truth from being too prominent.

Luther, with his free justification, by faith, is apt to go too far unless there shall come in Calvin and Zwingli, with their balancing truths, to set him right. Even Paul's inspired words might have been the means of leading some men astray unless James had also been inspired to write on the practical side of truth so that Paul's meaning should be the better understood. There is nothing wrong in the teaching of either Paul or James, they are both right, the two together bring out both aspects of truth.

I am going to preach tonight about sorrow for sin. I hope it has not yet quite gone out of the world, I trust that sorrowful penitence does still exist, though I have not heard much about it lately. People seem to jump into faith very quickly nowadays. I do not disapprove of that happy leap, but still, I hope my old friend, repentance is not dead.

I am desperately in love with repentance, it seems to me to be the twin sister to faith. I do not myself understand much about dry-eyed faith, I know that I came to Christ by the way of Weeping-cross. I did not come to shelter beneath His blood immediately I heard of it, as I now wish that I had done, but when I did come to Calvary by faith, it was with great weeping and supplication, confessing my transgressions, and desiring to find salvation in Jesus, and in Jesus only.

Now, concerning this sorrow for sin, I want first, *to remove certain erroneous ideas with regard to it*, secondly, *to distinguish between the two sorrows mentioned in the text*, the godly sorrow which works repentance to salvation, and the sorrow of the world which works death, and then, thirdly, we will *indulge ourselves in sorrow for sin*. We will finish up with some happy sorrow, that blessed, godly sorrow which is never to be repented of or regretted.

I. First then, I want to try to REMOVE CERTAIN ERRONEOUS IDEAS WITH REGARD TO SORROW FOR SIN.

Some persons seem to think *that mere sorrow of mind in reference to sin is repentance*, but it is not. Read the text, and you will at once see that it is not. “Godly sorrow worketh repentance.” Therefore, it is not itself repentance. It is an agent employed in producing repentance, but it is not itself repentance.

There is in the world, a great deal of sorrow on account of sin which is certainly not repentance, and never leads to it. Some transgressors are sorry for sin for a time, they are convicted of guilt, with a

transitory conviction, which soon passes away. Many are sorry for sin because of its temporal consequences, and many more because of its eternal consequences. They are afraid of hell. If there were no hell, they would like to continue to live in sin. They would be delighted if it could be proved that there is no God. Nothing would please them better than to have the law of the Lord and all its penal consequences abolished. They are as fond of sin as ever they were, but they sorrow because they see that it is bringing them down to the gulf of perdition.

Now, that kind of sorrow is not repentance. A moth may burn its wings in the candle, and then, full of pain, fly back to the flame. There is no repentance in the moth, though there is pain, and so, there is no repentance in some men, though there is in them a measure of sorrow on account of their sin. Do not, therefore, make a mistake in this matter, and think that sorrow for sin is, or even necessarily leads to, repentance.

Next, do not fall into the other mistake, and imagine *that there can be such a thing as repentance without sorrow for sin*, for there can never be such a thing. I heard a person say, and as I thought, say very flippantly, that it was a great thing to know the Greek language because, in that way, you found out that repentance “simply meant a change of mind.” The brother who said that did not appear to me to know much about the English language, and I was quite certain that he did not know *alpha* from *beta* in the Greek language, but that was what he said, “it simply meant a change of mind.”

Ah! it does mean a change of mind, but what a change of mind! In my opinion, such a translation of the Greek as that would not imply that repentance was anything less than it is commonly understood to be, but a far greater thing. It is an entire and total change of mind, a turning of the mind right round, so that it hates what once it loved, and loves what once it hated—it forms different judgments from what it ever did before, and no longer puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, darkness for light, and light for darkness. It judges righteous judgment, for the change of mind is thorough and complete, and I therefore say that there is no repentance, that is worth anything, which is not accompanied by sorrow for sin.

Just think for a moment. Here is a man who says, “I repent.” But are you really sorry that you sinned? “No,” he replies. Then, my dear sir, you cannot have truly repented, for a man who has not got so far as repentance, is often sorry for having done wrong. When a man is convinced that he has transgressed against God he ought to be sorry, and if you tell me that there can be such a thing as spiritual repentance, and yet no sorrow for having broken the law of God, I tell you that you do not know what you are talking about.

The thing is clearly, on the very face of it, impossible. There must be a deep hatred of the sin that you have committed, and even of the thought of ever committing that sin again. There must be sincere sorrow that ever you should have transgressed against God, and that you should be liable to transgress again. If there is no such sorrow as that in your heart, one of the things which are necessary to a genuine repentance is absent.

I have tried thus to correct two mistakes, but there is a third which I must point out to you. There are some persons who seem to think *that we must reach a certain point of wretchedness, or else we are not truly penitent*. They imagine that we must grieve up to a certain point of temperature, or we cannot be saved, and they watch the convicted sinner to see when he gets near to what they consider to be a sufficient measure of brokenness of heart.

But there are different methods of measuring this state of the spirit, I believe that some of our Hyper-Calvinistic brethren rigidly apply a very long measure indeed to all cases of this kind. I remember that one young friend, before whom I had set the Gospel very simply, said to me, “But is that all I have to do? Have I only to believe in Christ in order that I may be saved? Why, my father was six months in trouble of soul before he could find the Savior, and part of the time he was so bad that he had to be put in a lunatic asylum.”

Yes, that is the kind of notion some people have—that there is a certain amount of alarm, distress, apprehension, and fear which a man has to feel before he is up to the mark in this respect, but there is nothing at all in the Word of God to support that idea.

I will not waste time by dwelling upon it, because it is altogether a baseless supposition. We admit that many, who come to Christ, have passed through very great terror and agony before doing so, but a large part of their suffering was the work of the devil, and not the work of the Spirit of God at all. A great part of it might have been spared if they had not been so ignorant, and a still larger part of it they might never have suffered if they had heard the Gospel preached with greater simplicity, and had not been muddled and handled so roughly by some who put their own experience into the place of the Savior.

After all, we are not saved by any feelings or alarms that we may have. The source of eternal life is yonder, on that cross, and he who looks there, be he who he may or what he may, shall find salvation in the glance that spies out the wounded God. Not our wounds, but His wounds—not our griefs, but His griefs—not our tears, but His blood must save us. Away, therefore, forever, with the notion that there is a certain point of grief that has to be reached to qualify us for coming to the Savior.

Then again, there is another mistake made by many—that *this sorrow for sin only happens once*—as a sort of squall, or a hurricane, or thunderstorm, that breaks over a man once, and then he is converted, and he talks about that experience all the rest of his life, but he has nothing more to do with it. Why, dear friends, there is nothing more erroneous than that.

For myself, I freely confess that I have a very much greater sorrow for sin today than I had when I came to the Savior more than thirty years ago. I hate sin much more intensely now than I did when I was under conviction, I am sure I do. There are some things that I did not know to be sin then, that I do know to be sin now, and therefore I strive to be rid of them. I have a much keener sense of the vileness of my own heart now than I had when first I came to Christ, and I think that many other believers here will say that it is the same with them.

Sorrow for sin is a perpetual rain, a sweet, soft shower which, to a truly gracious man, lasts all his life long. He is always sorrowful that he has sinned. He is continually grieved that there should still be any sin remaining in him, and he will never leave off grieving till all that sin has gone. I could almost wish that, in heaven itself, the Lord would let me mourn that I ever did sin. Good old Rowland Hill used to say that the only thing about heaven that he did not quite like was that he should leave off repenting there, he supposed that no tear of sorrow for sin could be ever allowed to fall there.

It is a sweet thing to be sorrowful for sin, to be sorrowful for impurity, to be sorrowful for anything that made Jesus sorrow, it is not a thing that happens once and then is done with, the godly sorrow of a believer lasts throughout his life.

I want also to correct another mistake, namely, *that sorrow for sin is a miserable feeling*. The moment the word “sorrow” is mentioned, many people suppose that it must necessarily be grief of a bitter kind. Ah! but there is a sweet sorrow, a healthy sorrow. In honey, there is a sweetness that cloys after awhile. We may eat too much of it and make ourselves ill, but in repentance there is a bitter sweetness, or a sweet bitterness—which shall I call it?—of which, the more you have, the better it is for you. I can truly say that I hardly know a diviner joy than to lay my head in my Heavenly Father’s bosom and to say, “Father, I have sinned, but You have forgiven me, and oh, I do love You!”

It is such bliss, whenever you are troubled in heart, to go to God over again just as you went to Him at the first, as a poor sinner, and to say, “Lord, I mourn to think that I should have been what I have been—that I should have fallen so far short even of my own ideal of what I meant to have been, but I know that You love me, and the more sure I am of the fact, and the more glad I am because of it, the more grieved I am to think that I do not live as such love as Yours deserves that I should live.”

What have you been doing that is wrong, brother? Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret sin that is keeping you sad and sorrowful? Shall I help you to find out the source of the evil? Have you been neglecting the reading of the Word? Have you been lax in private prayer of late? Have you been getting covetous? As you have grown richer, have you grown tighter in the fist? Have you been getting more worldly? Do you speak less about Christ than you used to do, and more about vanity? Have you been mixing up in bad company? Have you been entangled by a so-called friend who

is no help to you, but who really hinders you greatly in spiritual things? Have you been forming some associations that you know Christ does not approve of? Have you been letting things go a little amiss in your business—only a little amiss? Still, you know that things are not straight, and that you could not face a thorough examination of your affairs. Have you fallen out with your brother, and can you not forgive him? Have you had a quarrel, you two sisters, and will you not love each other? Yet you call yourselves Christians!

So I might go on to mention fifty other things, and any one of those things would be quite sufficient to take from you the joy of the Lord, and to bring you into a lean state spiritually. You know that you were once like the land of Egypt during her seven years of plenty, when all went well with you. I pray God that you may not have seven years of famine, as they had in Egypt, for it is full of wonder how the lean cows will eat up the fat cows, and yet never be any the fatter themselves. One would have thought that, if the seven lean beasts ate up the seven fat ones, they would get fat themselves, but they did not, and you may have a sad time of declension that will eat up all your years of zeal and holy joy, yet those years may not be one whit the better because of the strange feast.

Come brother, come sister, you and I cannot afford to live at a distance from Christ. We cannot afford to live in a state of misery. A Christian who is not glad—why, what sort of a Christian is he? I cannot bear to see religion served up with vinegar. No, brethren, it ought to be sweet in itself—so sweet that, if you poured a cask of vinegar on it, you would not make it sour.

A Christian ought to be a happy man. He is not true to his colors—he is not true to his Master—he is not true to himself—unless he is a happy man. Let us have a good drink of the “wines on the lees, well refined,” till we forget our misery, and remember it no more in the ecstatic joy and intense delight which the love of Christ and communion with God shall give us over again. If you have backslidden, come back this very hour, confess your sin in backsliding from God, and Christ will soon give you back your old joy and gladness.

It does not spoil your happiness, my brother or sister, to confess your sin, the unhappiness is in not making the confession. If you are a child, and you have done something wrong towards your father, you are unhappy as long as you try to conceal it. You old folks can recollect that when you were boys at home, and you had been doing wrong, you sometimes said, “I shall not own it,” but all the while that you hardened yourself, you were miserable, you know that you were. You missed your father’s good-night kiss and your mother’s smile, and although, as long as you stubbornly held out you thought yourself very brave, yet you were very miserable.

But did you not also know what it was, afterwards, to go and say, “Father,” or “Mother, I was very wrong to do what I did, and I am truly sorry”? Then, as you received the kiss of full forgiveness, I do not suppose you ever felt more happy than after that in all your life. That is the way for God’s child always to do. Whenever you have done wrong, go at once to your Heavenly Father, with godly sorrow for that sin, and get over again the sweet kiss of His forgiving love, that is not wretchedness, it is happiness of the highest kind. It is the safest and surest way to maintain communion with God that I know of, unless, indeed, it be true, as some of our friends say, that they live without sinning altogether, about which I will say no more just now.

There are some who also erroneously think *that sorrow for sin must be mixed with unbelief*. They suppose that, if a man is sorrowful for sin, he must be afraid that he will be lost, he must fear that his sin can never be forgiven him. Permit me, however, to explain that no such black cloud as that need follow upon the heels of our repentance. The best sorrow for sin is that which never doubts Christ’s ability to wash it out—that cries out in grief for having sinned and yet says, “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” It is not right on the part of your child, if he comes and says, “Father, I have done wrong, and I do not believe you will ever forgive me.” Why, he is wrong all over then, is he not? You can see the evil that is in his heart boiling over in such talk as that.

But there is no need for it to be so with you, my brother or sister, rather say, “My Father, I have sinned, and I mourn that I have done so, but at the same time, I not only know that You will forgive, but

I know that You have forgiven me, for Christ's sake. I have laid my hands upon the head of the great Sacrifice and Substitute, and I know that, ere I was born, in His own person He carried my sin away, even as of old the scapegoat carried the sin of Israel into the wilderness, and it is gone forever, for You have said, 'The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.' Lord, I trust to the substitutionary sacrifice offered by Your dear Son, and I feel at perfect peace with You, and for that very reason, I hate sin more than ever I did, and I grieve more than ever I did in my life before, to think I should ever have been guilty of it."

Thus have I tried to remove a few erroneous ideas out of the way, yet I fear that they will continue to deceive many as long as the world stands.

II. Now secondly, I want to help you to DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE TWO SORROWS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT.

First, there is a *godly sorrow*, which "*worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.*" If you have marginal notes in your Bibles, you will see that, in the preceding verse, where we read, "ye were made sorry after a godly manner," in the margin it reads, "ye were made sorry according to God," and that rendering lets a great deal of light into the meaning of our text, "sorrow according to God."

Now, mark, the true sorrow which we ought to have, and which saves men instrumentally, is sorrow on account of sin because it is sin against God. That is the very pith of godly sorrow, as penitent David cried, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," and as the prodigal said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight."

O my dear hearers, do ask yourselves whether you have sorrowed for sin because it is sin against God, for any hypocrite is sorry for sin which injures himself, or which may damage his reputation among men, but the essential thing is to be sorry because the evil is a wrong done to God. You know that men do not generally trouble much about wrong done to God. A crime is usually a wrong done to man, so we think it is a horrible thing, but a sin, inasmuch as it is against God, many people do not care at all about that.

If I were to personally address any man or woman in this place and say, "You are a sinner," each one would reply, "Yes, that is true," but if I were to say to a man, "You are a criminal," he would be ready to knock me down. So, you see, a criminal is one who offends against men, and that is in our view, a very horrible thing, but a sinner being only one who offends against God, that is not, according to most people's notion, anything in particular, so they do not care much about it. Oh, but when a man is really awakened, he sees that the gravamen of the offense is that it is an offense against God, that is the worst part of the offense, as he rightly judges, and he therefore sorrows over it. This is a sorrow which is to be cultivated by us, the mourning over sin because it is committed against God.

Then notice, that it is also a sorrow which is associated with a believing faith, for a godly sorrow must be one that makes the heart that feels it yield itself to Christ. Yielding itself to Christ, it must believe in Christ, for if I do not believe in Christ, it is certain that I have not yielded myself to Him. Therefore, the only sorrow for sin that is worth having is that which brings me to yield myself up to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to accept God's mercy in God's own way.

If you have any sort of sorrow for sin, which does not lead you to believe in Christ, away with it! Away with it! A repentance, that does not repent at the cross, is a repentance which will have to be repented of, but true sorrow for sin must be blended with a childlike submission to God, and consequent confidence in Christ, otherwise, it is not "godly sorrow."

"Godly sorrow" is, next, known by its leading to repentance. It "*worketh repentance*"—"a change of mind" about everything, and especially about sin. A man is so sorry for having done wrong that he thinks differently now of all wrong doing. He thinks differently of his entire life, and his mind is made up, God helping him, to live just the opposite way to that in which he has formerly lived. When sorrow for sin leads to that result, we may be quite sure that it is the work of the Spirit of God, and that it is acceptable in His sight.

It leads on also to deliverance from sin, for the text says, “Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.” Now, what is salvation? Some people think that it means being saved from going down to hell. That is the result of salvation, but salvation means being saved from the power of sin, and being saved from the tendency to sin, as well as being saved from the punishment of sin. That is a blessed sorrow which leads us to such a change of mind that the bonds of sin are snapped, and we become free men in Christ Jesus, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation from the bondage and the power of sin and Satan.

That is the kind of sorrow to cultivate, for it leads to perpetual perseverance in the ways of God. Notice that the text says it is a salvation not to be repented of, or if you like, a repentance not to be repented of. I have known men repent after a fashion, and they have been very sorry for it afterwards. I knew a wild sort of fellow, who was brought to his knees at the penitent-form, and he did cry away at a fine rate, but you could never get him inside that place again. He was always ashamed of himself, for it was a repentance that needed to be repented of, and he did repent of it.

There is many a dog that gets back to his vomit as soon as he can, and there is many a sow that is sorry for being washed, and glad enough to get back to wallow in the mire. But that is not the kind of change that the apostle mentions here. True godly sorrow is that which leads to repentance never to be repented of, for the man says, “No, I left my sin, and if I wanted to go back to it, I have plenty of opportunity to do so, but I cannot go back to it, I hate it. There,” says he, “I have been tempted over and over again, and my feet had well-nigh slipped, but the eternal life within me, kept there by the Spirit of God, has driven me back to Christ. I could not do this great wickedness, and sin against God. I have smarted too much already to put my hand again into the fire. I grieved my God too much, and brought too much grief upon my own heart, for me again to play the fool, and once more to go into the purlieu of iniquity.”

Happy is that man who has had enough of the smart of sin to make it sour and bitter to him all the rest of his days, so that now, with changed heart, and renewed spirit, he perseveres in the ways of God, never thinking of going back, but resolved “through floods or flames” to force his way to heaven, to be, by divine grace, master over every sin that assails him. That is the kind of sorrow which I pray that God may work in everyone here who has never yet felt it.

III. Now, to close, let us pray God the Holy Spirit to enable us to **INDULGE OURSELVES IN GODLY SORROW FOR SIN.**

I will not say anything about the sorrow of the world, that works death, but leave that sad subject in order that we may devote this little space that remains to the enjoyment of godly sorrow for sin.

Remember, beloved, that *it is all forgiven now*. Our sin is all gone, it will never be mentioned against us any more forever. The depths of the ocean of oblivion have covered the Egyptians of our sins, there is not one of them left. Therefore, “sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously.” The Red Sea waves of the Redeemer’s blood have rolled over all our sins, and they sank to the bottom like a stone. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” That is, they are removed to an infinite distance, from which they can never be brought back again. They are gone, they are all gone, and gone forever.

And now, beloved, let us ask ourselves—*how could we have sinned against such a forgiving God?* If we had known how readily He would forgive us, surely we could not have offended Him as we have done. Such a God as He is—was there ever any like unto Him? Well might the prophet Micah exclaim, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?”

O God, how could I ever have offended You? Having done so, how could I continue to rebel against You all those long years? How could I resist the yearnings of Your love, and the entreaties of Your Spirit? Oh, why did I linger so long before coming back to such a Father, who clasped me to his heart, and kissed away all my transgressions and said, “Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.”

Burst forth into tears, O eyes that have so long been dry! O hearts that have been like the rock in the desert, let the sweet love of God strike you, like the rod of Moses, and let the waters leap forth. The thought that we have sinned against such a God, may well cause us godly sorrow.

And then, we should further sorrow as we remember that *our pardon has come to us through Jesus Christ*. Yet it was against Him that we sinned—against Him who, for our sakes, left the thrones and royalties of heaven, and was born a babe at Bethlehem—against Him, who sat weary on the well at Sychar, and said, “Give me to drink,” yet to whom we refused to give the water of our heart’s love.

Think, brethren and sisters, that you and I have sinned against Him who said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” We have sinned against Him who never did us any wrong, never did us an ill turn, or said a hard word to us, but who, blessed be His infinite love, went up to the cross for us, and gave His hands to the cruel nails, and His whole body to death, that He might redeem us from our sins, and save us forever.

O Jesus, my Savior, against Thee have I offended! O strong Son of God, Incarnate Deity, whom, though we have not seen, we do by faith unceasingly adore, it is against You we have offended. We have sinned against Him to whom we are married forever—against Him who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—against Him, the kisses of whose mouth are sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. O my heart, you might well break, though you were made of cast steel, to think that you have rebelled against Him who is all goodness and all love to you!

I tell you, dear friends, one thing that always makes me grieve to think that I have sinned, is *my election*. Oh, when I first knew that God had chosen me to be His from before the foundation of the world, I could not make out how I could have been so mad as to have lived without Him—to have lived in opposition to Him. And then, when I found that Christ had graven me, even me, upon the palms of His hands, and written my name upon His heart, then I smote upon my breast and said, “Woe is me that I, a man so much beloved, should, nevertheless, have been such a transgressor, and have sinned so grievously against my God!”

Come, brothers and sisters, plunge with me into this pool of holy sorrow. Well you may, for think how some of you have been favored by sovereign grace! Think how God called you out of the depths of sin—how long and how patiently He bore with you! Some of you were converted when you were sixty or seventy years old, can you ever love Him enough, and can you ever grieve enough because you lived so long in sin? And you who were converted when you were but boys and girls, can you ever bless Him enough for calling you so early? Can you ever blame yourself enough for not loving Him more, and not serving Him better?

As for me, I am the worst and the lowest among you all, because I owe more to God’s grace than anyone else in this place. To have this sweet privilege of talking about His love, why, I would not change places with Gabriel himself, for he, at any rate, has never had the privilege of telling such a story of redeeming grace and dying love as I have to tell. Yet I am ashamed of myself for speaking so coldly and so feebly concerning my blessed Savior. I could almost fly from my pulpit because I cannot speak better of Him, and move your hearts more earnestly to hate your sin.

But so it is, the more mercy we have received, the more sorrow for sin should we feel, the more love, the more delight and rapture we have experienced, the more lamentation should we make that ever we should have sinned, and that we should be so prone to sin again even after we have been forgiven.

I often have to cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Some people tell me that Paul wrote that lament before he was converted, or when he was just converted, and they talk about rising above all such experiences as that, but I find that, the nearer I get to God, the more is my experience just like that of the apostle when he wrote those words, and whereas I only knew that I had so much sin when I had a clear view of God, and a strong sense of being His, yet it is then that I have learned how terrible it is that there should still be the possibility of sin hanging about me, and I have cried, “Oh, that I were delivered from this body of death that still drags me down to the dust!”

I am sure it will be the same with you, beloved. The more your joy in the Lord, and the nearer you come to perfection, the deeper will be your lamentation—the bitterer, yet in some senses the sweeter will be your sorrow that there should be any sin still remaining within you. I say again, this is sweet sorrowing—sweet, sweet sorrow, and till you get to heaven, I could scarcely wish you any better joy than this—to go home, and creep to the cross-foot, and lie there, sorrowing over your sin against such a Savior, yet rejoicing that it is all forgiven.

*“He that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;”—*

so, as you lie there, look up—

*“And view the flowing
Of the Savior’s precious blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He hath made your peace with God.”*

And then say—

*“My sins, my sins, my Savior,
Their guilt I never knew”—*

“till I knew what they cost You—till I knew Your great love to me—till I knew my sins were all forgiven, but now they are forgiven, they torture me with a sweet grief of whereof I fain would die.”—

*“Lord, let me weep for nought but sin,
And after none but Thee;
And then I would—oh, that I might!
A constant weeper be.”*

This is joy, rest, patience, bliss, just to lie there, and weep, and wash with tears the feet that came upon that errand of love and mercy for us, and still look, and love, and long, and weep, and look, and love, and long, and weep again, and kiss again and again the blessed feet of Him who hath redeemed us unto God by His blood. The Lord keep us there, dear friends! Amen. Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—555, 69, 580

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.