

Godly Sorrow

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Sorrow is an element of human emotion. Sorrow may manifest itself in weeping or in other outward expressions of grief. Sorrow can also remain concealed as inner anguish. In the Greek language, there are several words that express this emotional anguish. The word *klaiō* means to weep, cry out, and expresses man's immediate and outward reaction to suffering. *Koptō* stresses the aspect of public grief which can manifest itself in various customs such as smiting the breast, cutting oneself, wailing, tearing one's garments, and singing set funeral dirges. *Thrēneō* means to wail, sing a lament or a dirge. *Pentheō* refers more to external manifestations of grief. It means to mourn or to lament. *Lupeō* covers the widest range from physical pain to inward grief. In the active voice, it means to give pain. In the passive voice, it means to be grieved (see the article by H. Haarbeck, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. II, 416).

The present study will focus on the Greek word *lupē* (noun form). *Lupē* is found sixteen times in the Greek New Testament (J. B. Smith, *Greek-English Concordance*, 218). It is translated *sorrow* eleven times; *heaviness*, twice; and once each, *grudgingly*, *grievous* and *grief*. It occurs most often in the book of Second Corinthians (six times).

The word is used in the following ways in the New Testament. It is used of sorrow produced by troubling and unsettling events. In Luke 22:45, the disciples of Jesus are found in the Garden of Gethsemane by the Lord "sleeping for sorrow." They were exhausted by inner anguish caused by the uncertainty that they faced. Before this moment in the garden, Jesus attempted to quiet their troubled hearts with the eloquent language of John 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled..." In John 14, Jesus consoles his disciples with an appeal to faith, the glories

of heaven, the promises of God, the power of prayer, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father and the Son, and peace. However, in the garden, we see that their hearts were still in anguish.

Lupē is used of sorrow produced by the knowledge of the impending death and departure of Christ from the presence of His disciples. In John 16:6,20,21,22, Jesus attempts to console His disciples by contrasting sorrow with joy. They would have to be made sorrowful for a short time and after that, joy would be restored. The sorrow the disciples experienced was in direct response to the words He had spoken. Words often produce strong emotion. Jesus spoke of His death and His departure from them. They were saddened by His statements.

It is used of sorrow produced by the disappointment of unbelief. In Rom. 9:2, Paul declares, “That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.” Paul was in anguish of spirit because many of his countrymen had rejected Christ and the truth.

This interesting word is used of sorrow produced when giving reluctantly. Paul states, “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (II Cor. 9:7). Some feel pain and anguish at the thought of giving. Could this be because they covet what they possess? A heart free of covetousness and greed can cheerfully give to God.

It is used of sorrow related to the illness of a friend. *Lupē* is found twice in Phil. 2:27, “For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” Paul wrote of Epaphroditus a companion in Christian labors and fellowsoldier of Jesus Christ. His recovery brought great joy to Paul and the Philippian brethren too.

It is used of sorrow produced by chastening. In Heb. 12:11, we find these words, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Chastening is discipline from God. God disciplines those whom He loves. Chastening temporarily produces sorrow, but the ultimate goal is to permanently produce righteousness.

Lupē is used for sorrow resulting from persecution. Peter describes this sorrow in the following words, “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.” *Lupē* is translated *grief* in this passage. Christians who remain true to their faith in God may suffer grief (sorrow) because of persecution. They must suffer it gladly and willingly. They must endure the pain and anguish of spirit. Enduring such without complaint reflects a noble heart shaped by the courage and restraint of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Pet. 2:21-25).

I have purposely saved four passages in II Corinthians (2:1,3,7; 7:10). These passages focus on the role of sorrow in conversion from sin. This sorrow is characterized as godly sorrow (II Cor. 7:10 where *lupē* is found twice). What is godly sorrow? Sin hardens the heart of man and causes him to become “puffed up” (arrogant, full of pride). The Corinthian brethren were guilty of pride (I Cor. 5:1-13). They permitted a sinful situation in their congregation to go undisciplined. Paul’s first letter to them (I Corinthians) is sometimes referred to as “the letter of tears.” The reason for this is found in II Cor. 2:4, “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.” The fact is many were grieved. The inner anguish that they felt was produced by Paul’s rebuke of their negligence toward the sinner and his call for them to act in righteous judgment and discipline the transgressor. This is an example

of an apostolic rebuke producing a conviction of sin. The result is godly sorrow. The pride of the Corinthian brethren must give way to humility. They are humbled by their knowledge of their sin. Their sense of pride gives way to a sense of worthlessness before God. Guilt is produced. They are humbled and they are sorrowful after a godly sort. Their sorrow followed the path of truth and righteousness to genuine repentance. This is true religion: the heart of man seeking God and acting in harmony with the divine imperatives of God's Word.

Paul contrasts two types of sorrow: godly sorrow and sorrow of the world. Each type of sorrow is distinct. Godly sorrow is sorrow *according to God* (*kata=bears a relation to God*). The sorrow of the world bears a relation only to itself. Godly sorrow produces repentance (a change of heart) while the sorrow of the world produces remorse and despair (no heart change). Godly sorrow results in salvation. The sorrow of the world results in death (spiritual). The type of preaching that wins souls to Christ must produce godly sorrow before it produces repentance that leads to salvation. Sometimes we are preaching to save those outside of the Lord's church. Sometimes we are preaching to save those within the Lord's church from a grievous sin as Paul does in I and II Corinthians. Godly sorrow is an integral aspect of conversion from sin to Christ. We fail to convert from sin when we fail to convict of sin. If we fail to convict of sin, no godly sorrow will be produced and no heart change will be affected.

Godly sorrow produces repentance and repentance leads to salvation. Whenever a person completes the journey involved in conversion from sin, sorrow is turned to joy. The forgiveness of God removes sin and its guilt and replaces it with joy and peace. The choice to follow God is a choice to live each day in the joy of salvation.