

## Th122 Foundation Doctrines

### *Lesson Th122 - 2 Repentance: Godly Sorrow*

I once heard about a man who had a violent temper. When he got drunk, he would become violent and would beat his wife and children. After he got sober he would feel remorse. Then he would tell his family that he was sorry for what he had done to them. And for a time things would be good. But then he would get drunk again, become violent, injuring his family again. This man was sorry for what he did, but his sorrow did not lead to any change in his behavior.

In our first lesson we learned that there are six basic or foundational doctrines that every Christian should know. These doctrines are: Repentance, Faith, Baptisms, Laying on of Hands, Resurrection, and Eternal Judgment. In this lesson we will begin to explore concepts of repentance.

What does it mean to repent? One definition says, to repent is "to feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing or sin." Indeed, sorrow is important to repentance. But there is actually much more to repentance than just feeling sorry for your actions. The apostle Paul wrote this about repentance: "For the **sorrow** that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the **sorrow** of the world produces death" (2Cor 7:10).

So, what is the difference between Godly sorrow that leads to repentance and worldly sorrow that produces death? There is a very good example of worldly sorrow in the story of King Saul and David.

Now after the Israelites conquered the land of Canaan, there was no king over the people. It was God's intent that the people would look to him as their king. Thus God gave to the people prophets to lead them and wise leaders to serve as judges within the land. For hundreds of years the people of Israel lived this way. Some of the leaders were very godly; others drifted away from God and led the people into sin. So God would have to raise up a new godly leader to bring the people back to him. The prophet Samuel was one such man that God raised up to restore the people to himself.

It was during the time that Samuel was prophet that the people of Israel began to complain. "All of the lands around us have kings to lead them, but we do not!" They grumbled to each other. This did not please God. He knew that kings were not always the best leaders of nations. Finally the grumbling and complaining became so great that God decided to let them have a king. He knew only one way the people would learn the value of having God as their king. He would let them be led by an earthly king. Soon a tall, handsome, young man named Saul was anointed to be the first king of Israel.

At first Saul tried to follow God's commands, but disobedience broke his relationship with God. This led to his being tormented in his mind. Then Israel's enemies, the Philistines, prepared themselves for war. Now the Philistines had a three-meter-tall giant as their champion.

All of Israel was afraid to go out and face him. But a young shepherd boy named David, who was anointed by God, went out and killed the giant. He used only a sling and a smooth stone. All of Israel rejoiced at David's victory. So King Saul brought David back to his home to be part of the royal court (1Sam 17).

Now the presence of God was upon David and he could play the lyre and sing beautifully. Whenever he played and sang before the King, Saul found moments of peace. But Saul knew that God was no longer with him, but that God's anointing was upon David. This, plus the fact that the people loved David more than the king, led Saul to great jealousy. One day David was playing and singing for Saul, whose mind was greatly tormented. Saul was walking around in his house with a spear in his hand. Suddenly Saul stopped and threw the spear at David, trying to kill him! David escaped without harm and hid from the king.

This jealousy would lead King Saul to try to kill David on many different occasions. But David would never raise his hand against the king. Instead, he continued to serve in the king's army, fighting the king's enemies. Finally King Saul earnestly set out to kill David, and this forced him to flee for his life. David gathered around himself a small group of friends. They became a raiding band of warriors who fought against Israel's enemies.

One day King Saul got news of where they were hiding in the wilderness. He gathered together an army of 3,000 soldiers and set off to find David and kill him. After journeying many hours into the wilderness, King Saul needed to find a place to empty his bladder and bowels. There was a cave on the side of the mountain ridge and Saul entered into the cave for privacy. He set his weapons down, removed his sword belt, and finally laid aside his royal cloak. Then, lifting his tunic, he squatted to relieve himself. Unknown to the king, the cave he had chosen was the very cave where David and his band of soldiers were hiding. David's men wanted to kill the king, who at that moment was totally defenseless. But David refused to lift up his hand against the king. Instead he crept up to where the king had dropped his royal robe and cut off a piece of its edge. Saul finished relieving himself and, after dressing, returned to his men. David then went and stood at the entrance to the cave and called out to the king.

"My king, why do you seek to kill me? Who has lied to you and said that I am disloyal. Look! I have in my hand the edge from your very robe. I could easily have taken your life, but I am your loyal servant."

King Saul suddenly felt great sorrow and wept for his behavior. "David my son, you are a better man than me. What man allows his enemy to escape his hand? You have dealt me a great kindness." And so Saul and his army left David and returned to their city. But David and his men went up into the mountains (1Sam 24).

Now it seemed that King Saul had repented of his behavior and would no longer seek to kill David. But the sorrow that he experienced was short lived. He was not sorrowful that he was trying to kill David. Rather, he was full of sorrow that he could have been killed and that David had spared his life. This again proved that David was a more righteous man than the king. Saul was now forced to return the kindness to David or he would lose face in front of his army. But, sometime later it was again revealed to King Saul where David and his men were hiding.

Again Saul took an army to go and kill David. But the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Saul and his army that night. David and a few of his men sneaked into Saul's camp. Again David's men wanted to kill the king, but David would not allow it. Instead David took the king's spear and the jug of water that was near the king's head and then they left. The next morning David stood on the hillside and called out to the king and his generals.

"You have not done a good job protecting the king. Men sneaked into the camp last night and could have taken his life." David shouted.

"Is that you David?" The king asked.

"It is me. Look, I have the king's spear and the water jug that was by his head. I could have taken his life, but I have never done anything against the king."

Then the king said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again, because my life was precious in your sight this day."

Again, the king and his army departed. But David knew better than to return to Israel. The king had many times expressed sorrow and even admitted he was wrong. But the king never changed. He always tried to kill David again. Thus David and his men fled the land of Israel (1Sam 26).

Soon King Saul was again tormented in his mind and felt sorry for trying to kill David. He called for him to come back and play for him. Earlier David had returned to the king. But King Saul's sorrow was not a godly sorrow. It did not lead to true repentance and a change in heart and behavior. It was a worldly sorrow. King Saul felt sorrow for his behavior only because it deprived him of David's singing. His desire to have David return was not to restore their relationship, but rather to meet his own selfish needs. You can imagine the end result of worldly sorrow. It is temporary and does not lead to true repentance. Indeed, King Saul would pursue David and try to kill him on a number of different occasions. After each attempt on David's life, Saul would feel sorrow and remorse, but never for the motives behind his actions. His sorrow never led to a change in behavior.

This lesson is **important** because it demonstrates the connection between sorrow for our behavior and repentance.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that without godly sorrow there will be no true repentance, which is made evident by a change in behavior.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. King Saul chased David and his men into the wilderness to kill them. While hiding in a cave David had a chance to kill Saul but chose not to. When King Saul was confronted with this, what emotion did he experience? [Pause]

A. If you said, "Sorrow," you are correct.

2. King Saul experienced sorrow when David spared his life. How do we know that this sorrow did not lead to true repentance? [Pause]

A. If you said that King Saul tried to kill David again, then you are correct.

3. Godly sorrow will lead to what? [Pause]

A. If you said, "True repentance," then you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it two or three more times, until you can tell the story of King Saul and David to someone else. Ask, "Is sorrow for being caught in an act the same as repenting for that act?" As you share the difference between worldly sorrow and true repentance, prayerfully ask God to show you and your fellow believers if there are sins you need to truly repent of.