

“Guilt and Conviction”

Emotions Study 5

Guilt is one of the most complex emotions. It is often rooted in the fact that we have done wrong as much as much as it is in feelings associated with culture. It can be imposed on us easily from others just as readily as we impose it on ourselves. Peter experienced the feeling of guilt the night in which Jesus was betrayed. Paul teaches the Corinthians about guilt, telling them that his first epistle to them was written to make them feel “godly sorrow”, the healthy kind in contrast with worldly guilt. How can we make this distinction in our own lives?

Matthew 26:30-35, 69-75

³⁰When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ³¹Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: " 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³²But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." ³³Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." ³⁴"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." ³⁵But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same. ⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. ⁷⁰But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. ⁷¹Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." ⁷²He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" ⁷³After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away."

⁷⁴Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" ⁷⁵Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly.

2 Corinthians 7:8-11

⁸Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it--I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while-- ⁹yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. ¹⁰Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. ¹¹See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

Questions

1. In Matthew 26:75, we see Peter weeping bitterly over his guilt in denying the Lord. Explore all the possible sources for his guilt and sorrow. Are there similar sources for these feelings in your own life?
2. In 2 Cor. 7:10, Paul contrasts “Godly sorrow” (aka Conviction) with “worldly sorrow” (aka Guilt). What is the difference in practical terms and how can we distinguish between these two types of feelings?
3. In 2 Cor. 7:8, Paul says that he does not regret making them feel sorry in his previous letter. Do we have similar authority to build up our fellow believers in this way and if so how do we do it?
4. What do we have to do and how can we encourage each other to experience the kind of repentance that Paul says “leaves no regret”? (2 Cor. 7:10)

Discussion Guidelines:

1. Allow everyone a chance to speak. If you are bursting with ideas and tend to share a lot – great – but occasionally pause a bit before you go, sometimes the quieter ones are just waiting for their chance and they need a little space before they go.
2. Respect the opinions of others, and refrain from giving advice.
3. Keep discussion focused on the material being studied.
4. Maintain the confidentiality of personal things shared within the group.