

BEWARE OF GOD'S GOODNESS

There are two verses that seem to contradict each other at first glance. They are II Corinthians 7:9 which reads, *"I rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us."* The other verse is Romans 2:4 which says, *"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?"* Now which is it? Is it the kindness of God that leads us to repentance or is it being sorrowful that produces repentance? The truth is that God uses both of them to lead us to repentance. We are more familiar with sorrow leading people to repentance. We all know stories of people who come to the end of their rope and in their despair, turn to God and repent of their sins. Actually, the apostle Paul was not exactly referring to something like that in the scripture that we read earlier. These were already believers, but they were not acting properly. Paul was probably referring to I Corinthians chapter 5, where he rebukes them about an immoral situation in the church.

Repentance doesn't just mean feeling sorry for what you have done, it means that you change directions. You must stop doing what you are doing or start doing what you have been neglecting to do. Repentance is not just an emotion, it is a determination to execute a change in your life. Sorrow may be the thing that starts your repentance but it is not repentance. The motivation for repentance often starts with the consequences of our sin. An unfaithful spouse is caught by the other partner and the partner files for divorce. Unmarried young people find that their fornication has led to a pregnancy and they have to decide how they are going to handle it. The drunken driver kills someone in a car crash. These things should lead to repentance but often times they don't. Often, people are not only not repentant at times like this; but they even end up blaming God for the consequences of their sin. They will say, "Why did God allow this to happen to me?", or they say, "Oh God, if you get me out of this, I will never do it again." This is not repentance! These people are only concerned about being caught in their sins and are looking

for a way out. Often, people will even use these things to show that there is no God. They say, "If there is a God, why does he let these things happen to people?". God would want these things to lead to repentance, but each one has to choose for himself.

Now we come to the passage that gives us a little more trouble because we don't think of God's goodness as leading us to repentance very often. I once knew of a church where I knew that the leadership was not even close to being Scriptural, and there were many people being genuinely converted in that church. I was very confused about that and went to the Lord for an answer. He showed me the verse in Romans 2. Then He began to show me that, when we are out of God's will, His goodness should convict us if our hearts are open toward Him. Our thoughts should be, "Lord you are blessing me and I know that I am not right with You, I repent, please forgive me, I will return to you and be your servant again." Of course that doesn't happen all of the time. I want to put the verse in Romans into context by reading from verse 4 through verse 8, which reads, ***"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation."*** We will all give an account for what we do and the motive for those actions. Reward will then be given, based on those deeds and motives. The pastor of the church that I mentioned earlier, said that God must approve of what he was doing because He was blessing the work. Here is a case where the blessing of God lead to arrogance and pride instead of repentance. We have seen t.v. evangelists fall in the past few years and they had been blessed greatly; but that blessing of God did not lead to repentance. Our attitude about God's blessings are of utmost importance. We must also be very careful about our attitudes about God's blessings on others. We must not be caught up in the attitude of thinking that God's blessing on someone is a sign of approval or endorsement of their actions or life stile. David had to deal with this. Psalms 73 reads, ***"Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are***

pure in heart! But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling; my steps had almost slipped. for I was envious of the arrogant, as I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pains in their death; and their body is fat. They are not in trouble as other men; nor are they plagued like mankind. Therefore pride is their necklace; the garment of violence covers them. Their eye bulges from fatness; the imaginations of their heart runs riot. They mock, and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth. Therefore his people return to this place; and waters of abundance are drunk by them. And they say, 'How does God know? and is there knowledge with the Most High?' Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence; for I have been stricken all day long, and chastened every morning. If I had said, 'I will speak thus,' behold, I should have betrayed the generation of thy children. When I pondered to understand this, It was troublesome in my sight until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end. Surely thou dost set them in slippery places; Thou dost cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are suddenly swept away by sudden terrors! Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, thou wilt despise their form. When my heart was embittered, and I was pierced within, Then was I senseless and ignorant; I was like a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee; Thou hast taken hold of my right hand. With thy counsel thou wilt guide me, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And besides thee I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For, behold, those who are far from thee will perish; thou hast destroyed all those who are unfaithful to thee. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Thy works."

As David learned, our reactions to Gods goodness to others is just as important as our reactions to God's goodness to us. It is not profitable for us to be envious of others. We can not benefit from Gods

goodness to others nor can we appropriate it for ourselves by envy. I know that I have said this before but it is futile to invest time and energy in things that are beyond our control. I have seen people consumed by jealousy over what others have. It never occurs to them to look at what they have because they are too busy looking at what they do not have. So just exactly what is it that we have? We have a savior that shed His blood to provide us with salvation. We have a home in heaven that He has been building for us for 2000 years. We have a Lord who said that He would never leave us nor forsake us. We have forgiveness for our sins. We have provision for direct communication with the creator of the universe. We have His own spirit dwelling in us. We have the Word of God that has been preserved for us at the expense of thousands of lives of the saints that have gone ahead of us. We have direct promises from the God who can never fail, promises like, "ask what you will and I will do it." "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." "I am the Lord that heals you", and so many more. In light of all of these provisions will you despise His goodness to you? Will you envy His goodness to others? If so, you need to repent. Romans 14:4 says, ***"Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand."*** Let us keep our eyes on Christ and not on our circumstances nor those of others, and let us live in His peace.

The truth is that people and civilizations can survive famines, wars, floods, invasions, and all sorts of other trials and tribulations, but one thing that civilizations do not survive very long is prosperity. In this regard, there is a parallel between what we see in the country, what we see economically, and what we see in the church. When civilizations are prosperous for a period of time, they begin to get greedy. The focus begins to be short term rather than long term, they are less willing to put off gratification till a future time. The attitude becomes, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. People begin to be focused on their own gain rather than giving consideration to others. There gets to be a (me first) attitude. In economics there is the desire for the quick buck rather than long range planning. Law suits abound, with huge awards from big companies because they can afford it without regard to what is reasonable. Big money is earned by those who contribute least to the actual production of those things that we need. People with sports

abilities, fresh out of college, earn more in one year than the factory worker will earn in his entire life time. Singers like Barbara Streisand, earn \$5 million in one evening performance. That would pay my highest teachers salary for over 140 years. People get millions of dollars because they spill coffee on themselves and get burned and, of course, the lawyer gets millions as well. The stock market is oversold and has become no more than a pyramid scheme that will come crashing down with the first announcement of bad news. Crime and in-civility are rampant and the legal system, social services, and education can not control it. All of this is made possible because the church has gone whoring after strange doctrines. We have seen "Name it Claim it", "the Prosperity doctrine, the "shepherding movement", "Christian Psychology", "User friendly Christianity", and all manner of other man made gods. We have had big time Televangelists and radio preachers who will give you a piece of wood from Noah's ark or the cross of Christ for an offering of \$25 or more. These men hawk healing cloths, water from the Jordan River, and various other charms and trinkets that gullible people, who are too lazy to read their Bibles, buy by the thousands. Our "Christian book stores are filled with all manner of New Age psychobabel that sells like crazy while the classics collect dust. We have produced a church that brags of it's mountain of faith but can not move a mustard seed. When the Church of Christ is strong the country is secure but when the church deteriorates the society will follow.

By

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