

# The Anecdote for Self-inflicted Sorrow

By Jim Davis

Growing up in a small town in West Texas my brother and I were responsible for the care and upkeep of our lawn. This was no easy task when you live in a desert area. Besides the heat and lack of rain there are grass burrs. Grass burrs are like sin. In the middle of a well-manicured lawn it will grow up and come to seed. Committing a sin is like running over the grass burr with the blade of your lawn mower. Once the seeds are spread it is impossible to recover them. There is a principle of reproduction that goes into effect when a sin is committed.

Suffering comes upon a person in many different ways. It knocks at our door at the most unexpected times and frequently it strikes like a tidal wave. Sometimes our suffering is unrelated to personal experience but often suffering comes via our sins, personal mistakes, or presumptuous and selfish ambitions. Because we live in a fallen world some suffering is unavoidable. Of course, we desire to avoid it when possible and the Bible is God's book of guidelines for blessing. I want to address what we are to do when we know that we have violated guidelines from the Bible and we are experiencing difficult times because of personal sin.

Are you trying to put Humpty-Dumpty back together again? Are you suffering consequences of your own doing? You may be trying to gather the seeds of the wild oats that you have sown. The bad news is that the only one who can truly help you is the One you have personally insulted with your sin. The good news, of course, is that God is merciful, tirelessly loving and kind, and willing to forgive. The Psalmist says in Psalm 103: "that as high as the heavens are above the earth so great is His mercy over those who fear Him." Not only is God merciful but He is powerful and willing to forgive. The Psalmist also declared that "God has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." God is the only one who is able to deal with both the penalty of your sin and also the consequences of the sins you have committed. "As far as the East is from the West so far has He separated our transgressions from us."

Perhaps you are like King David in the Old Testament and are suffering with the consequences of having committed adultery. Maybe you are at present experiencing the realities of life on drugs or alcohol. It could be that you have awakened in the aftermath of the party life and after years of pursuing good times you have come upon bad times. Unfortunately there is no way to recover what has been lost. We find that the law of "whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap" is a strict and unmovable principle. The young man or lady that has lost their virginity cannot in some way recover it. The man that abandoned his wife and children cannot go back and recover the lost experience of being a husband and father through their childhood. There are, however, some principles from the Bible to help you with the consequences of things that you may have done.

David sang, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness" (Psalm 30:11). Hope that is based on the truth is the key. God is powerful and He turns mourning into dancing. He is able to make bad things turn out good. Romans 8:28 says, "all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purposes." Simply translated, God turns bad into good when we love Him and are called into His service. The principle of hope will help you when you are experiencing God's discipline or chastisement. God can take all things, even

the consequences of your sins, and make good out of them.

Here are two things to remember on your part and two things to remember about God that will help you. Proverbs 28:13 says, “he who confesses and forsakes (his transgressions) will find compassion.” 1 John 1:9 teaches us, “If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

When you confess your sins to God you acknowledge to Him that what He has said about sin is true. You cease trying to cover up and get honest to God. The Bible tells us that God is faithful and just to forgive our sins when we confess them. That God is faithful means that we can count on him to do what He has said. That God is just means that what He wants to do He is able to do without violating His holy character. Because the penalty of sin is death and Christ paid the just penalty in your place, God is just when He expresses mercy toward you. “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Psalm 51 records how King David confessed his sin of adultery and murder. It will help you if you want to know how to confess sin.

When we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive the penalty of our sin which is death but He is also interested in cleansing us from unrighteousness. In other words, God doesn't want us to keep doing wrong things again and again so He purges us from the sinful desires that are in our heart. It means that God will bring the chastisement or discipline necessary to correct His children even as any good father would discipline his son (Hebrews 12:5-6). Psalm 51 records King David's confession of sin, but Psalm 6 addresses suffering brought about by God's chastisement in David's life. God's chastisement provokes us to confess and to forsake our sin. Sometimes confession and repentance occur at the same time. Usually repentance occurs in stages. It is only necessary to confess your sins to God once but repentance may be a process. David thought that because he was king he could enjoy the pleasures of sin without experiencing the consequences of sin. The natural and God-given circumstances brought about by David's sin created distaste for the temporary pleasure.

Repentance is a gift that God has given to sinful men. Psalm 119:67 says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray. But now I keep Thy word.” The purpose of repentance is to terminate or prevent God's judgment for sin and restore a relationship with God. In the case of the Assyrian city, Ninevah, God turned from destroying the city when he saw that they had turned (repented) from their wicked ways (Jonah 3:10). Another example from Scripture is the wicked King Manasseh. The Bible says that he practiced witchcraft, and sacrificed his children to false gods, and did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger (2 Chronicles 33:6). But when Manasseh was taken into captivity and was in great distress he humbled himself before God and repented and God brought him out of captivity and back again to Jerusalem. The biblical principle of repentance is key for experiencing deliverance from the consequences of sins.

God is faithful and just to forgive us when we confess. He will take away the penalty of our sin. God mercifully cleanses us from the sinful desires of our heart when we forsake them. He will deliver us from the consequences of our sins. He will turn your mourning into dancing. He will turn your sorrow into joy.