

# "HEAR YE HIM"

## A Devotional Series For Radio

This sermon script is furnished with the good wishes of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

World Headquarters: The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri

Program Number 250  
Evan A. Fry, Radio Minister  
All Rights Reserved

The Sermon: SORROW UNTO REPENTANCE

Scripture: Book of Mormon, Mormon 1:34-38.

And it came to pass that the Nephites began to repent of their iniquity, and began to cry even as had been prophesied by Samuel the prophet . . . . Thus there began to be a mourning and a lamentation in all the land . . . ., and more especially among the people of Nephi. And it came to pass that when I, Mormon, saw their lamentations, and their mourning, and their sorrowing before the Lord, my heart did begin to rejoice within me, knowing the mercies and long suffering of the Lord, therefore supposing that he would be merciful unto them, that they would again become a righteous people. But behold this my joy was vain, for their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God, but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin. And they did not come unto Jesus with broken hearts and contrite spirits, but they did curse God, and wish to die.

\*\*\*\*

Their sorrowing was not unto repentance.

The background of our reading from the Book of Mormon earlier in this service is important to the subject chosen for this talk. The Nephites, whose history was written by Mormon, had been repeatedly defeated in battle by their rivals and enemies, the Lamanites, and had fled before them with great loss of lands and possessions. There was a continuing threat of further warfare and destruction. There was great wickedness even among the Nephites, which was manifested in rebellion, revolution, anarchy, murder, robbery, and attempts at various kinds of black magic and witchcraft. So serious had the situation become that the record says, "No man could keep that which was his own." No one's property or life was safe.

In the midst of this distressing and painful situation, the Nephites began to be sorrowful, and to mourn and wail and lament before the Lord. For a time, Mormon had high hopes that their repentance was genuine, that it would bring about a much needed reform, and lead the people back to God. Finally he had to come to the inevitable conclusion which he expressed thus: "Their sorrowing was not unto repentance, because of the goodness of God, but it was rather the sorrowing of the damned, because the Lord would not suffer them to take happiness in sin."

There are two kinds of sorrow: godly sorrow that worketh repentance, and world-

ly sorrow that ends in death. What is the difference? Paul also mentions these two kinds of sorrow in the second Corinthian letter, chapter 7, verse 10: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death." In this passage the Weymouth translation uses the word "pain" instead of "sorrow." In some ways "pain" is more meaningful than "sorrow." The difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world may be illustrated by the two ways in which we may regard and deal with pain.

No pain is easy to bear; but in some ways pain is good. I remember reading a news story from London several years ago about an eight year old boy who suffered some kind of nervous disorder which made him insensible to pain. The headline described his life as a "nightmare." Every day his mother had to examine him carefully for painless cuts, burns, and bruises. On one occasion he burned himself severely, but felt nothing and didn't realize that he was being burned until someone else smelled burning flesh.

With this illustration it is easy to see that pain may be a good and indispensable thing. It is a warning that something is wrong. But when pain comes, if we are concerned only about doing away with the pain, then we may let the cause of the pain go on uncorrected until it destroys us completely. If we are con-

cerned with the basic cause of the pain, on the other hand, we seek to remedy the condition that causes the pain, and the pain disappears automatically when the cause is corrected. Once the cause has been corrected and the pain stopped, we continue to live, with no regrets for the pain experienced, because it was instrumental perhaps in saving our life.

Sorrow for sin is like pain; it may be used as an instrument of God's discipline and mercy, or it may be used as an excuse for further rebellion, waywardness, and crime. It may lead to life, or it may lead to death.

Leslie D. Weatherhead says that there are two effects of sin: (1) penalties, and (2) consequences. The penalty for sin consists in separation from God, plus a progressive deterioration of character. Godly sorrow for sin brings repentance; and repentance cancels this penalty. It brings forgiveness. It restores the fellowship with God which has been lost. It stops the progressive deterioration of the sinner, and gives him the assistance and power needed to start building back what he has lost.

Consequences are not so easily cancelled. Repentance does not cancel them. God himself cannot cancel them. If while driving as carefully as you know how you innocently and unwittingly kill somebody with your car, the penalties for murder or manslaughter may be forgiven or remitted, and you may go free. But the consequences always remain. The dead man will still remain dead. His wife and family will still be deprived of his strength, his comfort, his love, and his support. You yourself will never be quite the same again for remembering your tragedy. Thus all sin has consequences which forgiveness cannot cancel. When the prodigal son returned home he found forgiveness; he was restored to his father's love and fellowship; but no amount of forgiveness could bring back the fortune or the years or the health he had wasted.

Godly sorrow recognizes that consequences, and the pain and suffering they bring, are the discipline of a loving heavenly Father. The repentant sinner welcomes the painful consequences of sin as one welcomes the pain of an inflamed appendix because it indicates a source of infection and potential death, and enables the sufferer to take prompt and proper action to save himself before it is too

late. The unrepentant sinner, caught in a web of consequences which bring him pain and suffering and loss, rebels, resents the pain, and stubbornly refuses to do anything about it.

Some sorrow is sorrow only for the consequences of sin --for loss of health, friends, money, time, pride, self-esteem, reputation. It is sorrow that we cannot eat our cake and have it too -- that we cannot continue to have the pleasure of sin without suffering the consequences that bring loss and pain. It is sorrow for the pain, but not for the malady that causes the pain.

In the Corinthian letter previously mentioned, Paul lists certain results of the godly sorrow of the Corinthian saints. It worked in them a carefulness or earnestness, that would not allow them to belittle their sin; an eagerness to clear themselves of guilt by repentance, apology, and restitution; and indignation that they could so easily be led astray and deceived; a fear or alarm lest they fall into error again; a vehement desire to be received back into the good graces of God; a zeal for good works; and a willingness to receive and use to godly purposes whatever punishment was proper and necessary under the circumstances.

In conclusion, let us look again at the Nephites who sorrowed, not unto repentance, not because they recognized the goodness of God and wanted to be forgiven and restored to his fellowship, but whose sorrowing was the sorrowing of the damned because the Lord would not always suffer them to take happiness in sin. They wanted to be left free to rob, lie, murder, steal, and break any laws of God or man they pleased; but they did not want to be killed, or robbed of their wealth, or beset by lawless enemies, or driven from city to city by hostile armies. They sorrowed because of the consequences of their sins, but they did not welcome those consequences as the means of grace that would lift the penalty, lead them to reconciliation, and restore them to fellowship with God.

How do you sorrow for sin? Worldly sorrow, the sorrow of the damned, leads to death, to total and eternal separation from God, without a single ray of hope. Godly sorrow leads to repentance, to God, and to eternal bliss that leaves no regrets.