

When “Sorry” Isn’t, “Apologies” Aren’t, and “Repentance” Doesn’t 2Cor.7:9-11

Context: Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians was full of rebukes and corrective instructions almost from beginning to end. In this Second Epistle, and especially in the verses of our primary text, he details their response(s) to the chastisements of the previous letter. They had listened. They had learned. They were truly sorrowful. They manifested true regret for their previous actions. They repented (to change your heart and mind to such a degree that you change your future actions/course). All of which brings to mind the all-too-common *imposters* fostered by our society highlighted in our title.

“Sorry” that Isn’t.

- From an early age, children are taught that to say you’re “sorry” is a *get out of jail free card* where the words are required, but the expression of them are devoid of and divorced from any true consciousness of the “crime,” and/or even the slightest sincere remorse for it.
- We don’t want their precious psyches damaged or their self-esteem repressed by such horrible detriments such as *guilt* or *shame*, so the mere utterance of the word “Sorry” suffices.
- Adults are thus produced in which “Sorry” becomes a common expression that rarely possesses any true contrition. Then, we’re “*Sorry* you misunderstood me” or “mistook my meaning” but after all, “I was just being me” or “honest” as if such justifies heartless and hurtful words/actions that are completely lacking in sympathy, empathy, compassion, or grace, cf. Matt.12:36; Eph.4:31-32; Col.4:5-6.
- Parents, please teach your children that *words* (and *actions!*) should be sincerely and properly chosen **before** they give offense, as well as **afterwards** when we fail to do so. Otherwise, “sorry” becomes just another heartless expression glibly given by narcissists as a mere means to an end for them. Parents, teach your children to *be* truly “sorry” for their mistakes rather than just saying it, for “*the sorrow of the world produces death.*”

“Apologies” that Aren’t.

- When “sorry” isn’t really, then any additional “apology” is robbed of its proper motivation and sincerity. Please realize that being “sorry” is the precursor of an “apology,” but is not synonymous to it. Saying “I’m sorry,” even when such is true, is, alone, not all there is to an “apology”- which should also include (in addition to the sincere expression of regret): an *admission of wrong*, and a *request for forgiveness*.
- Otherwise, “I’m sorry” may be (and probably is) merely a statement about “me”... perhaps being sorry *I got caught* doing something *others think is wrong* (but I probably don’t) and *I regret* having to go through this *completely unnecessary but apparently required* “apology” for which I am

not truly sorry, nor do I actually even regret. In this connection, note King Saul's words of 1Sam.15 from: v.13, complete denial of obvious wrongdoing; v.15, blame-shifting; vv.20-21, doubled-down denial and blame-shifting but with added proposed "noble" motivations ("ends justifies the means" logic); v.24, "Yes, I did wrong- but it wasn't *my* fault." Does any of these *denials of guilt, side-stepping of culpability, and justification of motivation* sound familiar? Are they not hallmarks of modern "apologies" that aren't really? Is there any *admission of guilt, statement of contrition, or request for forgiveness* (all of which should comprise an "apology")? We're all going to make mistakes (cf. 1John 1:8), and we all need to learn how to properly "apologize," for "***the sorrow of the world produces death.***"

"Repentance" that Doesn't.

- Being "sorry" is about *regret* and *motivation* for the forthcoming "apology," which further includes an *admission of guilt, a statement of contrition, and a request for forgiveness*. But there is one more step in this process of attaining *forgiveness* that we need to consider: a *vow of changed behavior*. What *admission of guilt, statement of regret, and request of forgiveness* could be refused when accompanied by a *sincere* (there's that word again!) *pledge not to repeat the offense*?
- Go back to our primary text of 2Cor.7 and note carefully: *genuine sorrow* was produced by the *regard for* and *application of truth* (Paul's inspired accusation of wrongdoing), vv.8-9a; this *godly sorrow* (for such it is) further enabled *earnestness, indignation* (at self for sin), *zeal* (for renewed fellowship), v.11a; and resulted in *true repentance*, v.10a, and *life* (by renewed *innocence*), v.11b. This is how it's done, "***but the sorrow of the world produces death.***"

Conclusions- Final Thoughts to Contemplate/Remember:

1. **"Apologies"**- even those properly motivated and carried out, **are REQUESTS for forgiveness** based on the **GRACE of the offended**. Thus "forgiveness" cannot be demanded on a *quid-pro-quo* basis of having jumped through the proper hoops **by the offender**, cf. Mal.2:13,15a; Eph.2:8-9.
2. We should, even when we are the "wronged" party, **remember our own need(s) of forgiveness**, cf. Matt.18:21-35.
3. And mostly importantly of all, our *sorrow for sin, apologies to God and requests for forgiveness and renewed fellowship*, **should include sincere expressions of and desires for true repentance as well**. True sorrow for sin produces repentance without regret!