

Sorrow Over Sin

Nehemiah 1:1-11

Monday July 12, 2021

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*When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days,
I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.
—Nehemiah 1:4*

In Japan, you can hire a handsome man to show up at your workplace and watch a sad video with you and your team until people on your team begin to cry. Once people are crying, this man walks around the room with a handkerchief and wipes the tears from the various team members' eyes. Sometimes teams go to the business location of the man who wipes the tears away. He plays a few sad videos, and then as people cry, he wipes their tears away in his office setting.

The man's job title is somewhat unusual: *ikemeso danshi*, or "handsome weeping boy." He runs sessions with the sole purpose of making people cry. Japanese people are not used to weeping in front of other people. The philosophy behind this crying exercise suggests it is good to show off your vulnerability to your teammates. When you see others crying, it's supposed to bring people together, so they work better as a team. Weeping in front of one another breaks down walls. But, this kind of weeping is contrived, not organic or natural.

In our walk with God, tears sometimes come naturally. They can reflect our deep-felt response to sin in our lives or the lives of others. Several characters in the Bible exhibit tears of repentance. The Old Testament character Nehemiah is one such example.

Nehemiah lived in exile in a foreign land due to God's judgment on the people of Israel decades earlier. As we read the book of Nehemiah we see that he works for the pagan Emperor of the Medes and Persians. He hears news from Jerusalem. The city lies in waste. Efforts to rebuild have been futile and frustrating. Nehemiah responds to the report in Nehemiah 1:4 by breaking down in tears. Throughout the remainder of chapter one, Nehemiah prays to God on behalf of his people. He repents of his sin and the sin of his ancestors.

"I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses" (Nehemiah 1:6-7).

The longer we walk with God, the more we see how damaging our sin and selfishness are. Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, most of us have known the tears of brokenness and pain. Weeping in repentance is not contrived by the manipulation of others. We felt the burden of our sin and the consequences of it. We cried over our failures and how they hurt those closest to us.

Courageous Christians repent as a part of their walk with God. Hope is found in experiencing the constant forgiveness and grace of our God. That grace can be found in no one other than Jesus!

Jesus gives us freedom from the burden of sin's shame and guilt. As we walk in Him, we find release from old patterns of sinful thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. When we sorrow over sin, those tears represent how our offenses against God and others grieve us as followers of Christ. New patterns of healthy and holy thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors come as we experience the continuing forgiveness God gives us. Tears of sorrow over sin give way to joy in the Lord.

Freedom begins when we sorrow over our sin and embrace God's grace to cleanse us.

Today's Prayer

Lord, thank you for your constant forgiveness. I know sin hurts my witness for you to others. Show me any sin inhibiting my life being a clear witness for you! —Amen