



The President's Perspective



Repentance

"Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed unto repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner. For godly sorrow worketh (produces) repentance to salvation not to be repented of (regretted): but the sorrow of the world worketh (produces) death." II Corinthians 7:9-10

At the risk of sounding political and supporting one party over another, I confess that I was angered this week by the arrogant, condescending and totally inappropriate "joke" that the Senator from Massachusetts told this week at a campaign stop in California. I was angered that (1) he denigrated our troops and that (2) he, even in his "apology," actually refused to apologize. Note the distinguished Senator's apology. "I apologize that my comment was misunderstood and if I offended anyone in the military or their families." Someone's misunderstanding of a statement is not your fault and, hence, is not the subject of an apology. Also, it is totally inappropriate to express one's regret "IF I offended." Either you offended or you did not. If you did, then the appropriate response is, "I apologize FOR offending."

This week's "apology" firestorm is one more example of the way our culture expresses sorrow. It is what the Bible refers to as "the sorrow of the world." Though I cannot judge anyone's motives, I do know that worldly sorrow is never genuine sorrow over the offense itself, or the injury that it has caused, but rather something else entirely. Consider the following two thoughts.

First, the world's sorrow is sorrow over being CAUGHT. I dare say that this is the main reason a child, politician, religious leader or CEO expresses remorse. Had the transgressions of Ken Lay, Martha Stewart, Mark Foley or most any other contemporary name in the news, not been uncovered, we would probably have never heard a word from them. It is a rare occurrence to hear remorse expressed over the offense committed and the hurt inflicted. It is an ever rarer thing to hear sorrow expressed BEFORE the iniquity becomes public knowledge. As one politician stated, "America is a very forgiving nation. Just say you're sorry and Americans will overlook your dalliances." Far too often, I fear that "apologies" are nothing more than statements of regret that "I've been found out."

Second, the world's sorrow is sorrow over the COST. It is always easier, at first, to defend oneself than to admit "I did it." To admit to one's wrong-doing usually carries a heavy penalty. It can mean the loss of respect, trust, a job, or a marriage. It is always easier to lie, cover, or "spin" the story than to just come clean with the truth. The sad

reality, with this weeks' events, is that Senator Kerry's refusal to admit to his "mis-statement, "blooper" or whatever, may end up being the thing that costs him his career. It will be extremely difficult for him to repair the damage to his reputation, especially in the eyes of the military.

The real test of genuine sorrow is what follows the apology. The Bible says, "godly sorrow produces REPENTANCE," that is, a change of lifestyle. If Senator Kerry, or anyone else for that matter, really is "sorry," then they will live differently. Zachaeus, the short tax collector, when he admitted that he was wrong, attempted to restore all that his actions had taken away. In fact, he did so four-fold!

May this weeks' events cause us to seriously examine our own hearts, when we have done wrong. I pray that our MOTIVE for saying, "I'm sorry!" will be that we truly regret the offense we've created and not, merely, that we are sorry for the consequences of our being caught.

Dave Kistler
President,

H.O.P.E Ministries International
www.hopeministriesonline.com

Email comments to:
davekistler@hopeministriesonline.com

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