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Remorse, Sorrow and Mourning

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How does every society of people expect someone to react when they are found guilty of a crime against a neighbor? I think the universally acceptable reaction is for the perpetrator to show remorse. We want them to be sorry, not that they got caught, but to feel the pain their actions caused someone else. Only a sociopath can feel nothing at the pain and suffering of another. Nations, tribes, and clans all over the world and throughout history have had rules of order to live together in peace and harmony. These rules have been amazingly consistent for thousands of years. The apostle Paul in Galatians chapter 5 listed both the acceptable and the unacceptable with his rendering of the deeds of the flesh followed by his accounting of the fruits of the spirit. These fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are what every person in the world wants from his neighbors. I suppose that is the reason Paul follows perfect function with "against such there is no law". There was not then, nor, to my knowledge, has there ever been, anywhere in the world, a law against having these character traits.

Paul's deeds of the flesh, though, are against the law in most places and always have been unless it was a lawless society, usually described as such, like our own Wild West. The goal of these wild societies, if I interpret the history of such correctly, was to tame down the wildness because so many innocent were harmed. As laws were passed and punishments handed down, they were severe and swift in the beginning. Hangings and immediate executions were often the rule and hanging judges were popular because people needed to feel safe. As the more gentle of society began to gain control, the shift began to incarcerate and rehabilitate. Society's willingness to show mercy was most often based on how much remorse was displayed by the wayward. Parole systems were established to both show mercy and give opportunity to lessen the burden of supporting the incarcerated by reintegrating them as productive, harmonious members of society. Again, though, all this was dependent upon the guilty feeling the pain of their actions, expressing regret and meaning it. Something, anything to let the offended know the offender will never offend again.

Our Lord Jesus, at the very beginning of His ministry, after telling the multitudes to repent (turn), began laying out for them the requirements for citizenship. Number two in that list was "blessed are those who mourn" (Mat 5:4). In order for us as human beings to reach our full potential "becoming partakers of the Divine nature" (2Pt. 1:4) we must first realize the seriousness of falling short of what GOD desires for us and what He expects from us in order to trust us with something far greater. Our willingness to be sorry, to grieve over not only our own personal shortcomings but also those of others displays a character trait we learn from GOD and His son the man, Jesus.

While watching the Olympic Games we were, of course, cheering for our own. Proud Americans always wanting our nation to be the winning team. Compassion dictates certain reactions though when we see someone else's beloved suffer a humiliating defeat because they too have spent their entire lives preparing for this moment. As much as the Russian government can be a thorn in the American side, we almost cried when the two best Russian girls fell during their events in gymnastics. They had worked so hard and had come so far, even though you want to win and they are the "enemy" we had better grieve over their pain. There is something very sick about rejoicing over someone else's misery. There is although something Godlike about grieving over your enemy's suffering. I guess as a grandfather it took two little Russian girls to teach me that lesson. Could I feel the same sense of mourning for a Russian soldier? Soldiers are different though, right? What about when our Lord was about to die on the cross and those who were actually taking His life were the objects of His Compassion. He intervened like Moses had done centuries before. He said "forgive them father, they know not what they do". They were killing Him and He was worried about them. They were not innocent little girls. They were committing a heinous crime against HIM. We should grieve over sin — not just our own, but anyone's.