

Giant Despair

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“Great thoughts of your sin alone will lead you to despair,” said the beloved 19th Century London pastor, Charles Spurgeon. He ought to know. He had excruciating bouts with depression. “I know the borders of despair and the horrible brink of that gulf of darkness into which my feet have almost gone.”

But read the quote again:

“Great thoughts of your sin alone will lead you to despair, but great thoughts of Christ will pilot you into a haven of peace. The weight of my sin presses down on me like a giant’s foot would crush a worm, but oh, it is but a grain of dust to Him because He has borne that sin on the cross.”



Despair, melancholy, depression, sadness, sorrow, regret—we all know something about this giant who goes by many names. And some face him to a degree almost beyond toleration. Often (but not always) the heaviness of sin is at the root of such despair.

We are no match for such a giant as the relentless memory of foolish disobedience.

As believers who still sin, we know this:

- Our sin is an awful crime against the One who loves us the most.
- Our sin makes us feel worthless and defeated.
- Our sin may create tension, distrust, and alienation to some degree with others, even if it does so merely because of our mental preoccupation with it.
- Continual meditation on our sin may debilitate us way beyond the actual sin itself. We can give sin a second life by letting it destroy all our joy and godly ambition. Even after repentance, we allow the back side of the hurricane of sin to blow prevailing winds of despair over us.
- Sometimes we wallow in the memory of our sin as a way to try to pay for it ourselves.

It is that last issue that is the most unappreciated by God because it implies there is something inadequate in Christ’s work on the cross, as if He did not pay for sins *en toto*.

As a true believer, what should you do if Giant Despair is bludgeoning you with former sins?

Be sure you have repented of that sin. Repentance is hating what you once loved, and rejecting what you once craved. It is a change of mind that effects behavior. The believer lives in the world of repentance. “The sorrow which comes from God,” said the apostle Paul, “produces repentance, without regret, leading to salvation [deliverance]; but the sorrow of the world leads to death.” (2 Cor. 7:10)

Act on the necessary correctives—especially asking forgiveness or making restitution to the person(s) you have sinned against. Generally our admission of our sin should be as wide as the sphere of the sin itself. If it is between you and one other, go to that person, admit your sin, and ask for forgiveness. If it is between you and a group, go to the group. If it is between you and God, go to God alone.

Have “great thoughts of Christ.” This is what Spurgeon learned-and practiced! Christ has already taken the punishment of that sin for you. Have enough sorrow to be sick of the sin, but not so much sorrow as to make nothing of what Christ has done on the cross. When you are convinced enough to despise it, then sorrow has done its work. Throw off nagging thoughts and go on.

Christian, God does not appreciate us acting as though Christ did not die. Your sin demands a fresh application of faith, a resting on this solid truth. Believe what He told you about the effect of Christ’s death for your sins. Have “great thoughts of Christ.” In Christ, you are as forgiven as you can be!

Your sin “is but a grain of dust to Him because He has borne that sin on the cross.”

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . .”

Isaiah 53:4

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