



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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Dear Friends,

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Your recorded message this month addresses the redemptive nature of sorrow. There are of course different kinds of sorrow. Some sorrow can be so deep and damaging that it can require professional help to guide a person out of it. That is an important subject that is beyond our present focus. Yet I do want to make one thing clear. What some clinicians and pastoral counselors call chronic sorrow will still have a redemptive power for good to the person who can lay it at the Cross.



Our focus here is on the kinds of sorrows that have come from our own sinful choices. These sorrows actually become for us the pavement of our road out of the sin that caused the very sorrow we seek to transcend. How can God give us a new heart without that simply making us a robot? Can He change us without annihilating us? Yes! It is through the grace-guided process of redemptive suffering. Our willful choices become transformed into His desires for us. In such a mysterious journey, we begin to choose His will over ours. So we are still free while He gives us His desire for us which He in-

tended all along. All along He wanted you and me to be free to choose the good, without robotically programming us, for love's sake. Our sorrows are a part of that liberating process. This is the full work of grace.

In our happy-clappy materialist pseudo-Christian culture, we are encountering an increasing illness of soul. It is a kind of sorrow that is sorry that sorrow exists. Yet it is not sorry that sin exists, only that sorrow exists. It is not because it longs for goodness, but only for personal relief of private pain. A wiser generation understood that as one old song says, "without a tear the heart is hollow." We are a people so entangled with our own longing for ongoing uninterrupted earthly happiness, that we have become increasingly overwhelmed with sorrow. There is such a lack of understanding

that this life is a time of soul formation as we grow in grace and, most of all, as we learn how to love. It is the focus of satisfying ourselves that has made us shallow. We are easily stuck up to our axels in sorrow so that we cannot make progress.

And the big question is progress to where, progress to what? If the present happiness is all the meaning there is, there is not much soul-making material to work with. We tear easily. Our fabric cannot hold. Yet for those who understand that **the suffering of this present time cannot be compared to the glory that shall be revealed to and in us**, we are becoming. **We are transforming from glory to glory**. There is a far greater meaning beyond our present happiness. There is a strength of being forming in the core of us. It not only can endure present sorrow, but also can see through the sorrow to a place of joy. Yes, it just happens to be true: the dark threads of a tapestry contribute to the overall beauty of the final picture.

Trusting this process is what faith is, what Christian hope is, and it produces an elevation of soul that eventually transcends sorrow. It spins straw into gold, so to speak. Sorrow itself cannot perform this miracle. But sorrow willfully united to Christ is no longer meaningless suffering. It is joined to His Cross. We can stand in the Cross in our sorrow, but with our eyes ever lifted to His Face. And as we do so, trusting Him to be with us in our sorrow, this transforming supernatural power is then released into our lives. The end result will be that **as we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him**.



Movie News

Wonder

This is the story of a middle school child born with a genetic facial deformity and what he had to overcome as he made his way into the painful world of public school. It is funny, painful, sobering, and for parents, often hard to watch. But if my kids were in upper grammar school or entering middle school, I would certainly take them to see it. Then afterwards, I would have a real discussion with them on bullying and adolescent insecurity. Our kids need to learn how to stand up against any mistreatment on behalf of those victimized by the crowd.

Darkest Hour

Teaching our children history through the dubious medium of Hollywood film demands full attention to truth. I don't mean truth as regards to exactness of detail, but to the spirit of truth. In this film, which depicts the war behind the War going on in Churchill's government, there is a good presentation of the spirit of truth. For instance, no, Churchill did not leave his limo and go down into the tube lines to ask the London common man and woman what he should do about negotiations for peace with the likes of Hitler. Rather, this is a depiction meant to communicate a vital truth. The truth is that Churchill did indeed take his queues from the heart of the British people and then re-presented their best and highest back to them in his resounding speeches. This gave the British people the strength of will to carry forward.

I am sad to say that neither this fine film, nor *Dunkirk*, which fleshes out the full story *Darkest Hour* introduces, gives credit to the miracle of answered prayer that saved nearly 300,000 British troops when all hope was gone. There is no reference to the call by King George for the nation to pray. Still, the spirit of the real events are communicated. To a generation so deprived of any understanding of our history and of the huge demands and sacrifices our parents and grandparents made, films like *Darkest Hour* serve a real valuable purpose. They tell the story, if not with precision of detail, still in the spirit of truth.

Some Closing Thoughts...



I am feeling the national and personal weight of demands increasing. I face what is given me to battle in the confines of my own small portion of the wider war-both above me and within me. I know you do too. We simply must press forward. And because we know we must, we do. Nothing is wasted. What seems mysterious, we entrust to God. What seems meaningless, we know is not. Nothing is useless. *All things are for your sake. All things are yours. And you are Christ's. And Christ is God's.* Turn straw to gold by giving thanks to Him in the face of your own battles.

You are all very dear to us. We are deeply honored by your trust to let us into your private worlds each month.

Happy Valentine's Day, Clay & Mary



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