**A TIME TO WEEP** by Leslie Diestelkamp

My lifetime philosophy has been that Christianity is not a life of sadness but a life of gladness. In spite of all the sorrows and disappointments that come to every one of us, we have every reason to live a life of joy. Overcoming even deep grief, we “sorrow not as those who have no hope” (1 Thes. 4:13).

The joy of which I write is not necessarily demonstrated by laughter. In fact, constant laughter, especially when there is nothing funny, may indicate frustration and insecurity. The happiness of which I write is characterized by serenity, contentment, peace of mind, and hope which is “an anchor of the soul” (Heb. 6:19).

***Personal Remorse***

But let us turn our attention to real and valid reasons for sorrow. Each person will surely come to a time when he must let his “laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness” (Jas. 4:9). Actually James is demanding penitence. We must not rejoice in sin. It has always been disconcerting to me to hear someone tell how bad he used to be. I suspect such behavior should not be advertised. Indeed, when we see sin in our own lives or in the lives of others, it should cause grief that would lead us to repent or to try to help others see the necessity of “godly sorrow” that “worketh repentance…” (2 For. 7:10).

Please do not misunderstand me. Sorrow is not repentance; and it is repentance—not sorrow—that is a condition of salvation (Ac. 17:30). However, this absolutely-necessary penitence is hardly possible in the absence of godly sorrow. And this kind of sorrow is a product of the piercing of our hearts by the word of God (Heb. 4:12). So let us be quick to identify and acknowledge to God our total unworthiness, doing so with humble and contrite hearts that are bowed down in godly sorrow. In real repentance David said, “Mine iniquities are gone over my head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me…I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long” (Psa. 38:4,6). No wonder David was called a man after God’s own heart. And though we may not have sinned in the manner or extent as did David, we do need the same spirit he had.

***National Grief***

Our country—the land of the free and the home of the brave, the place of refuge for suffering humanity for three or four centuries—has declined to such a low ebb of morality that there is reason to weep, not to laugh. Perhaps it would be well if our national leaders would wipe away the wide smiles and face the nation with sober, serious calls to repentance.

Solomon said, “righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). Of course I have no means of appealing to the nation, but I can appeal to my brother in the Lord. We need to become a dynamic, leading force for the righteousness which would certainly assure us of God’s blessings on the nation. The nation can never be better than the influence real Christians have on it. I hope there is a sufficient percentage of righteous people, unlike Sodom of old (Gen. 19:32), so that God will spare the nation and that a reformation of the nation will come that would again provide the fertile soil for the seed of the kingdom such as prevailed in the fruitful years a few generations ago. There is need for national sorrow, for only thereby may we hope for national joy with God’s blessings.