

Godly Sorrow vs Worldly Sorrow

By Kevin Foster

Godly Sorrow:

2Co 7:10

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

It is not a self-focused sorrow that leads to regret, rather Godly sorrow leads to sadness that fully releases a Christian from the sins he committed.

Worldly sorrow

Is different from the godly sorrow that Paul was commending the Corinthian Christians for having. "Worldly sorrow" has non-repentant characteristics like:

Self-pity – "I can't believe I did this"

Personal embarrassment – "What are others going to think about me now?"

Shameful regret – "I will never be able to forget what I have done"

Unbelieving guilt – "I can't forgive myself"

Worldly sorrow—simply put—is feeling sorry for yourself but not sorry enough to turn to God in real life change.

Godly Sorrow

Turning from something wrong while switching to something good is the essence of repentance.

Repentance is a "from/to dynamic."

Psa 31:9, 10, 23

Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is exhausted from sorrow, my years from groaning.

Love the Lord, all you godly ones! The Lord protects faithful people, but he pays back in full those who act arrogantly.

That's how the Corinthian Christians repented:

- They turned from hating/avoiding Paul to longing to see Paul.
- They turned from rejecting Paul's authority to embracing him.
- They turned from being influenced by false teachers to the rejection of false teachers.
- They turned from being prideful and defensive of their sin to mourning over their sin.
- They turned from refusing to exercise church discipline to following Paul's instruction to discipline an erring brother.

2Co 7:9

yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us (by Paul's rebuke)

2Co 7:11

See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.

1. Repentance is not worldly sorrow or pouting
2. Repentance is not penance or some form of self-atonement
3. Repentance is not merely a confession
4. Repentance is not a partial confession
5. Repentance is not selfish motivation
6. Repentance is not "damage control"
7. Repentance is not morbid introspection