



# Godly Sorrow

“God knows I am a sinner. I asked God for forgiveness and no one is perfect.”

Inside and outside of the church, this is the normal response people give when challenged about wrongdoing. God, however, considers this the biggest excuse for sin and will condemn them on judgment day. The only difference between the world and the church is that the church takes the name of Jesus in vain.

“I have confessed it to God and know that He has forgiven me,” is the whitewash used to paint over sins in the church. But forgiveness of sins is never a private matter because sin is never simply a personal matter. The fact that when Eve sinned, it affected the whole universe ought to be proof enough. When we sin, whether privately or publicly, it affects everything all the way to heaven. For this reason, God has told us what He considers to be true sorrow over sin. We, in our sinful scheming, desire a false easy way of repentance. Elihu, a young man, full of wisdom, was correct when he rebuked Job by declaring the following:

Suppose a man says to God, ‘I am guilty but will offend no more. Teach me what I cannot see; if I have done wrong, I will not do so again.’ Should God then reward you on your terms, when you refuse to repent? You must decide, not I; so tell me what you know. Job 34:31-33

We often willingly say, “I am guilty and will sin no more.” We might even ask God to teach us what we cannot see as sinful and resolve to not sin again. We just want to ignore what we did and promise not do it again. As the previous passage demonstrates, we always want to analyze more. Constantly when dealing with sin, people repeat, “I don’t know why I sinned.” They want to keep on searching out why they committed the sin rather than acting to overcome. We already know why we sin—we are worthless to the core (Romans 3:12). The hard heart of man is always happy to learn more about sin, as long as

he never has to repent according to the will of God. Therefore, James reminds us that Bible study can become a deceptive matter (James 1:22).

Our sorrow remains too shallow and our resolve goes according to our own plans and design, therefore, we never overcome sin. Indeed, we brush aside wrongs done to others, so the consequences of sin continue to harm. Jesus does not forgive such repentance and we are in grave danger of being surprised when God sends us to hell. It does not matter if you think you asked Jesus into your heart or not, Christ commands that we repent on His terms when we sin.



Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.  
2 Corinthians 7:10

Feeling sorry over the sins in your life means nothing. Men, in the church or out of the church, feel sorry for the sins they commit. Indeed, everyone in Hades right now is full of sorrow (Matthew 24:51). However, there are two kinds of sorrow over sin. One is “worldly sorrow” and the second is “godly sorrow.”

Worldly sorrow actually produces death. Think of it. A man has sorrow for his sins in such a way that the sorrow over the sin actually works more death than the sin he committed. It would have been better if he were not sorrowful for the wrongs committed. After all, the worldly sorrow produces a delusion that fools the person into thinking they are genuine in their repentance.

Some people leave our church regretting that they felt sorrowful over their exposed sins. They regret giving up things, confessing, and

seeking to overcome sins. In fact, they become extremely bitter that they tried to repent. As a result, they resort to slandering those who tried to help them repent (Proverbs 19:3). This is why we read that only godly sorrow “leaves no regret.” Those who have godly sorrow discover the rich resurrected life after having suffered in their bodies to be done with sin (1 Peter 4:1).

Godly sorrow over sin can be seen in actions that spring from a good conscience and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:6). Someone with godly sorrow will never have to announce to others that they are repenting. If a person has to tell you that they are repenting, then they are lying, because godly sorrow is self-evident.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. 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. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

When someone says they have repented of a sin, ask yourself if they have godly or worldly sorrow. Do you see the good fruit Paul wrote about in Corinthians?

- **Earnestness:** a quickness to act with all their heart to deal with the sin.
- **Eagerness to clear:** making sure to correct the wrong with an emotion that all can see and attest to.
- **Indignation:** a demonstration of anger toward the sin.
- **Alarm:** showing a fear of God and a fear of what your sin might do against God’s glory and how it might harm others.
- **Longing:** a desire for righteousness rather than wickedness; to long for holiness to replace wickedness. Longing involves time, hoping for what we do not yet have because in true repentance it often takes time for righteousness to replace wickedness.

- **Concern:** to worry about your sin until you have heard the voice of the Holy Spirit say you may rest and that the sin is covered.
- **Readiness to see justice done:** to realize that nothing unfair is being asked or demanded of you. That justice only demands what is right and just. To praise God for His demands and disciplines (Hebrews 12:11).

“At every point” in the matter of repentance has the person proven they are “innocent” in the sin they feel sorry over? Have they repented– not because they were caught in a sin and had no choice but to confess–but because they felt cut to the heart by their wrongdoing? Even those in the world, when caught, will confess and ask for mercy. Godly sorrow shows alarm that goes way beyond the natural reaction to being caught. Godly sorrow goes back to every single person who their sin affected and seeks to make things right. They don’t call their wrong a mistake and just apologize. No, they confess it as sin using the word “sin” and make restitution to cover over the offense. If a person comes out of the prayer closet, not only resolving to never do the sin again, but setting out with forethought and purpose to pay back with good the wrong they did, then that demonstrates godly sorrow. In short, they do more than is asked, required, or told of them to do by the Law or man. As Jesus said:

I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20

Truly sorrowful people humble themselves, confessing to all the harm they did and persevere to seek God to the point of overcoming (Luke 8:15). Godly sorrow is not fast food forgiveness.



It is never enough to pay back good equal to the amount of sin you committed. Godly sorrow always surpasses what is required. Just look at Zacchaeus for one example of this.

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Luke 19:8

Zacchaeus stood up, walked in the Light (1 John 1:7) and announced to God in front of men that he would give half of what he owned to the poor. He planned to remember who he cheated and pay them back four times the amount. He would spend a lot of time thinking of past sins, people who he might have cheated, and how to quickly repay them. The vast majority of people today would struggle to admit that they really had cheated, let alone take action to repent. Again, four times the amount! No wonder that Jesus exclaimed that salvation had come to Zacchaeus that day. Those who do not repent like Zacchaeus cannot have—and have no right to claim—the salvation of Jesus.

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.” Luke 19:9

If someone confesses they sinned, test their godly sorrow by their actions. Do they set out to pay back individuals four times the amount of their sin? A man who very quietly tells me he is sorry and leaves it at that, has not repented and should not be forgiven, (John 20:23). God will not honor, nor forgive such unrepentant repenters. This is especially true when we have sinned against others in the church or even in the world. For Jesus instructed us to go to great lengths to reconcile with those we have sinned against. In the following passage it took a lot of time and ceremony to stand before the altar of God to offer a gift. A lot had to be done according to temple regulations. But never for a moment believe that our service and gifts to God will cause Him to excuse a sin that we remember needs repenting of.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24

True repentance with godly sorrow is never convenient, easy, or cheap. It requires effort, and the expense of ourselves. Godly sorrow will search out the Scriptures and dig deep to see sin for all its sinfulness (Luke 6:48). Godly sorrow never takes a casual look at sin. Those who claim they have repented will have dug deep into the Bible and exposed their wicked sin to Scripture. Godly sorrow, when first detecting sin, rises early, quickly and swiftly to repent according to the will of God. If we define sin as doing what we want to do, then true repentance means repenting as God wills, not as we want to repent.



If you have been given this because you sinned, then this is the kind of repentance men, angels and Jesus expect. Anything less than this is a lie that seeks to cover up the sin and proves you love the darkness of evil over the holy light of God.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. John 3:19

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