

Is "Regret" To Be The Story of My Life?

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would gently but deeply and thoroughly pour out your Holy Spirit upon us this morning. Father, we ask that your Holy Spirit would be poured out upon us to, on one hand, Father, humble our minds to know that unless you work, we cannot, by our own power, understand or capture you or your ways.

And at the same time, Father, as your Holy Spirit falls to humble us, we ask that your Holy Spirit would fall upon us to create within us a hunger, a hunger, Father, for you, a hunger to know your word, a hunger to know about Jesus, a hunger to see ourselves truly in light of who you are.

Father, we ask for this gracious double work of your Holy Spirit in our minds and hearts this morning. And all this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen.

Please be seated. Is regret to be the story of my life?

Is sorrow to be the story of my life? You know, in the midst of all of that confusing part of the Bible passage that I read just a couple of minutes ago, there's this very, very powerful verse.

[1 : 1 9] And it's sort of like a bit of a proverb. And in fact, what we're going to be doing this morning, we're going to look at all the verses, but really this, my great prayer and hope this morning is that we'll get this one verse sort of inserted into our minds and into our hearts.

I don't know how many of you have seen the movie Inception. But if you've seen the movie Inception, you know that the movie, one of the things that drives the movie is that they want to plant an idea deep within a person.

And so if this one verse can be deeply implanted in you, then I have done my job this morning. And the verse that we're going to look at time and time and time again, we're going to keep returning to this same verse, is a verse that talks about sorrow and it's a verse that talks about regret.

And the fact of the matter is, is that there's some people here probably today who are living with a lot of sorrow. And there's some of us here who are probably living with a lot of regret.

And in fact, there's probably some of us here who believe that living with regret or living with sorrow is a sign of our spiritual maturity. Just as there are some people here probably who believe that a sign of spiritual maturity is to instantly rid ourselves of sorrow and instantly rid ourselves of regret.

[2 : 4 4] And the rest of us are probably just somewhere confused in the middle. But we have these sorrows and we have this regret and we don't know how to deal with it. And for some of us, maybe our regret has been a very, very long season in our lives.

And we feel doomed that maybe God is calling us to live a life of regret for what we've done. And so the Bible passage that we're going to look at today is a very, very powerful verse that speaks about sorrow and speaks about regret and speaks about salvation and speaks about death.

You know, in other words, it's actually a verse which is very, very relevant to our lives and very relevant to the different stories that we tell ourselves and the stories that our culture tells us.

So it would be a great help for us.

The NIV uses the word grief.

[4 : 31] Whereas worldly sorrow produces death. It's a very, very powerful verse. And I have to confess it's a verse that I've read many times.

But it was really only when I had the honor and the obligation of opening the Bible and telling you about Jesus. And that this text has sort of not quite haunted me, but almost like that throughout the entire week.

Because I think it's such a powerful verse. And in fact, let's say it again. For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.

Whereas worldly sorrow produces death. So the first thing is, some of us might think that this just doesn't sound right. This idea that somehow, okay, you have this period of little brief period of godly sorrow, and then it quickly leads you to repent, and then you have salvation with no regret.

But is this text sort of just telling us that we shouldn't grieve or be sorry for some of the wrong things we've done, for some of the broken relationships that we have?

[5 : 45] You know, in Petawawa, the Roman Catholic Church in Petawawa is called Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrow.

By the way, if you did a little contest, church names that you'd never see in front of a Baptist church, Our Lady of Perpetual Sorrow Baptist Church, I'm pretty sure there's no church like that in all the world.

But, you know, this idea of, you know, for many people there's something deeply resonant about the fact that there should be this perpetual sorrow about it. So this verse seems like, is it trite? Is it trivial?

Is it telling you to live a shallow type of life? Because it gets to without regret. Like, what on earth is going on here? And is it talking about me not feeling sad for some of the people that I've lost?

Like, George, the text just doesn't, I mean, it sounds nice, but if you think about it, George, I think that text is not a wise verse. It's going to let people off the hook and tell people not to sorrow.

[6 : 48] It's not wise, George. Well, let's look at the context. So if you have your Bibles, and we'll start reading at 2 Corinthians 7, verse 2. We're not going to spend very much time on the context, but I want you to see, sort of narrow down what it is that the text is and isn't talking about.

The text isn't saying that Jesus was wrong to weep at the grave of Lazarus. For those of you who are Christians, there's a very famous story in John's Gospel where Jesus goes to the grave of Lazarus and weeps.

This Bible text isn't saying that Jesus did something wrong. It's not correcting Jesus. It's talking about something a bit different. So let's begin at verse 2. Just sort of pause there for a second.

So, okay, what on earth is going on here? You know, for those of you who have been here most weeks, there's a part of the letter of 2 Corinthians that I haven't talked about. And the part of it that's all the way through the letter, and you piece it together as you go through the whole letter, is that Paul, before this letter, wrote another letter to Corinth.

And the letter that he wrote to Corinth, which we don't know what it is. There's no record of it. It's not 1 Corinthians. It's another letter. It was a very, very hard, pointed, direct letter.

[8 : 25] Because Paul had become aware of the fact that there was something going on in the Christian community by whether it was just a couple of people or a small group, but it wasn't the majority, but there was a minority of people doing something in that Christian community that Paul thought was so wrong, and not dealing with it was so wrong, that it would endanger ultimately their whole status as followers of Jesus, whether or not, in fact, they would be a Christian church.

I know if you're non-Christians, you might say, well, how do you know what does that matter? And that's a bit of a separate topic of conversation. But for Paul, Paul has staked his entire life willing to go to jail, willing to be beaten, willing to be shipwrecked, willing to be hated, willing to be pursued in false, all sorts of things, because he had met the risen Jesus.

And he knew, beyond all doubt, that Jesus had actually died upon the cross, that the grave was empty, and the grave was empty because Jesus had risen from the dead, and Paul had met Jesus, and he knew that Jesus really was God's son, because the resurrection vindicates who Jesus is.

And he knows that not only has Jesus, the resurrection vindicated Jesus, it means that Jesus has defeated death, and it means that Jesus has defeated that which causes death. It means that Jesus is the one that can reconcile us to our Creator, when we put our faith and trust in him, that this affects people's eternal destinies.

And Paul knows that. And Paul sees that there's something going on in this church in Corinth by a small group of people, not the majority, but a small group of people, that endangers the spiritual destiny, the future, the physical, the literal destiny of the entire church, the entire people, and the entire movement in that city.

[10 : 11] And so we don't have this letter, but Paul writes a very, very hard, very direct and pointed letter to them. The same time, another thing which is going on is that there's a whole pile of people not very impressed with Paul, because he's not the best looking, he's not the richest, he's not the best speaker, he's not the smartest, and they think they're better looking, better people skills, better speaking skills, etc.

And that's another bit of a thing that's also going on as he's writing this particular letter. And so that's part of the context here, is Paul's just reminding him, he's sharing his heart with him.

In fact, it can't be captured in English, but in the original language, those verses that I just read, it's broken phrases. It's broken phrases. And in the English, it's smoothed out a little bit to make it look like proper sentences with verbs and everything like that.

But in the original, it's as if when he's writing, he's just so overcome with emotion at this point in time that it's just, he says this, and he says this, and he says this, and dangly forgot verbs again, you know.

And connectors, it's not good English. I mean, it's not good Greek, and it's smoothed over, but it's showing Paul's great heart for them. His great fear for the danger that they're in.

[11 : 30] And at the one hand, he hoped that when they received the letter, they would deal with it in a way that is good for people and meant that they were staying connected to God.

And on the other hand, he's worried that they won't. And that's sort of what's going on behind this letter. Let's continue on with verse 5. For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest.

And just pause here for a second. And there's no way in English it can be translated, but the original word in the original language, the word that he chose is a word that emphasizes frailty.

His frailty as a person. So I'll say it again. For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest. Just pause here for a second.

And there's part of this letter here which we have to realize that we couldn't write this letter in the same way. There's something very unique here about Paul that we have to realize.

[12 : 57] Because it sounds a little bit like it's self-centered, as if it's all about people being connected to him. And it's not that way at all. In fact, the whole letter keeps showing Paul's weakness, that he's a servant of God.

The thing which is unique here is Paul is writing as an apostle. And the apostolic teaching is the teaching of Jesus.

I mean, Jesus, for the three years of his public ministry, he taught and taught, and he taught publicly. The crowds heard him. But he especially taught not only his apostles, the twelve that he had chosen, one of whom betrayed him, and then that, in a sense, person's replaced by Paul.

And there's not only this deep teaching of the crowd, but there's this deep teaching of the apostles. And Jesus himself doesn't write anything. And that's for our good. We'd probably end up maybe even worshipping the words rather than God.

It would become a great idol to us. Just as it's actually a great benefit to us that the actual first document wasn't preserved, because we'd end up probably worshipping. It would become like an idol to us.

[14 : 07] We'd force everybody to write in the exact same way that Jesus wrote. Wouldn't that be terrible? Like telling kids, no, no, that's not how Jesus does that letter. Never. We'd be tempted to all be frozen in the same time period.

Anyway, and so Jesus teaches the apostles. The apostles teach us. So the teaching of Jesus is the apostolic teaching. It's what we now know of as the New Testament. And so what Paul here is talking about is he's not being self-centered.

He realizes that he has this specific authoritative role, that in a sense Jesus himself is speaking to the congregation through him. It's a very, very unique thing. So his worry isn't for him with his own ego.

His concern is that if they reject the apostolic teaching, they're rejecting Jesus. That's his concern. That when they have a zeal to connect with him, it's not a zeal to connect with him.

It's a zeal to connect with the apostolic teaching. It's a zeal to connect with Jesus. That's what he's concerned about. It's not self-centered. And in fact, once we try to get that in our head when we read it, we'll understand that some of the confusing part in the letter, it's not, I can't write to somebody and say, you know, it's all about me.

[15 : 21] I really want you to be reconciled to me. Some of you heard this story before. I did this wedding rehearsal. This is quite a few years ago. And it was a very, very proper lawyer.

And it was a second marriage for him. And he had a 16-year-old daughter, 17-year-old daughter. And in the rehearsal, she wanted to practice reading. And the way it was going to be set up, the way the church building was, that the dad and his bride were standing there, like right in front of her.

She was going to get up on a couple of steps, stand in front of him, do the reading. And she got up with a very, very, very serious voice, very serious expression. I'm smiling. I can't imitate her. She looked very somber.

And she began to read the Bible with a very somber voice, you know, reading from, you know, whatever it was. I think it was 1 Corinthians 13. And she starts to read a few verses. And then she looks up and smiles, closes the Bible and says, I don't want to read this.

I want to talk about me. And then it was one of those things. You wish you had a camera. The look of complete shock on her father's face when she said that.

[16 : 24] And then she giggled, hopped down the two steps, kissed her dad on the cheek, and said, I'm just kidding, dad. I'll do it right tomorrow. And then went to her seat. You know, but she captured something. It's all about me.

And that's not what's going on here in the text. It's not about Paul. It's about Jesus and his particular, unique, irreplaceable position in this case, in terms of how Jesus teaches his people, how Jesus teaches us.

So we continue on. It's verse 8. For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it. For I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while.

As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

So you see this? The thing is, he wrote a very, very hard letter. He was very, very worried. He knew it was going to hurt them. It was going to wound them deeply.

[17 : 25] And he worried about, he didn't want to hurt them because he loved them. And he was worried that the wound would cause, he didn't know what would happen, how they were going to react.

He had a hope that they'd react one way. And on one level, it's like, I believe helped my unbelief. But he wasn't sure. And now he's gotten news. And that's 2 Corinthians is in response to this, that they reacted with deep repentance.

They felt godly sorrow, deep repentance, and they dealt with the issue. And here we now come to verse 10. Here's the context in verse 10. For godly grief, for God, let's say it out loud together.

If it's still up there, say it together with me. For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow produces death.

And then it continues on, verse 11. And this passage is a bit hard. If you're looking at it, it's not contradicting. It's just very technical language.

[18 : 26] The indignation they feel is not indignation at Paul. It's indignation at themselves for letting it happen. It's indignation at the wrongdoers. It's indignation for their leadership.

It's indignation at their blindness. It's not that they've proved themselves innocent, but they've done, once they knew that there was a problem, they've done everything that had to be to make the matter right. And that's this language of verse 11. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment.

Really, the better word there would be discipline. At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong. In other words, it's not because he's angry at them.

And it's not for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong. He's not particularly caring about himself. But in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God.

And here he means your earnestness to stay with Jesus. That's what he means. And it's comparative. Of course, he had a concern for other people. But relatively speaking, his primary concern is to have them go more deeply into Jesus.

[19 : 39] Therefore, we are comforted. Verse 13. And beside our own comfort, we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame.

But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true. And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

I rejoice because I have complete confidence in you. By the way, the very next thing he's going to say is to hit him up for some money. But that's next week's sermon. Okay. Actually, it's not about hitting him up for money.

I misspoke it. So here's the thing then. Here's the thing. Some of you might say, okay, George, so this sounds... I don't know what to say, George.

So, you know, this verse 10 here about life with no regret and sorrow. And I'm still a little bit confused here. Is it telling me that the sorrow or grief I feel because my dad...

[20 : 43] I'm just confused a little bit, George, about the text. So here's the first thing. There's no points up on the screen because the only point today is verse 10. That's what I want you to remember.

I don't want you to go away and say, oh, George had such really good points if I was even able to do it. If you remembered my points but don't forget the scripture, in a very important way I failed. I want you to remember the scripture.

So here's the first thing. Not all sorrow is being referred to in this verse. Okay?

What we've seen in the story so far is the sorrow that Paul is referring to is the sorrow, the pain that comes when our moral failings have been made clear to us.

That's the sorrow that Paul's talking about. That's the grieving that Paul talks about. Now, there's obviously connections here to the type of sorrow and grief we feel at the loss of a loved one.

[21 : 42] But that's not what Paul's talking about here. He has other texts like 1 Corinthians 15 where he talks about how you grieve. And he's not contradicting Jesus at all here because Jesus grieves at the sin of the world, the evil of the world, the lack of belief, the reality of death, the sin that causes death.

That's why Jesus weeps at the grave of Lazarus before he heals Lazarus, brings him back to life to this side of the grave. Lazarus would still have to die. That's why we worship Jesus, not Lazarus, because Jesus died and he defeated death, and that which caused death, which is our rebellion against God.

So this text isn't talking about just feeling sorrow and grieving the loss of a husband or a sister or brother or a good friend. It's not talking about that at all. It's talking about the type of pain that we feel when somebody confronts us of something that's wrong.

So let's read verse 10 again. For godly sorrow... Is it still up there? Yes. For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow produces death.

See, I want you to have the verse memorized by the end of the service. Now, some of you might say, You know, George, I don't know about this text. I don't know about Christians. I mean, the fact of the matter is, is that sometimes when you tell people that they've done wrong, like Paul does in this letter, like they don't feel pain.

[23 : 16] I know a person who works in the civil service, and he was in an office for several years. He's no longer in that office. And there was a woman in the office who basically didn't show up to work for about two years.

And she still kept getting paid. And everybody in the office was so terrified of her that they didn't do anything about it. They just let her stay at home and collect her pay.

And we all know, I've shared with you before, I'm not very good at telling people off. It's a weakness of mine. But when I finally prayerfully screw up the courage to do it, you know, I can tell within a few seconds whether the person is going to feel even a tiny bit of twinge of conscience over it or not.

And we all have experience of people that when we confront them about something that they've done wrong, and we know they've done it, and we know the facts are right, we know they actually have done something wrong, there's a whole pile of people, or maybe everybody at some point in time, that react with an attack.

They go after you. They push back big time. And so for some of us, we might be a little bit confused. Okay, so the contrast is between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow, but George, that obviously isn't all of the options.

[24 : 39] And then all Paul would say, no, yeah, yeah, that's right. That's right. I'm not saying, Paul's not saying that everybody who's confronted by their wrongdoing reacts with pain.

Paul's not talking about that. That's a different thing. He's very aware of the fact, that's partly what he was worried about when he wrote the hard letter, was that they wouldn't feel pain at all, but that they would attack him.

He's aware of that. So one of the first takeaways for us here, by the way, is it's very easy for us to point at other people, because we know other people, that when we confront them of the wrong they do, they don't feel any pain or penitence or repentance.

They just attack us. And it's very easy for us to think this, of all the people that this story illustrates, it's too easy for us to say, I wish Bob could hear that, or I wish Sue could hear that.

But the fact of the matter is, one of the things we have to do is just take a moment with God and say, God, is that me? In what areas of my life are there that when people confront me about the real wrong that I've done, do I attack or dismiss it or completely ignore it?

[25 : 52] Like, Father, what parts of my heart don't feel pain, because my heart is so hard? So, Father, in hearing this verse, may you so grip me with your gospel that my heart will not be hard, that my heart will be able to receive this clear times and teaching when I've done wrong.

So, the Bible here isn't saying that there's only one or two ways to react. It's just talking about for those times when we do react with pain, how do we react? That's what the Bible is saying. Could you say this text with me again?

For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow produces death. Now, some of you might say, well, George, I'm not entirely sure about this, and what about Christians and all that?

You know, George, there's this person in my office, and she's a Christian. You know, she has the bumper stickers, and she has the little smiley-faced Christian things, and she listens to Christian music, and we can all hear it a little bit, and gosh, is she ever annoying.

Like, George, you wouldn't believe how annoying this person is. And, George, here's what I observe about her. You know, this verse is supposedly described what Christians believe, but, George, here's what I observe about her.

[27 : 25] It's, you know, she's the biggest gossip in the office. And she never feels any guilt about the gossip, and she never feels any guilt about all of the harm her gossip talk goes on, causes.

But, you know, George, the only thing that she shows any guilt about is the fact that she eats too much. And so, George, I don't know how this goes along with that person. Like, all she feels guilty about is when she eats, you know, another bag of Doritos, but she doesn't feel guilty that as she's eating that whole bag of Doritos, she's spewing gossip around the office.

Like, George, how does that fit in? Like, I don't know if that's, well, I mean, that's a really good observation about a lot of us. And what the Bible says here, what the Bible's teaching here is, first of all, the Bible's never telling us, the Bible is never saying, come to Christians because we're so perfect.

But at the same time, the Bible's not saying Christians always get a pass. You know, that's why the text about seeing the log in our own eye before we see the speck in other people's eye is such a foundational text for how we think and operate as Christians.

But what the Bible would say in this particular thing is that our consciences are disordered.

[28 : 50] Our sorrow is disordered. I mean, we're going to talk a bit more about disordered sorrow, but the very first thing is that, in fact, it's another thing for us to pray over.

Like, many of us don't feel guilty about envy. Many of us don't feel guilty when we envy another person. Many of us don't feel guilty when we hate another person.

Many of us don't feel guilty. I mean, I've only talked about the fact as to whether or not regret should characterize my life, but how many of us, when we think of a person who's wronged us, how many of us are inwardly hoping that the other person feels unending regret about what they've done to us?

Unending. Unending. That's what we desire for some people. If you knew what Bob did to me. Sorry, I always use the same name, by the way. If your name here is Bob, I'm not talking about you.

Anyway, you know, if you only knew what Bob did to me, you would be like me, and you would want him to feel regret, and you'd want him to feel regret for the rest of his life. You would want regret to be the story of his life.

[29 : 59] And so here's the thing. Many of us don't feel guilty about cheating on our taxes, about doing a whole pile of things. But we feel guilty about how much money we have, in terms of not enough.

Or we feel guilty that we're, I don't know, 10 pounds over, 20 pounds over, or whatever the news, the magazines say we should weigh. Or we feel guilty because, you know, all of our neighbors have this really nice car, and our car's old, and we feel pained and sorrow about that.

But the Bible never says it's a sin to not have much money. The Bible never says what the perfect weight is for a human being.

The Bible never tells us that we have to have a particular amount of toys. We feel sorrow over all sorts of things that the Bible says aren't sin, and we don't feel sorrow over things that the Bible does say are sin.

And so in reflecting about this text, there's a second thing that we should be praying, is that we should be acknowledging the fact that we might be that person in the office, feeling pained and sorrowful over our weight, and feeling no pain over our slander.

[31 : 20] And the Bible is inviting us to call out to God that he would heal our conscience. Because on one hand, we first want God to heal our conscience so that our hearts and our minds aren't hardened to moral truth.

But we want God's word to form what makes us feel guilty, and not the world, and not our idols, and not our pride. Because every single one of us has consciences which need to continue to be healed and properly formed by God and his word.

Every single one of us, without exception. And so this text is an invitation for us who are followers of Jesus to pray that God would bring that type of healing into our lives.

So some of us might be saying, Okay. So George, you're sort of saying then that this Bible text, that God knows that our hearts are disordered, and our consciences are disordered, and that we sometimes feel, okay.

But George, I'm not, I don't really understand what this verse says. Is it like one of these Buddhist koans, you know? Because doesn't it tell me to say, you know, to repent, and then it's going to tell me, I have to be sorrowful, and that's going to tell me to repent.

[32 : 55] That sounds like it's telling me to do the same thing twice. But at the end of the day, it's going to tell me not to do either of those things all at the same time. Like, George, isn't like feeling sorry and feeling regret?

Like, isn't that sort of the same thing? And is it like, is it one of these Buddhist koans, you know, that, you know, like the sound of one hand clapping, feeling, feel with, and don't feel at the same time? George, is that just this, like, spiritual gobbledygook that just, you know, be honest with you, George, I know some people really like mouthing these things, like the sound of one hand clapping as if it makes them really wise.

But, you know, George, I'm not one of those people. I like watching football. When I hear people like that talk, it makes me want to throw up. Like, it makes me want to gag. I just hate it. Is that what the Bible text is saying here? Let's read the text again.

For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow produces death. Let's say it again.

For godly sorrow produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow produces death. So what's this text saying?

[34 : 01] So what this text is saying is that, well, first of all, that sorrow and repentance aren't the same thing. Repentance might have a feeling connected to it, but repentance is not the same thing as sorrow.

Sorrow is a feeling word, by the way. And the text isn't telling us that first of all we have sorrow, then we have repentance, which is another way of saying sorrow, and then we don't have regret, which is another way of saying sorrow, that they're all just talking about three feeling words, and it's not saying that somehow God's going to zap you and then take away all feelings of sorrow or sadness.

It's not telling you that you shouldn't feel sorrow. In fact, it's saying that there's this thing called godly sorrow. And the text isn't saying that godly sorrow feels one way and worldly sorrow feels a different way.

They're both the same feeling, but godly sorrow... So, what...

Here's the thing about feeling... I'll tell you that... Here's the thing. I was counseling somebody a couple of years ago, and he was from a very, very, very good Christian family, and he'd had a bit of prominence in Christian circles.

[35 : 33] And then he had some moral failings. And he was trying to disentangle himself from the things that were causing the moral failings.

And he felt really broken up about it, and he was also sort of frozen, and he wasn't able to do anything with it. And I'm not the sharpest pin in the pin cushion, but it dawned on me, after we'd been talking for a while, after several sessions, I realized...

I'd been assuming something, and I realized I was making a very wrong assumption about him. He actually wasn't bothered that he'd broken a commandment of God.

What bothered him was that he wasn't living up to his image of himself. That he saw himself as Mr. Christian, and he saw himself as the one who always had the answers, and he was Mr. Christian.

And Mr. Christian was spelt with all capital letters, and a little bit of sparkles, and stuff like that. And really, what he couldn't accept was that he had not lived up to his own image of himself.

[36 : 49] And interestingly enough, he actually felt very little guilt at all that he'd actually done something wrong with God. So you see, here's the thing about all emotions. The text of the Bible here isn't telling us not to feel a particular emotion.

The Bible never tells you, stop feeling these emotions. The Bible doesn't tell you, don't have these emotions. The Bible doesn't say things like that. So part of the key to godly sorrow is when we're feeling this pain at a moral failing being revealed to us, and ask ourselves, well, what exactly, why am I feeling the pain?

So the Bible text, in a sense, isn't inviting us to say, okay, just, Father, I want to keep praying, I want to keep singing praise music, I want to do all of these things until the pain goes away.

The Bible isn't encouraging us to do, to use praise music or Bible passages or meditation as a type of drug to remove certain feelings from us. The Bible's not telling us to do that.

What the Bible is, in fact, asking us to do, and this is the difference between godly and worldly sorrow, is we look, every time we feel an emotion, it points to what we value.

[37 : 59] It points to what we value. It points to what we think is important. It reveals to us where we think we get our meaning, where we think we get our justification, how we are going to achieve success.

Every emotion that we have always reveals what our heart is tethered to. So let's be honest.

How many of us just inwardly rejoice when an enemy falls? We go, yes! We don't say, yes, I hated that person. It's so good to see him fall on his face.

But we feel that sometimes, don't we? It shows what we value. We value maybe showing ourselves to be right. We value our image of ourselves. We value, we think that if we weigh a certain amount of money, weigh a certain amount or have a certain amount of money, that it's going to justify ourselves, that it will make us look good.

It reveals the idols of our culture. So worldly sorrow just stays at the level of myself and my idol.

[39 : 13] And worldly sorrow can be very, very, very, very bitter. And it can be the story of our lives. And as long as our feeling pain just keeps us even more enmeshed in our idols, we're more enmeshed in our own image of ourselves, it means that our back is turned to the cross and it's turned away from God and it's looking somewhere else.

You see, the word repentance is a directional word, not an emotional word. partially how we feel, what we really worship and what we put our faith and our trust in is if we were to catch ourselves, where does our mind or our heart go when we are given this painful news?

Does our mind instantly think of revenge? Does it instantly go to self-pity? Does it instantly start to go to the bottle? Does it instantly go to drugs? Does it very, very quickly go to what we should do?

Maybe we should get our hair done or maybe we should buy some new clothes or maybe we need to buy a boat or maybe we need to buy... Does it go to possessions? Does it go to all of... Where does our mind go start to go for comfort?

You see, the pain comes and worldly sorrow just keeps us going to our idols or to ourself. And ultimately, they will all fail. All idols fail because there is a God who really does exist, who really did create all things, who really does sustain all things, who really will bring all things to an end.

- [40 : 47] And repentance is a directional word. Do we turn to God and say, God, I don't know. I did that and it's wrong and it's a sin against you. It's a sin against my wife. It's a sin against my boss. It's a sin against my church.
- It's a sin against my kids. It's a sin against my friends. And I'm not denying that, but it's also, Father, it's a direct... It's a rebellion against you.
- You see, when our sorrow leads us to see ourselves in light of who God is and when we turn in that direction, then that's godly sorrow that produces repentance.
- And here's the thing about the gospel, that when we turn to God and maybe, you know, partly how I became a Christian was I was just really aware of all of these things that I was doing that were wrong and I had this really strong, powerful sense of shame that not only was I doing these things which were wrong, but there was something radically incomplete in me and about me.
- [42 : 00] And in my particular case, I met Christians who somehow or another seemed to just be connected. Like when I was in their presence, I had this sense that Jesus was present.
- I had this sense that the Holy Spirit was here. And my conversion came about when my sorrow, my sorrow over the wrong things that I was doing, my sorrow even over myself, I wouldn't have put it in the words that I was a sinner, but that's really, without the language of that, that was my sense of who I was.
- And the beginning of my conversion came when I turned, I realized that I had to speak to God about it and that I needed his mercy. I needed him to do something.
- And that's why this text says godly sorrow produces repentance, a repentance that as we turn to God and seek his mercy, that it will create salvation without regret.
- This is where the gospel comes in. You see, it's not just telling us, it's not talking about cheap grace, that as we go to God and as we think about how God has responded to our sin, and as we get more deeply gripped by the gospel, it changes us.
- [43 : 27] Here in the light, you know, if you think of this as your life, some of your lives are frayed all the way through. All of our lives are a little bit twisted and have a little bit of depth, a little bit of things sticking out and in.
- I have to put it on the table here for a second, but the, you know, the frayed at the beginning doesn't really work, but, you know, we're conceived in our mother's womb. I guess I should do it from your point of view.
- We're conceived in our mother's womb over here, and this is the end of our life, which is death. And we experience our life one moment of time as we go along this. But from God's perspective outside of time, when he sees you and me, some of us are just over here.
- We have a lot of life living to go. Some of us are over here. We're very close to the end of our earthly life. But when God sees us, we experience ourselves one moment of a time, fearful of the future, a little bit of knowledge of the past and our depths.
- But when God sees you and me, he sees this. And he not only sees us from the outside, he sees all of our depths. He knows every little thing which is sticking out, every little frayed edge.
- [44 : 45] He knows us to the depths. He knows every dream that we have at night that we don't even remember when we wake up. He knows all of our masks, all of our illusions, all of our idols, all of our enmity, all of our strengths, all of our glories, all of our beauties.
- He sees us in the womb as we are conceived, and he sees us at our point of death. And we might have given our lives to Jesus here, or maybe we gave our lives to Jesus here, or maybe we're going to give our lives to Jesus right here.

But when we realize that Jesus is God's provision to make us right with him, and he sees us right from the beginning to the end of our life, it isn't that Jesus just saves this bit of the life, but Jesus takes the whole length of our life with nothing left over, and everything about our past and our present future is received by him.

Everything. Everything. And the work of Jesus in our lives is both a removal and an addition.

That on the cross, we see God powerfully dealing to remove the things within us, our shame, our sin, our rebellion, our sins of commission, and our sins of omission.

[46 : 05] All of the things that need to be removed from us are on Jesus. And he deals with it in his death upon the cross. And the work of the cross is not only a work of subtraction, but it's a word, it's also a work of addition.

That when I stand before Christ, before God, I am in a sense clothed with Jesus' perfect keeping of the law.

That he, there's a word federal head, covenant head, his righteousness, his perfect standing standing, his destiny stands for me.

It's a profound mystery of what it means that when we put our hands in the hand of Jesus at this one little point in time on the thread, he doesn't just take our hand at that image, but he takes all of our life, past and present and future.

Things that we might not even realize were sins that we committed until many, many years later when our friend or our wife or our son or our daughter or our brother reveals to us our hurt, but every single thing is covered by Christ and what he did for us on the cross.

[47 : 19] And so, when we are pricked in our conscience and go to God and call out to him for mercy, when we have that godly sorrow that produces a repentance that turns to God, it leads to salvation.

It's supposed to lead to salvation without regret because as it starts to dawn on us that this is what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we are very frail human beings and we believe that our life, if too much truth about us comes out, it can completely and utterly shatter us and leave us just in fragments.

But as we're gripped by what Jesus has done for us on the cross, when we realize that God sees us truly, God sees us perfectly, and he has provided his son to be the death, he has provided his son to remove, he has provided his son to clothe, and there is no secret from him, as this truth grips us, it starts to create a ground whereby we can look at our lives and our idols.

And it starts to draw us because when we realize that there's nothing that we have done that's going to catch God by surprise when he's received us by his, when he's dealt with us in the gospel, it draws us to the possibility that we can actually try to look at what we've done and deal with what we've done and to call out to God to help us amend our lives because God is the God of all comfort, God is the God of all consolation, he sent his son to die upon the cross to reconcile us to himself, to console us, to comfort us, and so there is this possibility that we can deal with these things in our lives as the gospel grips us and shapes us, that it can ground us to look, it can give us hope to look, to know that the mistakes and the failings and the pride and the vanity of our life is not the final word about us, but that God has given us the final word about us in the person of his son and his death upon the cross, and so brothers and sisters,

God's intent and purpose for you is not that you never feel regret, but that you not live by regret's script, that as you are gripped with the gospel, as you call out to God to pour out his Holy Spirit upon you, to have his word written in your heart, that there is a possibility for an amendment of life, and being gripped with the fact that you've been forgiven by the Father, that you can acknowledge with depth your sin, and acknowledge with even greater thankfulness your gratitude for what Jesus has done for you on the cross, and that you can talk to the Father to help you to amend your life and the Holy Spirit to amend your life as you begin to live without regret.

[50 : 14] In the gospel, sorrow is not to be the story of your life. Godly sorrow, which leads to repentance and salvation without regret, that is to be the story and the final word of your life.

Could you please stand? If you are here and you have never given your lives to Jesus, then I don't know.

I'm not going to, you know what, I can give you words. The problem I have with always giving you a little formula is I had so many years where I was beat up because it seemed the minister always used the exact same words and then I couldn't remember the words.

God doesn't care about you having the right words. All you have to say is, Father, I want you to take all of my life and hold it in your hand and what Jesus has done for me in the cross.

And I want verse 10 to be the story of my life. And I turn to you and I turn to you, Father, and I ask that you help me because you know how weak I am. I turn to you. I want Jesus to be the Savior and the Lord of my life.

[51 : 26] I turn to you and use your own words and there's no time better than today to say that to him. And for those of us who are followers of Jesus, many of us need to come to the Father now and confess our need to have our consciences healed.

Confess our hardness of heart. Confess that we have been living within a regret story. Confess that we have been desiring other people to live a life of unending regret.

And just not to say, Father, this has violated my sense of myself and my image of myself, but it's, Father, thank you so much for Jesus. Thank you that you knew this about me.

Thank you. Father, may this verse shape my life. Father, grant me a godly sorrow for my sins that produces repentance and leads to salvation without regret.

For some of us, for many of us, maybe it is our time to call out to God, to ask that that be true in our life, that he would write this in our heart. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

[52 : 26] Father, thank you for Jesus. Thank you, Father, that you know us perfectly. Thank you, Father, that you know us from the moment of our conception to the moment of our death.

Thank you, Father, that you know the dreams we have at night that we don't even remember. Thank you that you know us perfectly, and thank you, Father, that knowing us perfectly, knowing, Father, both how great we can be, but how petty and idol-driven and at enmity with you we can be.

Father, we thank you that knowing all this about us, still you sent your Son to die for us on the cross. And thank you, Father, that when he died for us on the cross, he died for the whole length of my life, the whole length of our life, and that he deals with the sin in the whole length of our life and removes it, and that he clothes me, the real me, the full me, the long me, the deep me, that the true me is clothed with Jesus' righteousness when I put my faith and trust in him.

Father, make me a disciple of Jesus who's gripped by the gospel, and so, Father, as the gospel grips me, will live a life of godly sorrow for my sins that leads to turning to you ever more deeply so that I will be more like Jesus and live my life without regret, but in deep gratitude for your Son.

And all this I ask in the name of Jesus, your Son, and our Savior. Amen. Amen.