

THE TALE OF TWO SORROWS: GODLY VS. WORLDLY

Text: 2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Godly sorrow is the deep, internal grief over your sin because you realize it has grieved a holy God and damaged your relationship with Him. It does not just weep over the consequences of sin; it creates a fierce desire to turn away from the behavior completely. It flows from a realization of God's love and mercy, driving a person *toward* God for healing rather than making them hide in shame.

Worldly sorrow is a superficial, self-centered grief over sin that focuses entirely on the earthly consequences of being caught or exposed, rather than the moral offense against a holy God. It is empty and destructive, ultimately producing spiritual, emotional, and eternal death. It mimics repentance on the surface, but it lacks any real desire for inner transformation. While godly sorrow is a healing wind that clears out sin, **worldly sorrow is a dead end**. It leaves a person unchanged, bitter, and spiritually bankrupt because it attempts to manage appearance instead of transforming the heart.

- **Adonijah** – One of King David's sons that exalted himself to be king when David was near the end of his life. He knew that both God and David had chosen Solomon to reign over Israel, but he tried to usurp the throne. He conspired with Joab and Abiathar (David's general and the high priest of Israel) and set up a royal entourage with chariots and 50 men running ahead of him. He threw a massive sacrificial feast to crown himself as king. He intentionally excluded Solomon, Nathan the prophet, and David's loyal mighty men. When the prophet Nathan and Queen Bathsheba alerted David, the king immediately ordered Solomon to be publicly anointed and crowned. When Adonijah's party heard the shouting and realized Solomon was the rightful king, Adonijah fled to the tabernacle and clung to the horns of the altar for safety. People clung to the horns of the altar in the Bible primarily to seek asylum and plead for mercy when facing immediate death or execution. In a religious context, the horns of the altar were considered the most sacred part of the structure. They were regularly smeared with the blood of sacrificial animals to make atonement for sins. Clinging to them was a physical way of crying out, *"I appeal to God's power and mercy through the blood of sacrifice to save me."* Solomon showed great mercy, telling Adonijah that if he proved to be a "worthy man," not a hair on his head would fall, but if wickedness was found in him, he would die. Adonijah pretended to submit, but his worldly ambition remained alive. After David died,

Adonijah secretly approached Bathsheba and asked for permission to marry **Abishag**, King David's final concubine. In the ancient Near East, taking a deceased king's concubine was a direct, political claim to the throne. Solomon recognized this as a continued, sneaky attempt to usurp the kingdom. Because Adonijah refused to truly repent and instead kept plotting, Solomon ordered his execution. Adonijah perfectly illustrates **worldly sorrow—he was deeply sorry about the consequences of his actions instead of the actions themselves.**

- **Simon the sorcerer - Simon the Sorcerer** (often called Simon Magus) was a famous practitioner of occult arts in Samaria who claimed to possess divine power. Before the gospel arrived, Simon practiced sorcery and bewitched the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was "someone great," and the people literally called him "the Great Power of God". When the evangelist Philip came preaching Christ and performing real miracles, Simon saw that his own magic tricks were outclassed. The Bible notes that Simon "believed" and was baptized, but he followed Philip primarily because he was obsessed with the signs and miracles. When the Apostles Peter and John arrived and laid hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit, Simon saw this supernatural power and wanted it for himself. He offered the apostles money, saying: *"Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit"*. Apostle Peter immediately saw right through Simon's counterfeit faith. He delivered a blistering rebuke that exposes the heart of worldly thinking: **Acts 8:20-23** But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. **Acts 8:24** Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. Simon is the New Testament's ultimate warning against **worldly sorrow**. He represents someone who encountered the gospel and wanted the *power* of the Holy Spirit, but completely refused the *brokenness* of true repentance. **He had a fear of punishment, not grief over sin!**
- **The thief on the left cross** - The unnamed criminal crucified alongside Jesus who died completely unrepentant. His actions on Calvary serve as the ultimate, definitive New Testament example of worldly sorrow working death. As he hung dying on his cross, he joined the mocking crowds and actively insulted Jesus. He

demanded and earthly escape. His cry of "Save us!" was not a prayer for salvation from sin. It was a demand to be taken down from the cross to avoid physical pain and Roman justice. He wanted to escape the *consequences* of his crimes without acknowledging the wickedness of his actions. When the thief on the right rebuked him, he remained completely silent and hardened. He refused to confess his guilt. He was so close to life and yet he chose death. He wanted to get off the cross and go back to his life even though he was right next to Christ when he said "Father forgive them for they know not what they do". **He was looking for an escape instead of a change.**

What true repentance looks like:

- **The thief on the right hand of Jesus** - The thief on the right is the criminal crucified alongside Jesus who repented at the final hour. He is the ultimate biblical masterpiece of **godly sorrow**. While the thief on the left died in bitterness, the thief on the right turned his agonizing final moments into a gateway to eternal life. When his companion began mocking Jesus, the thief on the right spoke up, saying: "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" He started going the right way when he began with the fear of God. He openly acknowledged his sin and accepted his earthly punishment without making excuses: "And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss." Turning his head toward Christ, he made a simple, profoundly faithful request: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." And Jesus said unto him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." **This man entered eternal life because he feared God, took the blame for his sins, saw Jesus as the Christ, humbled himself before him and pleaded for mercy.**