



Godly Sorrow: Key to Repentance

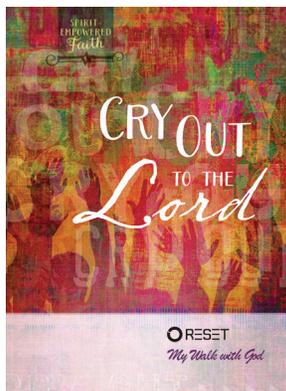
This article is from *Cry Out to the Lord*, by David Ferguson of Great Commandment Network.

It's a certain promise, a bold declaration: **Godly sorrow produces repentance.** In a day when true life change seems elusive and any Christlike distinction seems lost in our culture, this is good news indeed. In the midst of continuing to do the very things we don't want to do, the promise regarding repentance is refreshing (Romans 7:15).

In 2 Corinthians, we read about Paul's burden for the Corinthians. It is not the outcome of repentance that grips the apostle's heart but rather the godly sorrow that produces, prompts, and brings forth this genuine repentance. He writes, *"For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death"* (2 Corinthians 7:10–11).

Before there is evidence of a changed life, there must be an internal work of godly sorrow. A deep, emotional work of the heart must precede a change of behavior, attitude, and action. In his first letter, Paul challenged the Corinthians to a brokenness of heart. In the second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle rejoiced with the believers over the positive changes in their lives. Godly sorrow must have done its work in the lives of this early church!

In contrast to the sorrow of the world, godly sorrow is timeless and eternal. In this world, we experience tribulation and trials; struggles and losses take their toll. We constantly deal with the reality of rejection, regrets, disappointments, and pain. The good news is that we're not left alone in this journey.



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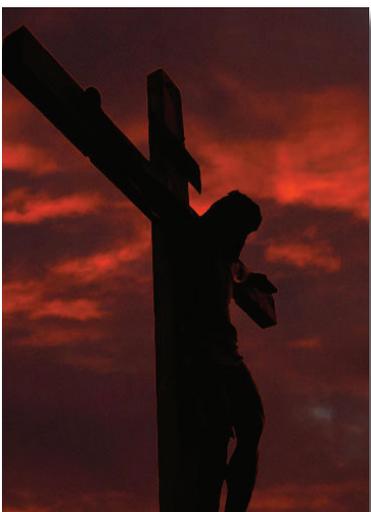


We have a Great High Priest who has gone before us (Hebrews 4:15), who was Himself acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3), and is even sitting at the right hand of God interceding for us now (Hebrews 7:25). Additionally, through the provision of divine comfort, we can experience blessing in the midst of our sorrows when we receive comfort from God and other people (Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 1:2–4). Still, this sorrow, as deep and penetrating as it is, can't compare to the power of godly sorrow.

So what's the difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow we experience in our world? First, godly sorrow is His sorrow. This kind of sorrow belongs to God, but it can be revealed, shared, and imparted to the attentive hearts of His children.

The Reason for Godly Sorrow

Godly sorrow speaks of His pain; God's heart actually feels sorrow. You may never have considered it before, but our God has experienced the emotion of sorrow. Remember the pain of our heavenly Father as He was rejected by His created hosts (Isaiah 14:12–14). Recall how our God was betrayed in the garden by the "very good" of His creation (Genesis 3). Remember how God was repeatedly forsaken and abandoned by His people (Exodus 32:7–10). Surely a sorrow-filled heart was behind these words: *"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart"* (Genesis 6:5–6). To experience godly sorrow means to share in the Father's pain—the pain of a loving Father who for us would:



- Watch Him who knew no sin become sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Allow the perfect One to be wounded, bruised, and chastised (Isaiah 53:4–5).
- Hear His only Son utter these words: *"My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?"* (Matthew 27:46).

As we consider God's experiences of sorrow, it ought to soften our heart with compassion and bring us to quiet brokenness. After all, why did God allow all of the experiences described above? Gratefully, it was for a relationship with you and me. God watched His son beaten and crucified and chose this great sorrow for our salvation.



We must ask the question: *Why* did God have to send His Son to die and experience this great sorrow? It was for our sin that Christ had to die. Therefore, it was our sin that contributed to God's sorrow. Our sin hurt Jesus, and it is our sin that has broken the heart of God. What a contrast? The world's sorrow focuses on our grief and what we've experienced. Godly sorrow shatters this self-focus, and challenges a heart to ponder: *What have I done to the Father and His Son?*



W1. Frequently being led by the Spirit into deeper love for the One who wrote the Word

LEARN to Encounter Jesus

"I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised Him from the dead. I want to suffer with Him, sharing in His death" (Philippians 3:10).

Quietly meditate on the words "suffer with Him." Bring your mind and heart to focus upon Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to center your heart on Him. It was Jesus who became your sin. He was bruised for you; He was beaten for you. Ask the Holy Spirit to soften your heart and to move you with compassion for His sufferings.

Lord Jesus, You took my penalty; You suffered for me. I have a fresh perspective of how my sin hurt You. Heavenly Father, I see also that my sin hurt You. Because I needed redemption, Your heart was filled with sorrow. My heart is now moved with _____.
I am heartbroken that I was a part of God's sorrow and Christ's suffering. Bring this image to my mind often. I want to share in this suffering.

