

**“Worldly Grief and Godly Grief”**  
**2 Corinthians 7:2-16**  
**June 4, 2017**  
**Faith Presbyterian Church – Evening Service**  
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I’m returning again to Second Corinthians tonight. I’ve been coming back to it when I’ve had the opportunity to, and Lord willing, I should be able to do three or four sermons on it this summer, including this one.

Tonight we are up to 2 Corinthians 7:2-16.

Paul has just called the Corinthians to fidelity to the Lord and to the Lord’s yoke, he has called them to forsake idols, and now he returns to a topic from earlier in the letter: the topic of how the Corinthians responded to the “severe letter” he sent them with Titus – a letter that is not a part of the New Testament, and which we do not have.

So hear now from 2 Corinthians 7:2-16. Paul writes:

<sup>2</sup>Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. <sup>3</sup>I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. <sup>4</sup>I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.

<sup>5</sup>For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. <sup>6</sup>But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, <sup>7</sup>and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. <sup>8</sup>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. <sup>9</sup>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.

<sup>10</sup>For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. <sup>11</sup>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! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. <sup>12</sup>So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. <sup>13</sup>Therefore we are comforted.

And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. <sup>14</sup>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. <sup>15</sup>And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. <sup>16</sup>I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.

This is God’s Word.

When I started studying this text, it occurred to me fairly quickly that it would take at least two sermons to deal with this text properly ... and so that is what I will probably do.

There are two major points going on here, I think. One is right in the middle of the text, in verses ten and eleven. We're going to look at that tonight. The other point is in the rest of the chapter: the thirteen verses that surround verses ten and eleven. I will probably turn to those verses the next time I preach – which will be in about five weeks.

The two portions of this passage deal with related topics, so the five week gap is not ideal – but it seemed to me the best way to handle it.

So tonight, we are going to focus on verses 10 and 11 of 2 Corinthians 7. Let me just read those two verses for you again. Paul writes:

<sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. <sup>11</sup> 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! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

Tonight we are going to think about grief over our sin. In particular, we're going to look at the two very different kinds of grief we might experience over our sin.

Now, if you hear that topic, and it seems a bit distant and vague to you, allow me just a minute to try to convince you that it's not.

On the one hand, if you are a Christian, you might agree that you don't like your sin. You might admit that you are frustrated, or angry, or discouraged when you sin. But for some of you, grief might sound a bit melodramatic. It might feel a bit distant from your experience.

Let me begin by saying that we can start by considering "grief" over our sin as any kind of distress we feel because of our breaking of God's law – any distress over our failure to live up to what God has called us to. We're going to get a bit more exact than that as we go on, but for now, think about what we are talking about tonight as simply the bad feelings you feel when you know you have sinned against God.

But what if you are here tonight and you are not a Christian? Or you're not sure that you are? Maybe you don't believe in this category of sin – or if you do, you wouldn't look to the Bible or to Christianity to define it for you. If that is you tonight, then does this passage have anything to say to you?

Again, I think that it does. Without getting into all the philosophical issues surrounding it, let me suggest that in your day-to-day life you actually *do* believe in sin ... and you *do* feel grief or distress over your sin ... even if you don't tend to think of it in those terms.

Francis Schaeffer, drawing from Romans 1, put it like this. He said to imagine if every human being had an invisible tape recorder placed around their necks at birth. And this tape recorder was programmed so that it only recorded the moral judgments which you made about other people. Every time you said "Hey, you shouldn't do X." or "You really *should* do Y." or "I think it's terrible that Bob did Z, and treated those people that way." Every time you make a statement of what someone should or should not do, regarding their conduct – regarding morality (whether you

would call it that or not) – it would record that sentence. And you wear it all your life. And then you die. And you stand before your Maker. And Schaeffer writes, “Suppose, then, God simply touched the tape recorder button and each man heard played out in his own words all those statements by which he had bound other men in moral judgment. He could hear it going on for years – thousands and thousands of moral judgments. Then God would simply say to the man, though he had never heard the Bible, ‘Now where do you stand in the light of your own moral judgments?’” [Schaeffer, 41-42]

Where would you stand?

You see, when we evaluate the behavior of others, we make moral judgments. We define “sin.” Now your personal standards may be different than the Bible’s, but you still have that category – maybe not in your official philosophy of life, but certainly in your day-to-day words and actions.

And not only that, I think we all know well before we die and stand before God that we fail to live up to our own standards. We sin against our own ideals. And when we do, we feel distress. We feel upset. We feel ashamed. We feel a kind of grief.

And so this idea of feeling some kind of grief over sin is, I think, a universal human experience. Not all people might use those words to describe it, but all people feel it.

Paul is not trying to prove that here. Paul’s focus for us tonight is to get us to think about the *kind* of grief, the *kind* of distress that we feel when we sin – when we fall short.

Kevin DeYoung, writing on this passage, points out that most of us tend to assume that feeling sorry for something wrong that we did is morally neutral. I wonder if most of us tend to actually assume that feeling bad when we have done wrong is always morally good.

But the Apostle Paul disagrees with both of those ideas. Paul is saying in this text that the *kind* of grief, the kind of distress we feel over our sin, over our moral failures, is extremely important – so important that one kind leads to life and the other kind leads to death.

The questions before us then are: Which kind do we feel? And: If we feel the wrong kind, what should we do about it?

To answer those questions, we need to do three things tonight.

First, we need to diagnose our grief over sin. We need to determine which kind of grief it is that we feel.

Second, we need to expose the roots of worldly grief.

And third, we need to think about how to pursue godly grief.

So we need to diagnose our grief, expose the roots of worldly grief that leads to death, and figure out how to pursue godly grief that leads to life.

So let’s begin at the top: First, we need to diagnose our grief over sin.

When you sin, what kind of grief do you typically feel?

It may be helpful to bring a particular instance to mind – maybe a time recently when you felt especially distressed over your sin, or over a pattern of sin in your life.

And let's ask: What kind of grief did you experience in that instance? Godly grief, or worldly grief?

Well, first: How do we distinguish between the two?

Commentator Paul Barnett is helpful here.

He points out the parallels of the descriptions of the two kinds of grief, and how their structure implies some additional components.

Verse ten reads, "For godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death."

Paul is setting up these two kinds of grief as opposites. And he spells out some of those opposites, but he implies others too.

Barnett fills in the blanks to make the two halves of the verse complement each other. He says the implication is that if godly grief produces repentance, then worldly grief produces *unrepentance*. The Apostle explicitly contrasts the results. The repentance of godly grief then leads to salvation, while the unrepentance of worldly grief leads to death. But a final element is added too. The salvation that comes from godly grief makes it a grief that is without regret. This implies that the worldly grief is one filled with regret.

So the full idea that Paul is pointing us to here is that:

Godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation without regret.

And worldly grief produces *unrepentance* that leads to death *with* regret.

That is the distinction. Now, how do we identify the two types of grief in our own lives?

Well, repentance is key to that identification, we see. Repentance is really the visible thing that helps us to distinguish them.

And when we say that, we need to also acknowledge that Paul here is also making a distinction between *grief* over sin and *repentance*. They are not the same thing. Repentance involves some level of a certain kind of grief, as Paul points out. But repentance is about turning. Repentance is about turning away from our sin and towards God. Unrepentance may feel grief, but it does not turn away from its sin. It does not turn towards God.

So repentance is a key indicator – it is helpful in diagnosing the kind of grief we have. But repentance isn't the thing that *produces* godly sorrow. It's godly sorrow that produces repentance, right? Repentance is the fruit of godly sorrow. That's what we see in verse ten.

What then does worldly sorrow look like?

Well, verse ten implies that it looks like grief paired with *unrepentance*. So then, we might ask: what does this kind of unrepentance look like?

I think it can take a number of forms.

One obvious form is that we minimize our responsibility for our sin. We explain how it is not *really* our fault. We find someone else to blame.

Earlier this week Rosie, our three year old, who has been *told* not to do this, stood up on one of our dining room chairs. She then lost her balance and fell off the chair, and somehow managed to do half a flip and land right on her face. She was fine, but there were many tears, and after we comforted her and calmed her down we tried to explain to her why this had happened.

We reminded her how we've told her repeatedly not to stand on the chairs, and how one of the reasons for that rule is that she could fall down like this, and we pointed out that if she had obeyed us, she would not have fallen and been hurt and scared.

She thought about this, looked up at me, and explained: "Olive," she said, indicating her older sister, "Olive tickled me the other day ... and so I fell." Three years old, and there she sat, trying to explain to me that her falling was not the result of her disobedience ... but the *real* cause of her falling that night was that Olive had tickled her a few days earlier.

Now ... we are hopefully a bit more sophisticated in how we evade responsibility for our sin. But we're not *that much* more sophisticated. We are often eager to believe that our sin, and the results of our sin, are not really our fault.

And that is one form that worldly grief can take. It does not lead to repentance because it denies that it has *really* done any wrong. It denies that there is anything to repent of, to turn away from.

Another form of worldly grief looks very different. It takes the form of hopeless despair over our sin – over our shortcomings.

We want to give up. We feel hopeless. We wallow. If godly sorrow is characterized by repentance – by active turning – this kind of worldly sorrow might involve a lot of grief, but it is characterized by stasis. By inaction. We might seek to numb our feelings of failure by eating too much, or drinking too much, or watching too much TV, or by indulging in something worse. But while we feel a lot of grief, we remain static.

A great picture of this, I think, comes from Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. If you haven't read it, you really must. If you won't read it, you can watch the movie – I personally prefer 1995 miniseries from the BBC.

I'm going to give a bit of a spoiler, and I'll try to mask some details, but I feel like when a book has been out for over 200 years, it's kind of fair game.

At one point in the novel, a tragedy strikes. Lydia, the youngest sister of Elizabeth Bennet (who is the main character), Lydia runs off with a man to London. At first they think it's to elope, but then they learn that it does not appear that an actual marriage has taken place.

Now, besides the moral implications of this, such a scandal in the early 1800s had *huge* social implications for a family like the Bennets. They would be marked with scandal forever. They would be socially excluded by their now-former peers. Their other daughters would have a *much* harder time finding husbands from families in their class. Whatever we may think of such social consequences, at that time and place that is just what they were, fair or not. And so the Bennets were facing a major scandal, while Lydia and the man she ran off with remained together. No one knew exactly where they were, but they suspected they were *somewhere* in London. And while there was a narrow chance of setting things right in a way that would save the family's reputation, few were optimistic at this point in the story that it would happen.

And while Lydia is primarily responsible for her actions, it also is clear at this point that everyone around her bears some responsibility as well. Her parents, her siblings – all had opportunities to guard her from such a temptation, or to warn her about the character of the man she ran off with beforehand, but each in their own way, they failed. Mr. Darcy, who had gotten to know the family, also had opportunity to warn them about the young man in question, but he had not. And so he too bore some responsibility for what had happened.

In other words, many people had failed to do the right thing. The question that remained now was: How would each respond? What kind of grief over their failure would they each experience? And here we get the contrast.

First there is Lydia's mother, Mrs. Bennet. When she gets the news she flees to her room, and there she stays, mostly in bed, for days. Elizabeth, who had been away, comes home to see how she can help the family, and she goes to see her mother, who is in bed. Jane Austen describes their meeting like this – she writes: “Mrs. Bennet [...] received them exactly as might be expected; with tears and lamentations of regret, invectives against the villainous conduct of [that man], and complaints of her own sufferings and ill usage; blaming every body but the person whose ill-judging indulgence the errors of her daughter must be principally owing” – that is, everybody but herself. [Austen, 253]

As a family member prepares to leave for London in order to help *Mr.* Bennet as he tries to locate Lydia and the man she is with, Mrs. Bennet wants the family member to deliver a message to her husband about the matter – she says “Tell him what a dreadful state I am in, - that I am frightened out of my wits; and have such tremblings, such flutterings, all over me, such spasms in my side, and pains in my head, and such beatings at heart, that I can get no rest by night or by day.” [Austen, 254]

Mrs. Bennet, whose inaction contributed to Lydia's current situation, responds by plunging herself into even *less* action. She is experiencing grief for sure – that is the source of all of her claimed maladies. But it is a grief that leads her to stasis, to inaction – not one that causes her to turn away from her own failure. It is a grief that leads to regret, but not repentance – that leads to death rather than life. It is worldly grief.

And then, contrasted with that, there is Mr. Darcy's response. Mr. Darcy, as I said, also had some moral responsibility for what had happened. He happens to come visit Elizabeth when she first gets the news about her sister Lydia. She tells him what happened and he is taken aback. He is distressed. He tells her that he is shocked and grieved. He paces and he broods. And then, after expressing his concern for her, he leaves her.

Elizabeth assumes he leaves to get away from her – as her family is now marked by scandal. It's not until later that she finds out the full truth.

Later she discovers that after he left her, he went home, packed his things, and left for London the next day. Once there he did not rest until he had not only found Lydia and the man she had run off with, but until he had made arrangements at his own expense to set everything right, and then convinced them to go along with his arrangements. When others protested about what his financial contribution to this arrangement was costing him, he simply replied that he bore responsibility by not doing what he could have to prevent this, and that it was only right that he pay what was needed to set things right [Austen, 284, 287].

Mrs. Bennet and Mr. Darcy had both, in a sense, sinned – they had both failed to do their part to prevent what happened with Lydia. And they were both grieved. They were both distressed. But their grief was of very different kinds and led to very different results.

The question is: Which do we look like? How do we respond when we sin – when we fail? Is our response marked by the grieved but determined kind of about-face that Mr. Darcy makes? Or do we more resemble the self-pity and excuse-making of Mrs. Bennet?

And please understand – the difference has nothing to do with *how much* emotion either of them felt. It is all about *what kind* of emotion they felt, and what they did with it.

So when you look at your distress over your own sin, what *kind* of grief do you see? Godly grief leading to repentance, or worldly grief, that turns in on itself, and leads to unrepentance?

I hope we each can see *some* godly grief in us that leads to at least some repentance. We should certainly look for that. If God's Spirit is at work in you, then repentance must be some part of your response to sin, even if it's a small part right now.

But I also suspect that even if we find some godly grief in our response to sin, we also will each find some worldly grief alongside it. Maybe a lot of worldly grief. And maybe *only* worldly grief *sometimes*.

If that is the case, then what are we to do?

Well, that leads us to our second task.

Once we have diagnosed our grief over sin, the second thing we need to do is to expose the roots of our worldly grief.

To expose the roots of our worldly grief.

If unrepentance is the fruit of worldly grief over our sin, we might ask, what is at its root?

We can start maybe by identifying what is *not* at its root. What is not at its root is whatever *is* at the root of godly grief. That's obvious enough, right? They can't have the same root. So what then is at the root of *godly* grief that *does* lead to repentance?

We get a picture of that in in the Heidelberg Catechism, questions 88 through 90. There the catechism asks, "What is involved in genuine repentance"?

It points to two components.

The first, it says "is to be genuinely sorry for sin, to hate it more and more, and to run away from it."

The second is "wholehearted joy in God through Christ and a delight to do every kind of good as God wants us to."

In other words, at the root of *godly* grief over sin is a hate for sin, and a love for God. And we might add that it is the love for God that leads to that hate of sin. So at bottom, at root, at the core of godly grief over sin is a love for God.

Which means that something else is at the root of worldly sorrow. That is really the meaning of "worldly" anyway. Calling it "worldly" is not to identify it with the physical world but with the current orientation of the human world – of human society. M. E. Thrall points out that the term "worldly" in this context means "the sphere in which life is lived without God and in opposition to God." [Barnett, 377, n.19]

So when some or all of our heart is not motivated by love for God, but is opposed to him, then what is at the core of our grief over our sin?

In book five of *City of God* Augustine discusses the virtue of the Roman pagans in their earlier history. And he asks this question – he asks: How could these pagans seem to live so virtuously if they did not know or love the true God? His answer is this – he writes "The ancient Romans [...] as their own history teaches and stamps with approval, 'they were eager for praise, generous with their money, and longed for boundless glory and riches with honor.' This glory they loved with a passion. It was for its sake that they wanted to live and for its sake that they did not hesitate to die. Their boundless desire for this one thing kept all other desires in check." [Augustine, *City of God*, V.12, p. 159].

A little later he elaborates, saying: "For the sake of this one vice – that is, the love of praise – these men suppressed the love of riches and many other vices." [Augustine, V.13, p.163]

What Augustine is saying is that one can live a morally-oriented life, a life that *looks* good, that seems morally ordered, and that therefore includes grief over sin ... he's saying that one could lead a life valuing and pursuing virtue ... and one could do it all based on the foundation of a vice.

In other words, we can live a morally rigorous life, a life that looks good, a life that impresses others, and at the core could be the sin, the vice, of the love of praise. All our good deeds can be oriented around what other people will think of us.

And if that is the case, then when we fail, when we sin, we will never, from that root, experience godly grief. Our distress at our failure will not be about our love for God, or about what our sin has done to our relationship with God or others – our grief will be about how our sin hurt what we *really* loved – which is being held in high esteem by others.

And so if praise from others, if being held in high esteem by others, is the core thing that motivates us, our grief will be worldly. We will minimize or hide our sin when we fail, in order to protect our standing in the eyes of others. Or we will wallow, and despair, and pity ourselves, because our failure has affected how others view us. Even if we *do* take action it will be to repair our image, not to truly repent and right the wrong that we have done to God or others.

On one level, this kind of worldly motivation for virtuous living can kind of work on the outside. You can live a life that looks really good on the outside based on the love of praise and esteem from others. You can look really good with this vice at the core of your motivation. But ultimately, as Paul says here, such a life leads to death.

Let me tell you, honestly, this is one of my biggest fears as a minister. This, I believe, is one of the biggest dangers for my soul: that I might live a life of ministry, that I might have a successful ministry, a ministry that looked good on the outside, that produced good sermons, that helped people, that was regarded as faithful, but that at its core, at its center, was *not* motivated by love for God or love for my congregation, but that was driven by a desire to be praised and highly esteemed by others. That I might have a good looking ministry that was motivated by the vice of self-centeredness at its core.

And it's not a crazy fear. Not only because I know my own heart, but because I know church history, and I know current events. Both our day and the history of the church are littered with men who had such ministries, and whose hearts were eventually exposed. And that is to say nothing of the men whose hearts were not exposed in this life.

But here's the thing – I also know this is not just a problem for pastors. I know that every Christian struggles with this to some extent.

When you fail, when you sin, are you more worried about what others will think of you, or what God will think of you? Which one bothers you more? Is your grief more caused by your love for God and for other people, or is it more caused by your love *for your own reputation* among other people?

Which one are you more concerned for?

Which one have you taught your children to be more concerned for?

As Christians we all have a mix of motivations and a mix of griefs when we sin. We all have a combination of godly grief and worldly grief. We have some of each.

The first thing we need to do when we see that is to expose the selfishness, and self-centeredness that lies at the root of our worldly grief. We need to see it for what it is.

But the next thing we need to do is to pursue godly grief.

We need to pursue godly grief.

Now – what does that look like? How do we pursue godly grief that leads to true repentance?

Well, as the Heidelberg questions we read from earlier point out, it is a process that involves two motions:

- With the one hand, we need to uproot sin,
- And with the other hand, we need to nurture and grow righteousness.

And so in this case we need to uproot that self-centered core that leads to worldly grief, and we need to nurture and grow our love for God that leads to godly grief and repentance.

Let's consider that.

First, we need to uproot the self-centeredness that leads to worldly grief. And that is exactly what Paul points out that the Corinthians have done here.

In verse eleven Paul writes: “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! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. ”

The Corinthians owned their failure. They did not try to hide it. They did not defend themselves. They were indignant, Paul says, over their sin. They were fearful of its consequences, he says. They longed to correct what they had done and they wanted to see justice done.

Paul writes to them about how eager they were to clear themselves. He goes on and writes that by their actions they “proved [themselves] innocent in the matter.” When Paul writes that they proved themselves innocent in the matter, he does not mean that they proved that Paul's accusations were false, or that they proved that really they had done nothing wrong. He doesn't mean that they defended themselves. He means that they *made themselves* innocent where they *had been* guilty, by owning their guilt and by repenting. They admitted their fault, and then they truly repented of it to the core.

And one of the ways we put our love for praise from others to death, one of the ways that we uproot our love of being held in high esteem by others, is that we own our own failures. We own our sin. We admit it. And we repent openly.

Now, that doesn't mean we go around telling everyone about all of our sin all the time. That's not what the Corinthians did here. But it means that sometimes we need to actively kill our idol of being held in high esteem, by openly admitting our failures at the right time and in the right place. If we do that right, it will hurt. But it will also be a way of putting that sinful part of ourselves to death. In fact, that'll probably be *why* it will hurt.

Another way of putting this is that admitting our need to repent, helps kill off the part of us that would urge us to unrepentance, and so makes us more able to repent ... if that makes sense.

The Corinthians admitted their need to repent, and *that* is what Paul rejoices over. Because their willingness to do that, and then the real action they take to repent shows that whatever sin may lie in their hearts, their ultimate loyalty was to Christ, and to Christ's people. And when we admit our need to repent and then follow through on it, we do the same thing.

So, we put worldly grief to death by first admitting our need to repent, and then following through on that repentance.

But second, we also need to nurture our love for God. What does that look like?

Well, that can look like a lot of things, of course. In the context of our grief over sin, let me suggest just one for us, in closing.

Let me suggest that we meditate on Christ's suffering for us. That we meditate on the suffering Christ took on in order to save us.

I don't mean anything complicated by that. I simply mean that we take time to reflect, and think about, and pray about regularly, what Christ suffered to redeem us to himself.

Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life, the Maker of heaven and earth, was beaten and bruised, so that he might conquer sin and death in your life, and be with you forever.

Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life, was mocked, and spit on, and stripped bare before jeering crowds, so that he might conquer sin and death in your life, and be with you forever.

Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life, was nailed to a tree, and tortured to death by his enemies, so that he might conquer sin and death in your life, and be with you forever.

Jesus Christ, the Lord of Life, agreed to have the wrath of God against your sin poured out on himself, so that he might conquer sin and death in your life, and be with you forever.

If those things are true ... how can we treat his salvation so cheaply? How can we be so unmoved by our sin? How can we be so unfeeling about the gravity of our vices, as we often are?

We need sometimes to hold that image of Christ's suffering before us in our minds. We need to reflect on what he has done for us. We need to nurture a heart of love for him by looking at the love he has *already* shown us. And we need that love for him to then grow into a godly grief when we sin against him.

But of course the process doesn't end there. Because as Jesus's death on our behalf becomes more real for us in our hearts and in our minds, so his resurrection will also become more manifest in our lives.

As we live more and more in light of the death that Jesus died for us, so his resurrection power should bring about more and more repentance and new life in us.

As we experience godly sorrow for our sin, we do not stop there. We repent. We experience forgiveness and new life. And that new life in Christ brings such joy that we can honestly say, as Paul does here, that we have no regret over the sorrow that we felt before. Yes, we regret our sin, but we do not regret the godly grief it caused us – because that godly grief led us to life, and to joy, and to salvation in Christ.

And so we do not stop at the cross, but we move on to the resurrection.

For our Lord died for our sin so that we might *not* experience grief that leads to death, and he rose from the dead that we might instead experience his salvation.

As we have seen again and again in Second Corinthians, in Christ, death always leads to resurrection.

And so, when we sin, we are faced with two paths. One is worldly grief, rooted in selfishness, that leads to denial, and self-protection, and inaction, and death. The other is godly grief, rooted in love for Christ, which leads to repentance, and salvation, and the joy of new life.

Let us fix our eyes on Christ, and pursue the new life that we have in him.

Amen.

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**This sermon draws on material from:**

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