

2 Corinthians 7:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Analysis

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of—

Hē gar kata Theon lypē metanoian eis sōtērian ametamelēton katergazetai (ἡ γὰρ κατὰ θεὸν λύπη μετάνοιαν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἀμεταμέλητον κατεργάζεται, "godly sorrow produces repentance unto salvation not to be regretted"). Katergazomai (κατεργάζομαι, "to produce/work out/accomplish") suggests active, effective causation—not mere emotion but transformative power. Ametamelēton (ἀμεταμέλητον, "without regret") modifies either 'repentance' (repentance one never regrets) or 'salvation' (salvation that needs no reversal).

But the sorrow of the world worketh death—Hē de tou kosmou lypē thanaton

katergazetai (ἡ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου λύπη θάνατον κατεργάζεται, "worldly sorrow produces death"). Worldly sorrow grieves consequences, not sin's offense against God. It produces despair (Judas, Mt 27:3-5), self-pity, or mere behavior modification without heart change. Godly sorrow drives toward God; worldly sorrow drives away from God. This is Paul's most crucial pastoral distinction: not all conviction leads to life—some grieves itself into spiritual death.

Historical Context

Ancient Stoicism taught apatheia (freedom from passion)—suppressing grief as weakness. Epicureanism pursued pleasure and avoided pain. Paul presents a third way: embrace appropriate grief (over sin's offense to God) that produces life-giving repentance. The contrast with 'worldly sorrow' may also reference pagan remorse

over ritual pollution (fixable through temple ceremonies) versus covenantal repentance requiring transformation.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How can I identify whether my sorrow over sin is 'godly' (leading to repentance) or 'worldly' (producing only shame, fear, or despair)?
2. What sin am I grieving the consequences of rather than its offense against God's holiness?
3. How do I counsel others in conviction—toward 'salvation not to be regretted' or toward crushing condemnation?

Interlinear Text

ἡ	γὰρ	κατὰ	θεὸν	λύπη	μετάνοιαν	εἰς	σωτηρίαν
G3588	For	G2596	godly	sorrow	repentance	to	salvation
	G1063		G2316	G3077	G3341	G1519	G4991
ἀμεταμέλητον	κατεργάζεται·	ἡ	δὲ	τοῦ	κόσμου	λύπη	
not to be repented of	worketh	G3588	but	G3588	of the world	sorrow	
	G278		G1161		G2889	G3077	
θάνατον	κατεργάζεται·						
death	worketh						
G2288	G2716						

Additional Cross-References

Acts 11:18 (Repentance): When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Acts 3:19 (Repentance): Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

2 Samuel 12:13 (Parallel theme): And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

Luke 18:13 (References God): And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Luke 15:10 (Repentance): Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Jonah 3:10 (Repentance): And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Hebrews 12:17 (Repentance): For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Proverbs 17:22 (Parallel theme): A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Jonah 4:9 (References God): And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

1 Samuel 30:6 (References God): And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

