

# PETER AND JUDAS

Matthew 26:69-27:10

## TWO CATEGORIES OF SORROW

Second Corinthians 7:10

I want to begin our study of Matthew by looking at Second Corinthians 7:10.

**10** For godly sorrow  
produces a repentance without regret,  
leading to salvation,  
but the sorrow of the world  
brings about death.  
**(2 Corinthians 7:10, 2022 LSB)**

The KJV, NKJV, and ESV all imply that *salvation* is without regret; other translations imply that *repentance* is without regret. Either one is very accurate. Certainly, no one who is *saved* regrets their salvation. I tend to think that Paul is using a little wordplay to make his point; true repentance is the kind of regret that no one regrets.

We see here that there are two categories of sorrow over sin: sorrow that comes from God's work within us and sorrow that comes from the world.

The Holy Spirit produces godly sorrow in us when He persuades us (or convicts us) of our sinful nature and the sinfulness of our actions. That persuasion is a tremendous work of His grace and, to be honest, is always contrary to our desires. Yahweh must interfere with our lives *without our permission* in order to make us aware that we face His judgment. Notice that godly sorrow does not bring about salvation directly; that would make it a form of purgatory, where we would be saved because WE suffer something. Instead, the gracious conviction of the Holy Spirit moves us to turn away from our sins and toward Christ and His cross in faith, and He does the work of saving us by HIS suffering.

The sorrow of the world has many sources. It can come from cultural and social forces; that's why so many white people in recent years have been lamenting and mourning their "whiteness." It comes from unmet expectations, lost dreams, or broken relationships. Worldly sorrow can be imposed on us by family and friends. Law enforcement and the judicial system are major sources of worldly sorrow. Certainly, worldly sorrow rises from within ourselves when we suffer the consequences of our actions. And, whereas godly sorrow brings about repentance, and repentance results in salvation, worldly sorrow directly produces death.

Matthew 26:69-27:10 tells the stories of Peter and Judas and the deep remorse each man felt. In those

stories, we see these two categories of sorrow illustrated. Turn to Matthew 26:69 with me, and we will begin with Peter's story.

## PETER

*Matthew 26:69-75*

After celebrating Passover and instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus foretold His disciples' abandonment of Him. Peter vowed to remain loyal, but Jesus said that Peter would deny Him three times. Peter responded by saying that, even if he had to die, he would never, under any circumstances, deny Jesus. Jesus prayed in the garden, and then was arrested by a large crowd of heavily armed men. The disciples fled as Jesus had foretold, but Peter doubled back and trailed the group to see what happened. He entered the courtyard of the high priest and sat down. Matthew describes the details of that trial in Matthew 26:57-68.

Matthew then turned his attention to Peter's actions during the trial.

### The First Denial

**69** Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard,  
and a servant-girl came to him and said,  
“You too were with Jesus the Galilean.”  
(**Matthew 26:69, 2022 LSB**)

Most of Jesus' ministry was in Galilee, but he frequently visited Jerusalem and Judea as well. The poor, like this girl, were the group most attracted to Jesus. The likelihood is that she had been around Jesus in the past at various times and now recognized Peter as one of Jesus' disciples.

**70** But he denied it before them all, saying,  
“**I do not know** what you are talking about.”  
(**Matthew 26:70, 2022 LSB**)

She spoke loudly enough that others heard her. They probably turned to glance at Peter. He literally replied, “I do not know what you are saying,” which works out to, “I have no idea what you mean.” He pleads complete ignorance.

### The Second Denial

**71** And when he had gone out to the gateway ...  
(**Matthew 26:71, 2022 LSB**)

Peter was unsettled enough to get up and move toward the gate leading to the street, perhaps to make a

quick exit if they made a grab for him.

**71** And when he had gone out to the gateway,  
another servant-girl saw him and **said to those who were there,**  
“This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.”  
**(Matthew 26:71, 2022 LSB)**

The first servant girl spoke directly to Peter. This second servant speaks to those around the gate, bringing their attention to him.

**72** And again he denied it with an oath,  
“I do not know the man.”  
**(Matthew 26:72, 2022 LSB)**

The word **oath** doesn't mean a curse word but rather taking a solemn oath to tell the truth; as it turns out, ancient courts were like modern courts in that witnesses swore to tell the truth. So Peter is not saying, “Listen, you dirty so-and-so,” but “I swear, you've got to believe me, I don't know the man.”

Ah, notice that change, too. In his first denial, Peter said, **I don't know WHAT you are talking about.** Now he said, **I don't know WHO you are talking about.**

## The Third Denial

It doesn't take long for the bystanders to get involved.

**73** A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter,  
“Surely you too are one of them;  
for even the way you talk gives you away.”  
**(Matthew 26:73, 2022 LSB)**

Peter's accent gave him away. We don't know the difference between a Judean accent and a Galilean accent, but they did. Not all Galileans were disciples of Jesus, obviously. But how many Galileans woke up in the middle of the night, decided to go for a stroll in the dark, and ended up in the courtyard of the high priest where Jesus, the Galilean, was under trial?

**74** Then [Peter] began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!”  
**(Matthew 26:74, 2022 LSB)**

Peter didn't curse the bystanders; he called a curse down upon himself, like “May God strike me down if I'm lying.” His heels are firmly dug in, and he continues to deny knowing anything about Jesus. By the way,

Peter was terrified of what would happen if these people thought he was one of Jesus' disciples, but the fact is that they DID think he was one of Jesus' disciples, and they didn't care. No one shouted for the guards to come arrest him. No one tried to take him into custody.

And immediately, while his words were still echoing on the stone walls, a rooster crowed.

Matthew goes immediately to Peter's response, but I want to pause to insert Luke 22:60-61.

**60** Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed.

**61 And the Lord turned and looked at Peter.**

And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him,

“Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.”

**(Luke 22:60–61, 2022 LSB)**

What a shock for Peter. At this third denial, he turned to look toward Jesus and found Jesus looking right into his eyes. What did Peter see there?

**It wasn't rejection.** Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him and had already spoken of Peter's restoration. It wasn't **surprise**; again, Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him. It wasn't **disappointment**, either. Being disappointed means having your expectations go unfulfilled.

So, I think Jesus must have looked into Peter's eyes with love and sympathy. His love for Peter was undiminished. He pitied Peter for the sorrow he would endure as a result of his failure.

**75** And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said,

“Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.”

And he went out and cried bitterly.

**(Matthew 26:75, 2022 LSB)**

Peter's heart shattered within him. This was not a single dignified tear rolling silently down his grizzled face. This was loud, painful, gasping sobs, wails of anguish and misery, the kind of crying that makes your heart ache within you.

## JUDAS

*Matthew 27:1-10*

Let's turn our attention to Judas in Matthew 27:1-10. Matthew turns his attention back to Jesus and the trial.

**1** Now when morning came,

all the chief priests and the elders of the people  
took counsel together against Jesus to put Him to death;  
2 and they bound Him, and led Him away  
and delivered Him to Pilate the governor.  
(Matthew 27:1–2, 2022 LSB)

The trial before Caiaphas ended exactly as the chief priests and elders desired: Jesus was condemned to death, and they had – they thought – a credible accusation to bring to Pontius Pilate.

Not only was Peter there observing the trial, but Judas was, too.

3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him,  
saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse  
and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,  
4 saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.”  
(Matthew 27:3–4, 2022 LSB)

Now, it was Judas’ idea to betray Jesus. He went to the chief priests and asked how much they would give him to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:15). Apparently, he was so blinded by greed that he didn’t understand why they were willing to pay him. Once he realized that they wanted Jesus dead, he was filled with remorse and regret. He changed his mind about the money and tried to return it. Perhaps he thought that if he gave them their money back, they would release Jesus. He even admitted his wrong to them: **I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.** These were priests, the very men sinners were supposed to confess their sins to when they brought sacrifices. But they felt nothing but joyful victory as Jesus was dragged out to Pilate’s house. They dismiss Judas with contempt:

4 But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself!”  
5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed;  
and he went away and hanged himself.  
(Matthew 27:4–5, 2022 LSB)

Sinners feel guilt and remorse all the time. It’s the way of the world. Frankly, the world has the same response as the chief priests: So what? That’s your problem. Deal with it. The worldly sorrow felt by Judas drove him to a quick suicide by hanging, but there are many others who commit slow suicide by other means: alcohol and drug abuse, sex, power, money, serial relationships, self-harming (like cutting oneself), avoidance, isolation, escapism, food, risky behaviors, perfectionism, overwork – the list goes on and on. None of these can actually solve the problem of worldly sorrow, and so people often intensify their efforts.

The chief priests, for their part, proved their wickedness and hypocrisy.

6 And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said,

“It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury,  
since it is the price of blood.”

7 And taking counsel together,  
they bought with the money the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers.

8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.

9 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying,

“AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER,

THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel;

10 AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER’S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME.”

(Matthew 27:6–10, 2022 LSB)

By the way, these words are not found in Jeremiah but in Zechariah. Did Matthew get it wrong? Not at all. Those who made copies of the Old Testament Scriptures sought to keep the scrolls the same approximate length. When they made the scroll of Jeremiah, they added the scroll of Zechariah to it. Those looking to find these words in written form would not have found them in a scroll of Zechariah but in the scroll of Jeremiah.

## BRINGING IT HOME

Two men. Two sinful, shameful acts. Two outcomes.

10 For godly sorrow produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation,  
but the sorrow of the world brings about death.

(2 Corinthians 7:10, 2022 LSB)

### Judas and the Sorrow of the World

We are told that Judas felt remorse for his actions, but feeling bad about your actions is not enough. It certainly isn’t repentance. I regularly encounter men in the jails who feel terrible about their circumstances and actions but who are completely unrepentant. The weight of their guilt might be suffocating, but they are unwilling to bring their sins to Christ. They will admit their actions to others, as Judas did, but it’s always the wrong others. Some will even tell *me* what they’ve done and probably feel a little bit of relief. But only Jesus Christ can save sinners.

### Peter and Godly Sorrow

We see Peter denied Jesus three times, just as Jesus foretold he would. When Matthew leaves Peter in Matthew 26:75, Peter is utterly heartbroken by his sin, filled with self-loathing and disappointment. If Matthew’s Gospel ended here, we would have no hope for Peter. But we know from the rest of the story that

the godly sorrow Peter experienced brought him to repentance, and he was fully restored. Since that event took place after the Lord's resurrection, we'll come back to Peter's story in a few weeks. But if you would like to read John 21:15-17, you will see Peter restored by the Lord Jesus.

## What About Us?

### I pray that your sorrow is never worldly:

- destructive,
- hopeless,
- and debilitating.

### I pray that your sorrow is always godly:

- glorifying the holiness of God,
- truthful about your sins and needs,
- open and honest in confession before the Lord,
- and rejoicing in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

The Puritan pastor Christopher Love said this in a sermon on Psalm 42: *There is not as much guilt in sin as there is merit in Christ; there is not as much guilt in sin to condemn as there is merit in Jesus Christ to save.*

Romans 6:23 says,

**23 For the wages of sin is death,  
but the gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
(Romans 6:23, 2022 LSB)**

Every sin pays out death and will until the Lord takes us home, but Jesus *received our wages in full* on His cross. And in the place of the death that we earn each time we sin, the Father has given us and continues to give us eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

That's the truth. Hold on to it.

Let's pray.

