

Hey, how are we? Let me start this way. I don't ever want to pander to you. I think if I'm willing to pander to you, if I just say to you things that I think you want to hear, then in the end I have been very unloving to you, and in the end the Village Church is about me and not about you, not about God, not about the gospel and not about lining ourselves up with how God created the universe to be. So I don't want to pander to you. And I want to shoot straight with you even when we get into very difficult topics, and today is a very difficult topic. So I want to just show you what Scripture says, and then I want us to see what the Holy Spirit wants to do here. But I just want to throw it out very early that a bulk of us will not like this. We very much prefer the Tinker Bell god who flutters around in a green dress helping everyone to fly. The God of the Bible is wildly unpopular because He tends to stamp His enemies until His feet are covered with blood, and no one talks about that One. And so, some of this today will be thick, but I don't know what to do other than tell you what it says. And so we'll start from there.

When I was five years old, we were living in San Francisco, California. I had a sister that was two years older than me, and I had a sister that was two years younger than me. My parents, for whatever reason, probably because we pestered them to death, decided to get us a pet. So they got us a gray kitten. We named him Smokey. My room was on the second floor and the staircase was one of those that goes down for a bit, ends in a wall, turns 90 degrees and goes down to the first floor. I come out of my room and get to the top of the stairs. And at the top of the stairs, Smokey is giving himself a bath. So he's licking his paw and doing that thing with the head. And for whatever reason, I picked up Smokey and as hard as I could, I threw him down the stairs. I'm not trying to make a joke or make anyone gasp, I'm just telling you what I did. I threw Smokey so hard that he hit that wall and made it down the lower half of the stairs. And so I ran down the stairs. When I got to the bottom of the stairs, I had hurt him badly. He wasn't moving. And at the age of 5, for the first time in my life I felt, "Oh my God, what did I just do?" That's the first time I ever felt that. It's my first recollection of "I can't believe I just did that." And so I tried to see if the cat was okay. Smokey wasn't moving. Smokey recovered fine. He always hated me, but he was fine. He literally attacked me several times of the next seven years. I was guilt ridden and I just took it. "I deserve that scratch." I went upstairs, shut my door and cried. Which made it very difficult to lie ten minutes later when my mom came in later and said, "Did you do something to Smokey?" "[Sniff] No, why?" It was the first time I ever felt it. I had never felt it before. The word we use is shame, but the feeling is just one of weight. We're not really sure where it came from, and we don't know how to get it off of us.

Things like that are what made me an agnostic, not an atheist. I just think atheism is silly. You have no explanation for almost everything. I have the Discovery Channel and the National Geographic Channel, I enjoy that. Nature is cruel. It is cruel at the highest order of things. It is murderous, violent and without remorse. Have you ever seen the lions stalk the antelope until they find the sick one, the old one, the weak one, the baby one? They pounce on that thing and chew it, obliterate it and kill one of their own who gets in the way. He's not laying there going, "Oh, I shouldn't have. It was just a baby. How dare I slaughter the baby antelope." No man, he's chewing on its liver. He doesn't care. So why is it that human kind alone feels this weight? Why is it that nothing else in the creative order feels this? And don't give me that, "Well, that's socially put on you." It wasn't socially put on you when I was 5. My mom didn't have a conversation with me that went something like this, "Hey, let's try not to kill the cat. You will enjoy this cat at a higher level if you don't murder it. Because once you kill it, it's going to get stiff and gross. You don't want to do that." Nobody told me that. There was something intrinsic firing off in me. And then here's the thing. There is no way I could have known this at 5, but that

feeling, whatever that is, conscience, Jiminy Cricket, the Imago Dei, the image of God in us, whatever it is would be a constant companion showing up time and time and time again and that thought of "Oh my God, what did I just do?" would be with me over and over and over again.

Okay, so here's what we've got to figure out. What do we do with it? Because it's there. Even if you are an atheist and you would say, "Well, that's just hormones or electrons firing off in your head that make you think that," even if you want to pretend that there's nothing divine, nothing spiritual, nothing deeper than just cognitive action occurring here, you still have to do something with it. Being an atheist doesn't mean it's not there. Unless you want to get into a crazy level of unbelief that would go, "It's just not there." So you've got to do something with guilt because no one escapes it, not in any culture, not in any place. If you are human, regret and guilt are there whether you grew up on church or not. Now, churchmen historically have been excellent at using guilt to make themselves wealthy and grow their churches, have they not? Was that too honest? Do I need to pull back on that a little bit? No, guilt is a very powerful tool. Here's what I would tell you. The Bible is going to tell you that there's two types of guilt. There's a good type of guilt and then a bad type of guilt. The good kind of guilt is good because of what it brings about, and the bad kind of guilt is bad because of what it brings about. And so all I want to do in our time together is show you what as Christians we believe concerning guilt and then what the secular world believes about guilt and how they handle it. And then we'll just let it roll down and see what the Holy Spirit wants to do.

So let's look in 2 Corinthians 7. We're just going to read one verse which is going to give two definitions. In fact, it's not even going to give definitions, it's going to make two statements and then we'll have to dig in to define. "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." So we've got two different kinds of grief, two different kinds of guilt, two different kinds of shame. One is a godly grief, the other is a worldly grief. So let's start to unpack them. We'll start with godly grief. In 2 Samuel 11, the Bible tells us that king David, when he should have been out at war, was not at war. He was on his roof. He's looking around on his roof and he sees a woman bathing on her roof. Just a note ladies, move that inside. David sees her, asks a servant, "Who is that?" The answer is, "That's Bathsheba, Uriah's wife. Do you know Uriah? He's one of your soldiers. He's a man fighting a battle that you should be in right now. He's a man who is not at home with his naked wife, which is where all men want to be, because he's fighting your battle." The sarcasm is lost on David and he says, "Bring her to me." He sleeps with her and she gets pregnant. So David, in a quandary now, launches plan A. He writes a dispatch to the front and asks that Uriah be sent home. I don't think this is a stretch of David's imagination. If a man's been off to war and hasn't seen his wife for several months, the reunion is sweet. Now, Uriah comes home, David goes, "Uriah will sleep with his wife and she'll 'get' pregnant. I'm out. I'm clean. Nobody will ever know." The problem is that Uriah comes in and tells the king that he made a vow to the king that he would not touch his wife until he won the battle for the king. Plan B, David pulls out the good wine. If you don't know what that means, if you have to screw the top off of it, that's not what we're talking about here. Just to further it, if it's in a box, that's not what we're talking about here. If you like that, I'm not telling you not to like it. I'm just saying that on a whole the globe would agree that if it screws off or comes in a box it's malt liquor, it's not wine. So David gives him good drink, gives him good drink, gives him good drink until his legs are wobbly and he's happy. And he sends him home, Bathsheba gets her nice dress on, leaves the top two buttons unbuttoned, perfume. Uriah, not trusting himself because of his drunkenness, refused to even go inside and lays down on the front porch just so he wouldn't break his vow to the king. Plan C, David pulls out a piece of paper and writes on a dispatch to move Uriah from the rear to the front, seals it, gives it to Uriah, Uriah climbs on his horse, rides to the front with the letter condemning him to die and gives it to the general. The general moves Uriah from the rear to the front and in the next battle Uriah is killed. News comes back to David goes, "Woe is me. Uriah is dead? What can I do that would honor him? What can I do that in the end would show him my appreciation for his sacrifice? I know, I'll take his wife as my own. I will care for her and provide for her..Wow, withing minutes of our marriage she's pregnant." And so David wipes his brow and goes, "I hid it. Yes!" A chapter later, Nathan the prophet comes in and goes, "King David, I need some help. I need you to rule

on this." So David said, "What's the situation?" Nathan said, "There was a very wealthy man who had 100 sheep, and the man who lived next to him had one lamb and he loved that lamb, he cared for that lamb, he laid that lamb on his chest and petted it and loved that lamb with his whole heart. The man with 100 sheep stole the man's lamb and killed the man. What should we do?" And true to form, David stands up and says, "Bring the man here. We will kill this man." And Nathan goes, "You're the man!" David just straight up got suckered in, didn't he? You'd think at some point David would be like, "Wait a minute, this sounds familiar." But he doesn't, instead he goes, "We'll kill the man." And Nathan tells him that he is the man. And immediately David tears his clothes and weeps.

Now here's where we need to start unpacking the story. David goes into the temple face down and says these words, "Against You and You alone I have sinned." Backtrack: lust, adultery, deceit, murder, more deceit, all of it David says is a sin, not against Uriah, not against Bathsheba, not against the nation, is a sin against God. Godly grief occurs in the understanding that the offense that has occurred is an offense against God. It's not, "Oh, I feel bad that I've been outed and now people know what a dog I am." That's not godly grief. Godly grief is, "I have sinned against the Lord. I have wronged the Lord." You see, David looked down at Bathsheba on the rooftop and had contempt in his heart for God. How? Because he's going, "All that You've given me, all that You've provided for me, every way that You've cared for me and what You've given me as a gift isn't adequate. That's what I want." That's contempt for God. He used Bathsheba as someone without a soul. That's contempt against the Imago Dei. He lies, he murders, all of it is an offense against a holy, righteous, jealous God. And David finally got it. "Against You I have sinned. Against You and You alone have I sinned."

Now look back at the text at what happens when there is godly grief, when there is godly guilt, when we understand that what's been harmed is our relationship with God. "For godly grief produces a repentance." What is the objective evidence of fruit of godly grief? Repentance. Let's talk about what it is and what it isn't. Repentance is two-fold, and where you remove either piece, you no longer have repentance. Repentance is an internal change of mind that leads to an external change of living. If you remove either one of those pieces, you no longer have what the Bible calls repentance. Let me give you an example. Where you have an internal change of mind but no external change, where in your mind you go, "This is what's right, this is what God's asked, this is who He is, this is what we should do," where you internally acknowledge what is right but externally there is no change in you, I would call that easy believism. God talks about it in Amos 5:21 when He says this, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies." Okay for us Gentiles it's, "I hate it when you come to church." Really? "I hate it when you come to church." Let's keep reading. "Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Here's what's happening here. I'll just be frank. God in heaven is going, "Shut up! Be quiet! I am sick of you constantly singing and saying and gathering. Do you not think I know what's in your heart? Do you think that at some level you've deceived Me by this weird religious game that you're playing where you constantly acknowledge what is true with your mouth but will not live this way at all? Do you think you have Me fooled?" That's what He's saying in Amos. He's going, "Oh, I hate Sundays." Now how thick is that? How weighty is that? How hard is that? Like I said, nobody wants to talk about God being frustrated, angry or being wrathful, not in our culture. Everybody wants the Tinker Bell god. But here's what I would push. There is no sacred literature sans the Old Testament and New Testament that unpacks God as primarily loving. So if you have this idea of an all loving God, you got that from this sacred literature. You cannot pull the love parts out or weaken the love the love of God by denying that it is His patience and mercy that is restraining His wrath. It's a weird game we're playing because deep down, we think we can hide things from Him. As if God is confused by your right rhetoric. "Oh they go to church. They must love Me." No, He can't stand it when internal is there and external isn't. Okay, so what if you have external but you don't have internal? What if externally you clean yourself up, "I'm not going to do that anymore, I'm going to do this, I'm going to stop this," and you actually manage to do that but internally there hasn't

been that change? Well, you'll see that in verses like that in Matthew 23 and 25 where He says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence." Doesn't this now sort of sound like a pendulum? Let's keep reading. Verse 27, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness."

You've got to have both pieces: internal leading to external. That's gospel repentance. And if you'll remember the text, it leads us to two places: salvation and life without regret. Just as a sub-point here, repentance and guilt are not the same things. Just because you feel guilty does not make you repentant. Repentance is what occurs out of good guilt. Just because you feel bad about something does not make you repentant. That's just a common misconception. "I'm repentant. I hate that that happened." That doesn't make any sense. Those words don't mean the same thing. So an understanding that we have sinned against leads us to repentance, an external and internal change, that then has brought about salvation. And just so you know, the writers of the Old and New Testaments will not separate out faith and salvation. There's a lot of debate among theologians about which one came first, but among Bible believing scholars you're not going to find anyone who thinks that if there is no repentance, there still is salvation. Faith and salvation are opposite sides of the same coin. Now let me talk about life with no regret. Go to 1 Timothy 1, starting in verse 12. I'm going to show you what I mean by life with no regret. "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life." This is life without regret. The religion I grew up in was a bunch of very clean cut white guys going, "I would never...I have never been to such and such....I would never think such and such..." But the Bible is filled with a slew of men who are like, "I was wicked. I did go there. I did do that." In fact, it is the modus operandi of God to pull out of the darkest recesses of earth those He will save and use. This is life without regret. "Yeah, I imprisoned. Yes, I killed. Yes, I was wicked. Yes, I was violent. Yes, I was horrible. Praise His name." That's life without regret, when you're not hiding your secret and shame anymore but you're going, "Yeah, I was that. In fact, I was that and God still loved me, still came to get me, still rescued me. If He could save me who was guilty of all of that, don't you think He might be able to save you?" This is so constant in the Bible I don't know how we could ever get away with it.

I giggle all the time when I see the pressure on us to acknowledge that guys in the 1st century tinkered with the Bible, like they changed things they didn't want in there. Let me just chat freely with you. If Peter is the first pope and he, 60 years after the ascension Christ, is sitting on top of the church and can control the Bible, don't you think Peter is pulling a couple of things out of the Bible that actually are still in it? I mean he is an absolute moron in this entire book. Even his highlights are clouded by him being a moron. Don't worry, I'll have to stand face to face with him one day and give an account to him. All I'm going to do is point back at the Bible and go, "You were." Jesus called him the devil at one point. He never figures it out, he never gets it, he's constantly blowing it. Don't you think if Peter is sitting on top of things 60 years later he's going, "Let's take that denial part out. I don't think that's really all that important. Hey, that time I said, 'Blessed are You. You are the Son of God, You are the Messiah' and then Jesus blessed me and said, 'Blessed are you Simon-Peter because God has revealed this to you,' and then right after that I tried to lecture Jesus even though I said He was God and He called me Satan and told me to get behind Him? Let's take that part out." Not only that, for my charismatics in here, even after he was filled with the Holy Spirit, he preached at Pentecost, 3,000 men saved. By chapter 4, 5,000 more men saved. There's 8,000 Jewish men saved, which means there were probably around 15-17,000 converts to Jesus Christ. Saul is converted, becomes Paul and within a year of his conversion, he's having to correct

Peter who is just sitting with wealthy Jews and no one else. I mean that's one of the last things we hear about Peter, the rock on which Christ built the church. Life without regret isn't that there's not hurt back there, shame back there, wounds back there. It's that Christ has redeemed those things and now now used them to display His patience, His glory and His grace. That's life without regret. So in the Judeo-Christian belief system all guilt is birthed out of an offense towards God, is repented of, leads to salvation and a life of no regret.

But that's not the only part we've got here, so let's look at the second part of this text. "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." Let me just give you a working definition of worldly grief. Worldly grief or worldly regret is when you feel sorry for something you did because it starts to backfire on you and either humiliates you or punishes you. That's worldly grief. Worldly grief is, "Oh no, I just lost my job because I did that...Oh no, my wife is leaving because I did this...Oh, my children hate me because I did that...Oh, I am seen in the community as a pervert, as a thief, as a liar..." Worldly grief is what happens when the roof of your mirage is ripped off and people see who you really are and you still don't want to acknowledge that's who you really are. That's worldly grief. It is a knee-jerk reaction of a proud heart. And here's why it leads to death. I think there are five things you can do with it. The first thing is you can try to learn from your mistakes and grow. I think that's the bulk of what people do that leads them into the other four that we'll get into, and I think it's somewhat problematic. Firstly, it doesn't address the origin of guilt, because if there isn't a God and there isn't an Imago Dei, why should your guilt drive you to get better? Shouldn't you try to silence it since it's just hormones firing off in your brain? Not only that, but I think every ounce of empirical data that you could find would show you that as soon as the repercussions of your actions have alleviated or dissipated, you'll return to whatever you were doing at first. So that's the first way.

Here's a couple of other ways you could handle it. We've had two children, we're about to have our third. My daughter was a pacifier girl; my boy is a thumb sucker. Let me tell you which we prefer. We prefer the thumb sucking. I'll tell you why. If you're in your car driving and your pacifier kid drops the pacifier and begins to scream, you will endanger your life and the life of everyone around you trying to find that thing to shut the kid up. A thumb sucker? You don't drop your thumb. The thumb doesn't disappear into thin air like the pacifier does. So with Reid, we never had this problem. Audrey would drop her pacifier and scream bloody murder until we could find it or until we could get home. So here's what we did as loving parents. We'd just turn up the music. Does that make me cruel or something? She likes music. So we would turn up the radio and drown out her screaming until we got home. It was either that or scream out obscenities and slam my head into the dash. I feel that I chose the righteous path. You turn it up so you don't hear the screaming. The primary way people handle guilt and shame is they turn up the noise. And listen, you live in the most perfect age in the history of mankind to turn up the noise. You can watch a television show on your phone while you're twittering that you're watching a show your phone as you have a conversation with your friend. I mean, that's unbelievable. I'm 34, I'm a young man and I remember the pager. It was the size of a garage door opener. There is more to do now than there has ever been to do. And what you have to do if guilt haunts you, it chases you, if shame is anywhere in you, is you just have to try to avoid it. So let's busy ourselves with work, let's busy ourselves with friends, let's entertain our minds as best we can. As effective as it is for the most part, the problem is that it will eventually catch up to you. You'll eventually have to try to go to sleep. So I think it's an exercise in futility.

The third thing is do deny that guilt exists and dive into whatever the thing is that's causing you guilt. The reason I think this is a problem is because it perpetuates itself and creates greater guilt. Let me give you some examples. The man who can't stop drinking feels guilt over his drinking, so he drinks to get over the guilt and wakes up with more guilt. Now this cycle continues until he's living in a bottle. I'll give you a wildly popular one. Lust, pornography, sex. Men and women will use those three things to try to avoid loneliness and to feel, even for a second, intimacy, most of the time at the expense of intimacy. Like a guy looking at naked images on his computer while his real, living, breathing, flesh

covered, breast having wife is in the other room is an odd thing, is it not? It reveals a little bit of sickness, spiritual, emotional, interpersonal relationship sickness. So we will run to lust, run to pornography, run to sex without deep relationship to try to get rid of loneliness and feel intimate. And here's what makes it so devastating. For an instant, it works...and then it's gone. And all the loneliness that you felt and all the lack of intimacy that you walk in is simply compounded the second the act is over and you're left now with not only the guilt of the action, but now you have to wrestle through feeling used, feeling like you used. You've just compounded your guilt; you haven't solved it.

A fourth way is you can just blame others. This one is easy because there's always someone around you. So you don't have to feel guilty about your actions; you were only doing those actions because such and such did this. And since they did this, you did that. And you wouldn't have done this if they hadn't have done that. You see, they hurt you and so how are you supposed to react? So all you have to do is find some target to blame for your actions, and you can diffuse your guilt because someone else is responsible for what you've done. Yeah, that's wildly popular.

And then here's the last one. This isn't as popular but we do see it. You can just dive right into it. You can operate at a level of self-hate where subconsciously you will destroy everything in your life. You will enter bad relationship after bad relationship after bad relationship. You will sabotage your body with food and drink. It is a subconscious level of hate that has at its core scheme, "I am not good for anything, I am worthless, I do not deserve love..." And that's just as much idolatry as the narcissist who thinks he's the new god of the universe. That's why He's saying here that worldly grief is going to produce death. There's no way to diffuse guilt, there's only ways to feed it. That's why Jesus says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly," life with no regret, salvation, a way out. All so we can proudly go, "No, I was a piece of work." In fact, two weeks from now we'll baptize 50 people across our services. You'll hear it over and over and over again, "This is who I was, but praise be His name this is what He's done." This is the difference between a worldly guilt that will kill you and and godly grief that leads to life, repentance and a transformed soul.

Now, what do we do with the fact that, although as believers we have repented and turned, we still struggle daily and some of us are stuck in habitual patterns of sin although we love the Lord very much. Can we admit that some of us are? I mean, I know that's not what we should do. We should all be well put together and praising Jesus for how good we are...or we could be honest. I prefer honesty. What do we do with habitual sin in the life of a believer, and what do we do with the fact that, although we have repented and turned, it feels like we might need to repent again? That will be next week. But for now, you have to be honest with you here. Because what I think of you, what I know of you, none of that matters here. What you think, what you know, what your life is has not been hidden from God at all. If you are playing this religious game, if you know in your mind that's right but you perpetually live in what's wrong, yet you keep coming to church and keep saying the things you know you're supposed to say, something's broken in there and by pretending it's not broken, by isolating yourself and hiding what those issues are, you have not fooled God. People are easy to fool. You can only see what we can see, touch what we can touch, smell what we can smell, taste what we can taste and hear what we can hear. Some of us have the gift of discernment, but for the most part everyone can be fooled. So what really is the state of your relationship with God? This is a tremendous question. If you're marked by something, is it a godly grief? Is it a grief that's birthed out embarrassment or fear of what other people are going to think of you? The telltale sign is there any repentance in your life at all? If the answer is no to that, if there is not internal/external change occurring, then it's an easy answer to the question. It's worldly sorrow. Okay, so if that's us then what do we do? Well the Scriptures would say, "Repent and believe." Believe what? I think the thing you've got to believe in, trust in is that the cross of Christ paid the bill. That's the hope by which we come. There's a way to deal with sin in such a way that's filled with hope and then there's a way to deal with it that's like riding a stationary bicycle, you'll peddle yourself to death and never go anywhere. But that's next week.

Let's pray. "Father, I thank You for these men and women, and I thank You for a chance to let the Bible read us. I do thank You for difficult truths, difficult, hard, heavy truths which help us understand the beauty of the cross, the beauty that occurred in the sending of the Son, the glory of Your name in saving us who have belittled You so consistently and constantly. I pray on against diving full on into guilt. I pray against trying to manage. I pray for surrender. Help us. We'll need it. It's for Your beautiful name. Amen."

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