

**Judges 21**  
**Doing Sorrow Wrong and Doing it Right**  
**Sermon Outline**

**Introduction:** We cannot escape sorrow in this life. The useful question, therefore, with regard to sorrow is, “How can we profit from it?” Paul puts the question in the form of a statement: *Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation—not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (2 Corinthians 7:10).* In Judges 21 we have a vivid picture of how *not* to ‘do’ sorrow.

**I) Doing Sorrow Wrong**

**A) Israel here is unquestionably sorrowful**

*v. 2: They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly*

*v. 3: Why has this happened...?*

*v. 4: ...they built an altar and offered burnt offerings...*

**B) But Israel’s sorrow is godless**

Solemn vows without reflection

Not a word about their role in the problem

No consultation with the LORD

**C) Israel’s ‘solution’ is appalling**

‘Saving’ Benjamin by bloodshed and rape

Ludicrous rationale

**D) How about us?**

**II) Doing Sorrow Right**

**A) Leading to self-reflection**

*Ps. 139.23-24” Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

**B) Leading to repentance and faith**

*2 Corinthians 5.7: We walk by faith, not by sight*

**C) Leading to God**

*Romans 5.2: Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.*

*2 Timothy 2.13: If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself*

## Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Reflect on 2 Corinthians 7:10—quoted in the sermon outline Introduction. Paraphrase what Paul says and try to identify at least one instance in your own life of godly sorrow and at least one instance of ungodly sorrow. How did these two ‘sorrows’ differ? Why did you do it right in the first instance? Why wrong in the second?
- 2) Is Israel’s sorrow godly or ungodly in Judges 21? What makes it so?
- 3) Has your own sin ever ‘painted you into a corner’—into a moral dilemma in which either course of action available to you was wrong? What happened? What did you do?
- 4) Reflect on the following: “We can know we are on the wrong track if we are not growing through our sorrow in love, humility, faith and obedience. If sorrow in our lives simply makes us meaner or more manipulative or more sullen, that’s a good sign that our sorrow is a godless one.”
- 5) Godly sorrow ought to lead to self-reflection before God. Read Psalm 139:23-24 (in the outline above) and pray through a present sorrow of yours using those words.
- 6) Another sign of godly sorrow is that we do not respond to it with manipulative behavior but with prayer, trust, and obedience. Reflect on a hard relationship you are in and determine to pray 25 words of silent prayer for every 1 word of spoken challenge.
- 7) Reflect on the following: “The astonishing thing about the Book of Judges is that God is still with his people at the end, despite themselves: ‘If we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself’ (2 Timothy 2:13). So faithful is God that, in the end, he came as one of us to love and be killed by us—all so that we could never lose him.” Thank God in prayer.