

"Paul's Love for the Corinthians"

Part 3

2 Corinthians 7:2-16

Introduction: Last week in our study of 2 Corinthians 7 we looked at the rejoicing of the Apostle Paul when he and Titus finally met in Macedonia. Paul had written a letter to the Corinthians which was sharp and to the point and he had it delivered by the hand of Titus. He sent it from Ephesus and then Paul had to wait to see how the church would respond. While he was waiting the pressure around him began to increase and so Paul then made his way toward Macedonia. Luke gave a brief description of the events in Acts.

Acts 20:1-3

And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

² *And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,*

³ *And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.*

Along with the pressure from the outside was the concern within Paul's mind.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:5

It was then that God allowed Titus to meet up with Paul.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:6-7

In verse 7 here we can see the results of the letter which Paul had sent to the Corinthians. They had an earnest desire to be restored back into fellowship, they were broken over their sin, and they had a fervent mind toward Paul which means they agreed with him on the matter of the sin.

Now as we continue on Paul will record with his pen just how he felt about sending the letter and how he was rejoicing because of their change of mind.

I. **The Tender Heart of the Apostle**

In this section we are stepping into we can clearly see how tender Paul's heart was toward these believers.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:8a

I want to take a moment and look at the first part of this verse to help us to see the tenderness of Paul's heart. He had made them sorry with the letter but he tells them he did not "REPENT". The word "REPENT" here means "REGRET". Paul had made them sorry with the letter but he did not regret that they had been made sorry. Then Paul tells them that he did "REPENT" or "REGRET" it.

The letter Paul had sent was a letter that was very sharp as we had talked about before. I had told you before that I believed he was sorry after he sent it off in the hands of Titus thinking it may have been too severe. But the more I read this the more I see this in a different light. Let me explain.

Paul regretted sending the letter NOT because of its contents but he regretted sending the letter because of the circumstances (which made the letter necessary) and he regretted the pain which the letter would cause. But he knew the situation had to be addressed. It is the same feeling which a parent feels when they must discipline their child. It is not a pleasant thing to do but it is very necessary. It is difficult for the parent to inflict the pain but they know that their children must understand there are consequences for their actions.

Paul's letter was written out of love and concern for the church and he was treating them as a parent would treat their children. The Bible is very clear concerning the need to discipline our children.

Proverbs 13:24

²⁴ He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Proverbs 19:18

¹⁸ Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Proverbs 22:15

¹⁵ Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Proverbs 29:15, 17

¹⁵ The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

¹⁷ *Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.*

These are just a few verses but the idea is Paul was treating these believers just as a parent would their children and he regretted the fact that he had to send a letter that would cause pain. But as we talked about before, when we love someone we will do all we can to help them to see the sin in their life and to help them to get free from the sin.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:8 again.

The letter made the Corinthians sorry but only for a season or for a short time. The reason why it was a short time was because they were receptive to Paul's instructions.

There is a thought here which we need to see. When there is sin in a believer's life the Holy Spirit is grieved and therefore the joy is quenched within their lives. The time which they harbor the sin can be a very miserable time. Let me show you David's misery while he harbored sin within him for over a year.

Psalm 32:1-5

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

² *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

³ *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.*

⁴ *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.* *Selah.*

⁵ *I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

When David confessed the sin there was a sense of relief and joy in his heart again. But before he confessed he was miserable deep within his heart.

The letter which Paul sent to the Corinthians made them sorry because it brought their sin before them and they had to face it but when they repented the sorrow was gone and fellowship was again restored.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:9

Paul makes it very clear in the beginning of this verse that he rejoiced not that they were sorry but because they sorrowed unto repentance. The sorrow which the Corinthians experienced was a godly sorrow because it led them to repent.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:10

Here we see there are 2 kinds of sorrow. There is a godly sorrow and there is a worldly sorrow. Godly sorrow leads to repentance but worldly sorrow only leads to death. Let me give you the meaning of the word "repentance" here.

"Repentance is a change of mind which is followed up by an action." I could also put it another way, **"Repentance is the result of sorrow for one's actions and repentance causes the person feeling the sorrow to change their course of direction."**

Repentance is more than feeling sorry. The "felling of sorrow" is the hurt in our lives and if it is a godly hurt then it will lead to a course of action. Isaiah gives to us a picture of repentance.

Isaiah 55:7

*⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and **let him return unto the LORD**, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:10 again.

Paul tells us here that godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation which is never regretted but worldly sorrow worketh death. We really need to understand what Paul means within this verse.

The word "salvation" here is not referring to eternal life and the salvation which we receive when we accepted Jesus Christ as Savior. The word "salvation" means "deliverance or freedom". The idea which Paul is pointing to in this verse is that when a believer sees the sin in their life and sorrows over that sin with a godly sorrow and then repents or turns away from that sin there comes with that choice a freedom. Now in this verse Paul also tells us that worldly sorrow worketh death. This is not a physical death but it is bondage or an imprisonment. Let me share with you a story by a lady that will help us to see what Paul is saying here. The story is told by Ray Stedman:

"She said, "I've learned that sensitivity is nothing but selfishness." I did not like that. I wrestled with it. I did not want to admit it, but I knew it was true. I knew that what I really wanted was to be the center of attention and have everybody watching out and ministering to me and taking care of me.

After a while I had been hurt so much, so long, that I was sick and tired of it, and I decided that I would act on that basis. It was one thing to say that, but another thing to actually do it when the moment came. The next time somebody hurt me, however, I

decided to act on the basis of what I had learned, and say, "That's not his fault. He didn't intend that. It is I who am feeling it. I'm taking it wrong." I did this, and after several such experiences I suddenly began to feel a marvelous sense of freedom. The tiger was off my back, and I was free to enjoy things much more than I ever had before. I will never forget the sense of deliverance, of liberation that came when I acknowledged the truth that somebody had even unwittingly said to me. Now that is what Paul is talking about. Godly grief acknowledges the truth, changes its behavior, and that in turn leads to a sense of freedom and deliverance, which is what he has in view. Worldly grief is quite different. Again, it starts with hurt, but it is a mixture of anger and self-pity. It makes you either want to run and hide and lick your wounds, or fight and strike back and get revenge."

There are definitely 2 kinds of sorrow and each brings about a different response. Let me show you a Biblical example of each.

Godly sorrow is seen in the life of Peter.

Luke 22:61-62

⁶¹ And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

⁶² And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

The sorrow which Peter experienced led him to repentance and restoration with the Lord.

Worldly sorrow is seen in the life of Judas.

Matthew 27:3-5

³ Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

⁴ Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

⁵ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Judas repented after he realized what he had done but the sorrow he experienced was not a godly sorrow because it did not lead to salvation/deliverance from the guilt therefore he went out and hanged himself.

Notice 2 Corinthians 7:11

Here we see exactly what the *GODLY SORROW* did in the lives of the believers at Corinth. Let me place this in a list so we can see what had happened when the godly sorrow found its way into their hearts.

1. **It brought about carefulness.**

The word "carefulness" here means "earnestness or diligence". The idea is that when the Corinthians were confronted with the sin they were eager to separate from it. They did not need to vote on what to do they wanted to be free from the sin immediately.

2. **It brought about the desire to be cleared.**

The word used here means "to be verbal" and it also the word which we get the word "apology" from. When the letter was read and they were filled with godly sorrow the Corinthians *CONFESSED* their sin and they were quick to apologize for what they had done. They want to get the entire sin out in the open and deal with it.

3. **It brought about indignation.**

This means that when they realized what they had fallen into they were appalled that they had allowed that to happen. They hated the fact that they had been used by the enemy to work against God and Paul. The Psalmist echoes the very same thought in different words.

Psalm 73:21-22

²¹ *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.*

²² *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.*

4. **It brought about fear.**

This was a fear of it happening again. They were now able to see how easily they had been lured into the sin. Godly sorrow will cause us to be very careful about the future.

5. **It brought about vehement desire.**

This speaks of a longing to be back in fellowship with God and with Paul.

6. **It brought about zeal.**

This refers to zeal to always be on guard against sin coming into their lives again.

7. **It brought about revenge.**

This is a reference to self-discipline. The Corinthians set their minds in determination to always guard against this ever happening again. They were committed to self-discipline or self-control.

Conclusion:

There are many lessons which we can gather from this text tonight but time does not permit to scoop them all up. So there is one which I will leave you with and it is spoken of by James.

James 5:19-20

¹⁹ *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;*

²⁰ *Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

Paul loved these people enough to invest in their lives and what a difference it made. It would have been so easy to turn away from them and focus upon the other churches but Paul chose to invest into the lives of these people. Let us learn that the time we sacrifice to invest into the lives of others may make a huge difference in the lives of many people.