

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

Second Corinthians – Chapter 7

Repentance & Living Holy Lives

“Beloved ones, with promises like these, and because of our deepest respect and worship of God, we must remove everything from our lives that contaminates body and spirit and continue to complete the development of holiness within us.” (v1 TPT)

Paul is continuing his letter to the church in Corinth. He made mention of “promises like these” referring to chapter 6 verses 11-18 especially that we are the temple of the Living God and because of our deepest respect and worship of God, we have responsibility to remove from ourselves anything contaminating to body and spirit... and continue our development of holiness within us.

Believers today must take an active and disciplined approach to spiritual maturity and living holy lives. Grace never removes our responsibility to be faithful to God. Grace empowers us to do what pleases God.

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

It is God and God’s grace empowering us to a holy lifestyle so, let us allow His grace to empower us.

Q: What are the things that contaminates our body and spirit?

“Again, I urge you, make room for us in your hearts, for we have wronged no one, corrupted no one, and taken advantage of no one. I’m not saying this to condemn you, for I already told you that we carry you permanently in our hearts—and you’ll stay there throughout our lives, for we will live together and die together. With an open heart let me freely say how very proud I am of you and how often I boast about you. In fact, when I think of you my heart is greatly encouraged and overwhelmed with joy, despite our many troubles.” (vv2-4 TPT)

We see in these verses how Paul is stating is case for this church to open their hearts to him. I guess the “telling off” in his previous letter (1 Corinthians) has had an effect on this church that they are closed. I wonder how many leaders in the body today are dealing with the same issue of closed-up members, workers, and/or leaders because of correction, removal from posts etc.

Paul affirmed:

- I have wronged no one. Paul was saying here that we have hated no one.
- I have corrupted no one. That is, he had not led people astray from right doctrine. He corrupted no one’s faith.
- I have taken advantage of no one. He has cheated no one” (for financial gain).

These are the comforting statements to this church –

- “we carry you permanently in our hearts—and you’ll stay there throughout our lives, for we will live together and die together”
- “With an open heart let me freely say how very proud I am of you and how often I boast about you.”
- “when I think of you my heart is greatly encouraged and overwhelmed with joy, despite our many troubles”

Q: Do you believe the same of your Pastor and leaders – that they have hated no one, not intentionally corrupted anyone’s faith, no cheated anyone for personal financial gain?

Despair to Joy

“When we arrived in Macedonia province, we couldn’t settle down. The fights in the church and the fears in our hearts kept us on pins and needles. We couldn’t relax because we didn’t know how it would turn out. Then the God who lifts up the downcast lifted our heads and our hearts with the arrival of Titus. We were glad just to see him, but the true reassurance came in what he told us about you: how much you cared, how much you grieved, how concerned you were for me. I went from worry to tranquillity in no time!” (vv5-7 MSG)

Again, we see Paul’s concerns here. He could not settle in Macedonia. Why? Guess what!

- Fights in the church
- inwardly emotional turmoil (TPT)

Paul was beset with adversaries who opposed him, problems and arguments within the church, and persecution at every turn. Paul was emotionally torn by all the conflicts among the believers and feared for Titus’ safety. He was worried about how the Corinthians had received his severe letter, plus there is a hint in his words that his concern was wearing him down both physically and emotionally.

This is perhaps the state of some church leaders today – me included.

Paul however, got comforted and encouraged by the arrival of Titus and the message that Titus brought to him. Titus became God’s person of encouragement for Paul at this point in his life and ministry.

I am Sorry but Not Sorry

“Even if my letter made you sorrowful, I don’t regret sending it (even though I felt awful for a moment when I heard how it grieved you). Now I’m over-joyed—not because I made you sad, but because your grief led you to a deep repentance. You experienced godly sorrow, and as God intended, it brought about gain for you, not loss, so that no harm has been done by us.” (vv8-9 TPT)

This shows the heart of a leader. He did correct the church in Corinth and perhaps, his letter was hard to receive... and Paul is sorry that the letter is that hard however, he is not sorry because he needed to send that type of letter to cause a change to happen. His intention was not to make them sad, but their grief will lead to deep repentance. This is the ultimate aim.

Godly Sorrow

“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” (v10)

Godly sorrow is a kind of wretchedness that can bring the repentant sinner to tears of grief. A good example of this is Peter at the time of Jesus’ arrest and trials. When accused as being one of Jesus’ followers, Peter disowned Jesus by cursing and swearing to his accusers that he did not know the Man. Upon hearing the rooster crow three times, he remembered the words of Jesus, who had prophesied Peter’s very actions, and he went out and wept bitterly.

Both the Hebraic and Greek concepts of repentance are literally “to turn from sin and come back to God”; that is, “to have a change of mind/direction.” This involves the “sorrow” or “remorse” of our hearts before God. Repentance is not a sterile, feeling-less act of changing direction. Paul makes it clear that godly remorse is a “God-intended” feeling that moves the heart back to God. Our repentance is not a

work of the flesh but the result of God's Spirit stirring our conscience. Peter's godly remorse over his denial of Christ eventually led him to experience a complete inner healing, while Judas' remorse led him to suicide.

James wrote, "Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn, and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom" (James 4:8-9). James is referencing this kind of deep sorrow with his command to "grieve, mourn, and wail." Such words are reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets' call for the people to repent, to grieve over their sins, and to sit in sackcloth and ashes.

Q: Do we still see godly sorrow today?

Result of Godly Sorrow

"For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter. Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you." (vv11-12)

Paul stated the results of godly sorrow:

- What diligence it produced in you
- What clearing of yourselves
- What indignation
- What fear
- What vehement desire
- What zeal
- What vindication

Paul went on to state that his letter was written not just in regards of the offender (e.g. the person sleeping with his step-mother) neither was his letter written because of the offended but that it is evident in the sight of God that he cares.

The offended will usually seek justice and the offender seek mercy. How great is it when we just reveal the heart of the Father rather than seeking to meet the need of one or the other?

Titus Comfort

"Therefore, we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true. And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. Therefore, I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything." (vv13-16)

Paul is comforted in the fact that the church in Corinth is comforted by the visit of Titus and the report of repentance and change noticed. It is refreshing when you recommend someone, or some church and the report comes back good. This is Paul's state here.

