

The Effect of Godly Sorrow 2 Corinthians 7

Good morning Riverside! I must admit, I am rather jealous right now as our pastor and a good number of our congregation including my wife are currently in Israel spending their time walking through the pages of the bible.

We will be in 2 Corinthians chapter 7 today and Lord willing we will make it through the entire chapter.

Please stand and we will read our text for today (read verses 1-7) **PRAY!!**

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

So as Pastor Brent mentioned last week, here is another time when the chapter breaks are added in an unusual way. This first verse really belongs to the last chapter as it is Paul's concluding thought on the topic that we studied last week. Paul again uses the word "therefore" as he so often does because he is careful to always bring us back to a point or points that he has made earlier to tie everything together and then move us forward again. It is kind of like the old saying, two steps forward one step back, where Paul likes to take us back briefly, in order to then continue taking us forward in our growth and understanding in the Lord.

Paul refers with this "therefore" to the promises at the end chapter 6

There are also though, instructions that we are given by God, to remove ourselves from the entanglements of this world. He wants us to be separate from the unclean or worldly things. The things that would bind us to the old nature and cause us to fall into sin and out of God's perfect will for our lives.

Verse 1 says that we need to [cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.](#)

So, what is filthiness of the flesh and filthiness of the spirit? Sins of the flesh would include things like sexual sins, drunkenness and other things that would affect the body and are far more easily identified. Sins of the spirit would be more things that affect the mind like idol worship, vanity, or pride. These are the things that are much easier to lie to ourselves about and to hide from others.

(sinners like prostitutes and tax collectors vs Pharisees)

What we see today though, is that all of these sins are glorified and promoted as ideals to be sought after and/or simply personal choices. "I decide what is best for me and this is my truth." But the actual truth is that these are sin. They are things that separate us from God. Now all sin is filthiness in the eyes of the Lord,

and these are the things that God is telling us that we need to remove ourselves from. Paul says much the same thing in his letter to the Romans

Romans 12:1-2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. **2** And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Now we know that **we** cannot cleanse ourselves through our own efforts, but God has given us the tools in His word and the power His Spirit to do it. There needs to be a willful effort on our part to cooperate with Gods cleansing in our lives to put off that old nature.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (expand?)

John 17:17

17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.
(this is sometimes referred to as real Lord's prayer. The prayer that Jesus prayed for His disciples and for all believers)

If you aren't familiar with John chapter 17, you really should be. It is something that you should read often. It is so incredibly beautiful to read about Jesus heart and His desire for all of us that believe in Him as He speaks to the Father about us.

Romans 8:13-14

13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **14** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (expand? Things we cannot do in our own power)

God will never ask us to do something that He has not equipped us to accomplish. We do need to make the decision to do the things that God asks of us, but He will always supply what is required to get the work done.

God tells Joshua in Joshua chapter 1 verse 5, 6a

5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6a Be strong and of good courage...

The writer of Hebrews reminds us of this as well when he exhorts the Hebrew believers in chapter one verses 5 and 6 when he says:

5 let your conduct be without covetousness; Be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," so we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear what can man do to me?

So we can see the things that God requires of us, and we see how He equips us to fulfill those requirements. We also know, that while we are in these earthly tents, these cracked vessels, we cannot be fully complete. But I love the way that Paul explained to the Philippians that even he, Paul, understood that it is God who is at work in us until that day we stand face to face with Him in glory, but until that day comes we are to go forward.

Philippians 3:12-14

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. **13** Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, **14** I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

(expand)

2 Corinthians 7:2-4

2 Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one. **3** I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. **4** Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.

When Paul begins with the statement "open your hearts to us" he is referring back to what he said in chapter 6 verse 11-13

11 O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. **12** You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. **13** Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open.

He picks right back up on that thought as he says open your hearts to us. He wants them to think back on his transparency when he was with them, reminding them that they had done wrong to no one, nor did they do anything that would have corrupted anyone they were not deceitful in any way and had cheated no one. He is saying these things not in a boastful or conceited manor, he is just reminding the Corinthians of what they saw and heard when Paul was with them last. Paul says that he's not saying it to condemn them, he merely wanted them to remember the truth, and not be deceived by all the lies that had been told about Paul and his companions.

Paul reminds them that they were in his heart he loved them. He said he would live and die together with them. He wanted them to remember that even though in his letter of correction to them he had been bold in what he had said, that he

did it out of love and so in the same breath, he reminds them that he was often telling people about them and about all of the good things that God was doing in their lives. He had been worried because of not knowing how they had received his letter, but now that he had reconnected with Titus and discovered that the Corinthians had received his letter well, he was now comforted, and his concern had been replaced with exceeding joy.

The Greek word for exceedingly here could be translated as super – abound, like jumping for joy so to speak.

Even in the midst of the tribulations that they had been facing, Paul was now joyful knowing that his letter of correction had been received well, and that the Corinthian believers were moving forward in their walk with the Lord. (MORE?)

2 Corinthians 7:5-7

5 For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. **6** Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, **7** and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.

It's so amazing how God by the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the bible. We know that God is the author of the Bible because it is his inerrant word, but I love the fact that he used individuals and their personalities to write it down on paper so to speak. We see here now in verse 5 how Paul actually comes back to a thought that he left off in 2 Corinthians chapter 2:13. it's almost as though 2 Corinthians 2:14 to 7:4 is somewhat of an interruption in Paul's train of thought. He was relating the story of why they had headed out to Macedonia and then God interrupted him and had him write down all of the great stuff that we have studied over the last few weeks and now he is getting back to where he left off.

Paul had been speaking about arriving in Troas to preach the gospel and even though God had given an opportunity to do that, Paul said that he had "no rest in his spirit" because he had not come across Titus there. We understand more fully now why speaking to Titus was so important to Paul in that he was extremely concerned about how the Corinthians had accepted the letter that Titus had delivered to them.

Paul says that when he arrived in Macedonia that he was exhausted, he was going through trials it seemed as though on every side and that he had no rest from trouble. He admits that he had fear, and that he needed comfort.

And then, we have those beautiful words, "nevertheless, GOD." Oh how I love how many times in the bible we are reminded of those BUT GOD moments. Wherever we are and no matter what we are going through or how dark our circumstances seem, we can count on those words. But GOD. God, who comforts the downcast Paul says, comforted us with the coming of Titus. And it wasn't just being able to see Titus again, because I am sure that whenever they were separated from their fellow workers in Christ they were concerned about their well being due to the

dangers and tribulations that the followers of Christ had to face on a daily basis, but it was even more because of the wonderful news that Titus was able to bring to Paul. It was the news that he had been longing to hear. Paul was able to finally hear that the Corinthians had not only received his letter of correction with understanding and obedience but also that they still loved and trusted Paul as someone who the Lord had sent to them to instruct them in proper doctrine and understanding of growth in their walk with the Lord. Paul was then able to have that super - abounding joy and to be comforted.

Are you maybe in that spot here this morning? Like Paul, are you in need of comfort? Do you lack peace? Is your spirit downcast? God wants to interrupt those problems with His comfort. We can tend to lose our focus on the things of God when we begin to look only at our circumstances and the troubles that seemingly surround us. We need to get our eyes back on Jesus who the bible says is the author and finisher of our faith.

Matthew 6:31-34

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ **32** For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. **34** Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (expand)

2 Corinthians 7:8-10

8 For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while. **9** Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. **10** For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Wow, now we are getting to what I believe is the real meat of the passage. Paul is able now to get to the heart of the struggle he had been having within his spirit. He lets them know that for a while after he had sent the letter to them he had regretted having sent it. The reason for the regret was not that he had sent the letter, but that he was worried about how the letter was to be received. Now that he knew that the Corinthians had received his corrective instructions well, he was able to be relieved of the burden that he had carried on his shoulders and could now carry on to let them know the purpose and desire that had caused him to write the letter in the first place. He knew the heart and the intent of the letter was not to condemn the Corinthians but to correct a course of action that would be incredibly destructive to the believers there. If you all remember from back in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul was writing to the church regarding sin in the church. There was a man Paul said that was having sex with his stepmother, his father's wife. Yes that was without a doubt sin, but it was not what Paul was

speaking to them about. He was confronting them on the fact that the church was allowing it to go on without dealing with it. You see the Corinthians were so proud of themselves for being tolerant.

Oh yes you can come to our church doing whatever sin you want and we will just accept you with no consequence. Aren't we wonderful, we don't judge.

Paul was so strong in regard to this he said not even the gentiles would tolerate this type of sin. What's the matter with you guys? You need to deal with this and repent yourselves of the sin of allowing it to go on.

So yes, Paul was very bold in his speech toward these believers because he wanted them to know the seriousness of what they were doing.

I think that we can all kind of identify with Paul in that sometimes the written word is not always taken in the manner that the writer meant it. How many times have you written e-mail or a text and received back a reaction that you were definitely not expecting? I think that's because when you are writing that e-mail or text you know what you are thinking and in your own mind you have the correct intonation and inflection in the voice that you're hearing in your own head, but the reader however can hear things in his or her own head in a completely different way and thereby some serious misunderstandings can happen. The great thing for Paul though was that his letter was actually authored by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit was at work in the hearts and minds of the Corinthian believers to prepare them for the words He had sent through His servant Paul. Paul knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that what he had sent the Corinthian church had lined up with God's word. But as we know the truth, can be a very hard thing to hear sometimes. So, Paul's concern for how his letter would be received is completely understandable.

I think that's one thing that we really need to keep in mind whenever we are attempting to correct somebody, is that we're not doing it by what we think or what we deem to be correct but what it says in God's word. If we know that we are accurately reflecting the word of God in what we say and if our motives are purely showing the love of Jesus we can leave the reception of it up to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul says that he knows that the letter made the Corinthians sorrowful, but he was glad that it only made them sorrowful in the way that it caused them to repent. Godly sorrow is a wonderful thing. When that sorrow causes us to understand that the things that we have been doing are hurtful to our Lord and savior. That we have grieved His Spirit.

It's the kind of sorrow that brings us to our knees in repentance and causes us to want to walk rightly with our Lord the way that he would have us to walk knowing that He only wants what is absolutely the best for us anything less falls short of His plan.

Paul points out the difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world that produces only death. We can see an amazing example of this in the life of Judas who betrayed Jesus.

Judas definitely felt regret and remorse for what he had done but it didn't produce in him the action of repentance. Judas did not suffer godly sorrow. What

a shame it is that Judas had been with Jesus for His entire ministry, he had seen the wonderful works and heard all the teaching, but he had never come to the point of actual repentance for his sinful life. He had never said yes to the Holy Spirit. He had never truly chosen to believe the truth. Judas felt bitter remorse and tried to return the money as though that might clear his conscience but there was no cleansing power in his actions. Rather than going to Jesus and asking for forgiveness and truly turning from his ways, Judas, when he couldn't clear his conscience went out and killed himself. He had the sorrow of the world, he made the mistake of looking to himself for cleansing, he thought that through some sort of penance he could find the peace that he was looking for. When that didn't work, he saw no hope and ending his life was the only answer he thought he had left.

So, you see that Paul was joyful because of the fact that the believers in Corinth had experienced godly sorrow that led them to have a repentant heart. They had seen that they were in error, and it caused them to want to get clean. Unlike Judas though, they knew that this could not be accomplished by their own hand. Only the cleansing blood of the spotless lamb of God could wash that sin out of their lives and that true repentance on their part was the key to having the blood applied to their lives.

As we come to the Lord in an attitude of true repentance, He will cleanse us.

Psalm 51:17

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart these, oh God, you will not despise.

Ecclesiastes 7:2-5

Better to go to the House of mourning than to go to the House of feasting, for that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart.

Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the House of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the House of mirth.

It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools.

When the Holy Spirit confronts us and convicts us of sin, are we just sorry that we got caught or are we grieved in our spirits that we have sinned against almighty God?

2 Corinthians 7:11-12

11 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. **12** 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.

The word diligence here in Greek speaks of speed or haste, enthusiasm Paul is saying how wonderful it is that you have with such quickness and eagerness had a desire to cleanse yourselves and to come under the authority of God. He says what indignation, what fear, or what anger they had at themselves for what they had done and what fear or reverential respect did they have for God that caused them to come into repentance. What vehement desire or great longing, what zeal, the Greek word here is “heat” they had a hot longing desire to be reconciled to Christ. And because of this, they had complete vindication they were made clear or innocent in all things in this matter.

And again we see the heart of Paul in that he says we did not do it for the one that had sinned or even for the one that was sinned against but we did this that all of you might receive forgiveness and come into a right relationship with God no longer an error and this made Paul exceedingly joyful and we see this in the final few verses of the chapter.

2 Corinthians 7:13-16

13 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. **14** 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. **15** And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. **16** Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.

We see throughout this chapter that Paul's joy continues to build until he almost can't contain himself. He says he is comforted because the Corinthians are comforted in their repentance and their reconciliation with God, he is rejoicing exceedingly because Titus has seen the results of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Corinthian believers. And Paul is also rejoicing in the fact that all of the things that he had spoken to Titus about in the way of boasting about the Corinthians proved to be completely true and Titus was witness to it and because of that Titus had affection for the Corinthians because of their obedience and he had been amazed with the reverence that they had accepted him in because they knew he came with a letter from Paul. And then Paul sums it up by saying therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything. It was as if all of the worries and concerns that Paul had had regarding this letter he had written to the Corinthian church had all vaporized because of God's mercy and grace upon their repentance.

Let me just end today by saying if you were here this morning and you are feeling convicted and confronted by the Holy Spirit because you know there are things in your life that need to be cleaned up. Please don't think that you can do it on your own, don't leave here thinking I just need to clean up my life and then I can come

to Christ because that will never happen or don't think hey, I'm no worse than anybody else I live a good life that should be good enough.

Join the psalmist David when he says in Psalm 139:23, 24
search me, oh God and know my heart;
try me, and know my anxieties;
and see if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting

Come to the Lord with that godly sorrow, repent, and know and understand that forgiveness and peace that only God can give through the blood of his son Jesus Christ. If you're here this morning and you would like to do that, please come up to the front at the end of this service and there will be people up here that will pray with you and if you're at home watching online just call out to God tell him you know that you're a Sinner and you need him to cleanse you and to make you new and if you do that please let us know, we would love to be able to make sure you have a Bible and make sure you have somebody to give you encouragement and some direction Don't let this day pass. Behold, now is the accepted time; Behold, now is the day of salvation.

PRAY!!!