

The Book of 2nd Corinthians

Chapter 7:1-16

January 31, 1999

- **Outline of 2nd Corinthians:**

- Chapter 1 God equips His people through trial, comfort and perseverance.
- Chapter 2 Restore fellowship to the repentant; One aroma, two response.
- Chapter 3 The glorious covenants
- Chapter 4 The Light of the Glory of Christ
- Chapter 5 Longing to be further clothed; Christ died for the world
- Chapter 6 Faithfulness in persecution; Separation from the World
- Chapter 7 Godly sorrow leads to repentance.

- **Review & Introduction**

We have come to end of the tangent that Paul began in chapter two and he will return to the topic of the sin that was being tolerated in the church. During this "tangent" we have considered the aroma leading to life or death, the surpassing glory of the new covenant, Paul's various afflictions, the resurrection of the body, the judgement of all believers, the ministry of reconciliation and the promises of God.

- **Exposition of 2nd Corinthians 7:1 - 16**

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

- The promises that are referred to are found in verses 16-18 of the previous chapter. Just as when God established a covenant in Abraham, the promises of God come with a required holiness. Genesis 17:1 God gave a promise of communion, land, and an expansive posterity. As a condition of the covenant, God demanded perfection or blamelessness of those in the covenant. Who could possibly comply with this covenant? Those who are covenant keepers are promise believers. God is the one who sanctifies us and the manner in which we may stand before Him is by faith believing that he will make us perfect by conforming us to the image of His Son.
- As always there are those who see the promises of God as a license for sin. Those who think that they can cling to the promises and yet not conform to the requirements are self deceived. So too, are those who think that they may comply with the requirements of blamelessness in their own righteousness.

2 Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one.

- Just as in chapter 6:13, Paul requests the Corinthians to restore him to a place of affection in their hearts. Paul implies that refusing this reciprocating affection has no grounds in fact. He, and probably Timothy and Titus, have wronged no one and are not deserving of the reproach of the Corinthians. He declares that they have not acted improperly toward anyone nor have they given destructive, heretical instruction to anyone such that they may be blamed for corruption.
- It becomes obvious that Paul has returned back to his original topic of defending his strong instruction in the "severe letter." Recall that there are two possibilities that either the letter was actually First Corinthians or else it was some non-extant letter written between First and Second Corinthians. For our purposes we are assuming that the letter spoken of is the book of 1 Corinthians where Paul certainly gave much critical instruction including the instruction to put a man out of the church for heinous sin that the church had been tolerating.

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.

- Paul does not want the church to think that he is so offended by their actions toward him that he is leaning toward abandoning them. Quite the opposite, he teaches them that they occupy a great place in his heart and that he would gladly stand with them and die with them. Notice that although Paul did not dwell permanently in the city with these saints, he manifested continued Godly behavior as an example to them and continued to love and nurture the church. This pattern demonstrates that Paul was not a hireling to the church in Corinth. He did not just come in and make certain demands and receive certain blessings and then leave the real work to other men. No, Paul continued to show his love to the congregation by ongoing instruction and manifest love for the saints.
- The boldness of speech which Paul used toward the church was consistent with his great love and boasting on their behalf. The tough words he gave were given in the context of affection and admiration for the church. This love of the church could be seen in the boasting and well-speaking about the church that Paul did. Paul now moves on to explain

how and why he was comforted and joyful even though he suffered various trials.

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.

- In the midst of his ministry, Paul faced many trials and even as a man gifted and commissioned by our Lord Jesus, he still suffered persecution and experienced fears. As he stated before, they were beaten, left for dead and worked tirelessly on behalf of the kingdom of God. Inside there were many sources of fear but one in particular was the fear that the church at Corinth might not prove their faith to be genuine.
- God who grants trials to come to all of His children, also grants comfort to come which leads to perseverance. God did so by the coming of Titus. Clearly Paul was thankful to find his missing comrade but the comfort was not limited to a fond reunion. The primary comfort came from the report given by Titus about the faithfulness of the church at Corinth.
- The church had proven themselves faithful by obeying the instruction given by Paul. We can assume here that this pertains to the church discipline situation in the church because of the information given by Paul in chapter two about restoring fellowship to the repentant man. Also though, we can assume that the report also contained evidence of faithfulness in the use of spiritual gifts, in joyful giving, in considerate communion and faithfulness in marriage.
- It appears that the church in general demonstrated that zeal for Paul by obeying him. We can surmise that later Paul's opponents began to place doubts in the minds of those who once demonstrated the zeal and thus the need for Paul to give a defense of his ministry and commitment to the church.

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.

- Paul's objective was not to solely make the church feel bad for their behavior. Paul really longed to see the fruits of faithfulness. Even after writing the letter, he was concerned that they might not prove to be faithful. Although he hoped and prayed otherwise, he knew that his letter might not be used by God to bring repentance.
- This could prove to be the most important point of the entire letter: godly sorrow leads to repentance; worldly sorrow leads to death. It is not enough to simply be sorry for our sin or even the consequences of our sin if such sorrow does not lead to repentance.

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.

- Titus reported that the sorrow led to a grand repentance and good fruit abounded in the church. Paul rejoiced at seeing the faithfulness of the church being proved to be genuine.
- Notice that Paul's primary concern in writing the letter and demanding discipline for the man in sin was not for the sake of the man in sin nor for the man who had been wronged (the sinful man's father). No, the primary concern was for the purity and faithfulness of the church. The church had proven to be faithful and that was of paramount importance.

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. NKJV

- Not only was Paul rejoicing at the news, so too, Titus was received by the church and was greatly encouraged by the faithfulness of the church. Paul rejoiced to know that his boasting about the church was not in vain. The faithfulness of the church was not only a blessing for the church, but also as the news about them spread throughout the region through Titus many others at large, would be encouraged toward faithfulness as well.