

## 2 CORINTHIANS - (Chapter 7)

**Vs. 1** - is the conclusion to Paul's appeal from chapter **6:14-18** for the Corinthians *to be holy and stay separate from the world*. God will bless those who separate themselves from sin and commit to living holy unto the Lord. Paul points out because of God's gracious promises we have some special responsibilities. The cleansing Paul is referring to is from the inside out and no one but the individual believer and God truly knows what one needs to be cleansed from - each one knows the problems of his own heart. Too often Christians deal with symptoms and not causes. We keep confessing the same sins because we have not gotten to the root of the trouble and cleansed ourselves. Perhaps there is filthiness of the flesh (pornography, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, drug or alcohol abuse) some "*pet sin*" that feeds the old nature (***Romans 13:14***). Or it may filthiness in the spirit – lying, jealousy, gossip, sowing seeds of discourse among the brethren, or prayerlessness. The prodigal son was guilty of sins of the flesh but the prodigal son's elder brother was guilty of sins of the spirit. Cleansing is part of the solution but we must also be "*perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" This is aurist tense...do it now and keep on doing it.

### ***An Appeal for Reconciliation (vs. 2-16)***

**Vs. 2** – Paul said, “*open wide your hearts to us.*” In other words receive us warmly. The prophet Amos said in **Amos 3:3** “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*” If the Corinthians would only cleanse their lives and their church fellowship, God would receive them and they could again have close fellowship with Paul. When Paul claims he had not cheated or defrauded no one, remember that he was organizing a collection for poor Christians in Judea and had responsibility over a significant amount of money (**1 Corinthians 16:1-4**). Despite what some troublemakers said about Paul, they had no good reason to criticize him.

**Vs. 3** – Paul as a courageous leader quickly informed the Corinthians that his frank speech to them was not intended as condemning or finding fault. Paul expressed his affections for the Corinthians in the phrase about them having “*a place in our hearts.*” The words that he would “*live or die*” with them expressed the pastoral heart of Paul and his willingness to give himself to them without reserve, whether they were grateful or not.

**Vs. 4** – Paul a loving and courageous leader could speak his heart to the Corinthians because he had nothing but their good in his intentions. He was willing to speak frankly to them; he was open to boast to others about them. Thus, the relationship was rebuilt; you see, forgiveness is a necessary trait that makes human relationships workable. This phrase *exceedingly joyful*

could be expressed as “I am super-abound in joy; I have a joy beyond expression.” Some think that God wants us to endure tribulation with a blank, stoic face – the “stiff upper lip” – but God wants more from us than that. He wants us to “super-abound in joy” even in all our tribulation. Few things allow us to shine brighter for the kingdom than when we respond to trials and tribulation maintaining joy in our spirit and in our worship. You are a magnet for kingdom advancement when trouble draws you to the church and not *from the church*.

Now 2 Corinthians 7:5-16 joins correlates directly to 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 where Paul spoke of his journey to Macedonia and the open reception to the gospel he found in Troas. 2 Corinthians 7:5-16 takes up the historical; record, tells of the meeting with Titus and expresses Paul’s joy at the report of improvement in Corinth.

Vs. 5 – Paul alludes to his distress at not immediately finding Titus either in Troas or in Macedonia. Paul’s body had no rest; he felt harassed on every side by opposition from without and anxiety from within. And maybe it is from this passage Paul is inspired to write Philippians 4:6-7. Paul, an apostle and mighty man of faith and prayer had vulnerable moments on his journey also. Our first response will not always be great faith and resolve when trouble shows up. This verse reflects an under-shepherd’s heart for his

people. When you pray for your congregation often times you take on their fears, pains, and anxieties. This is a reason intercessory prayer is difficult to maintain. Regarding the last phrase of vs. 5 - “Outside were conflicts, inside were fears” - this was Paul’s life in ministry. It was a life of great blessing but also a life of many conflicts and fears. On the outside, Paul was constantly in conflict with enemies of the gospel and worldly minded Christians. On the inside, Paul daily battled with the stress and anxiety of ministry.

Vs. 6-7 – Paul’s relief came with his meeting with Titus in Macedonia. Paul testified that the One (God) who never fails to meet the needs of the downcast, depressed, or downhearted comforted him by Titus’ coming. God used the news from Corinth to drive away Paul’s misgivings and replace these anxieties with joy, comfort, and confidence. The reason behind’s Paul’s anxiety is that Titus’ mission was to read his stern letter to the Corinthians and Paul did not know how they would respond. But they repented and disciplined the guilty sinful parties. Of course, Paul had been in deep prayer for the Corinthians that they would experience Godly sorrow from the letter that would lead to repentance. Sometimes all it takes is one person committed to prayer to see the miraculous efforts that took place.

Vs. 8-9 – When Paul says, “my letter” that letter was the 3<sup>rd</sup> letter and this one is lost written to the Corinthian church. Initially, Paul regretted writing such

a stern letter of rebuke of the sin going on in the church at Corinth but the letter led to Godly sorrow which produced repentance. That was the real intent of the letter so that is what gave Paul joy. Sometimes there are some tough conversations that have to be shared with people; and when the Holy Spirit lead us to do that we must do it; and trust God for the results. In these verses Paul makes a clear separation between sorrow and repentance. They are not the same things! One can be sorry for their sin without repenting from their sin. Usually they are only sorry they got caught. Sorrow describes a feeling, but repentance describes a change in both the mind and your direction in the life. The difference is clearly seen in Judas and Peter. Judas was sorrowful for what he did; he was full of regret yet, he committed suicide by hanging himself. Peter, wept and repented of his fall and Jesus restored him like He does with us when we repent. When Jesus forgive you; forgive yourself and press on.

**Vs. 10** – So is verse 10 saying we are saved by our repentance? Not exactly. Repentance “is not the grounds of our salvation; but it is necessary and a critical component of the salvation experience. But we are saved by faith in Christ Jesus when we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus and believing in our heart God raised Jesus from the dead – then we are saved. The Holy Spirit then indwells us and it is the Holy Spirit that leads us to godly sorrow

over our sins that produces confession and repentance of our sins. It is a process that works together. Sorrow in itself doesn't produce anything except bad feelings, but godly sorrow produces repentance. Therefore, godly sorrow cannot be measured by feelings or tears, only by what it produces. Some people are merely sorry they got caught, exposed, and embarrassed. It is simply their human pride was hurt. Sorrow of the world produces death, again Judas is a prime example (sorrow can lead to suicide).

**Vs. 11** – Diligence, clearing of yourselves, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, and vindication as a result of knowing they had sin showed that the sorrow of the Corinthian Christians worked real repentance. Repentance means to turn around, and it takes diligence to stay turned around. Regarding the phrase “*what clearing of yourselves*” - It is a clearing of guilt and shame, from knowing that we brought our sin to God and we now walk in the right way. You have got to learn to forgive yourself after God has forgiven you. Some people will never let you forget your mistakes, but when we confess and repent God cleanses us from all unrighteousness according to ***1 John 1:9***. The phrase “*what indignation*” - Godly sorrow leads to repentance and repentance shows indignation. We are indignant at ourselves for our foolishness in sin. This is the kind of attitude that helps makes repentance last. The phrase “*what fear*” reflects not a fear of God as much as a *fear of sin*, and *fear* of our

own weakness toward sin. The phrase “what *vehement desire*”- this is a heart that really desires purity and godliness and does not want to sin any more.

This *vehement desire* is expressed through heartfelt prayer and total dependence on God. The phrase “what *zeal*” – This ancient Greek word speaks of heat; we are hot towards God and His righteousness, and hot against sin and impurity. Instead of laziness, we have zeal in our walk with the Lord. The phrase “what *vindication*” you are vindicated as a Christian, even though you have sinned. No one can doubt it because the measure of a Christian is not whether or not they sin, but whether or not they repent.

Finally the phrase “*in all things you proved yourselves to be clear*” – when repentance is marked by the preceding characteristics, we are clear of guilt and sin. The *actions* of the Corinthian’s repentance proved them to be clear. *It wasn’t words or feelings* that proved them to be clear, but actions. Paul is praising the Corinthians for not being defensive when they were confronted with sin and they did not allow their pride to keep them from confessing and repenting of sin after being confronted. Christ cannot be sweet to us until sin becomes bitter.

*Vs. 12* - Paul’s purpose in writing the “sorrowful letter” was not to take sides in a dispute among the Corinthian Christians. His purpose was to demonstrate his concern (*that our care for you in the sight of God might appear*

*to you*). Paul's concern for the Corinthian Christians was evident even though in the New Testament from all appearance there was never a church less worthy of an apostle's affections than the church at Corinth was at this time; and yet no one ever more beloved." Jesus did not come for the healthy but for the sick.

**Vs. 13-15** - The experience of Titus in Corinth and his report from there were sure evidence that the Corinthian Christians had a change of mind. When Paul says, "*his affections are great for you*" Paul assures the Corinthian Christians that Titus loves them more than ever now. Probably Titus saw a lot of ugliness among the Corinthian Christians, and from this he may have had a chip on his shoulder against them. So Paul wants the Corinthians to know that after Titus saw and reported their repentance, Titus loved them more than ever. You know the joy that comes after repentance is so sweet; especially when you thought the situation could have gone in a negative way.

**Vs. 16** - All through this chapter we see how concerned Paul was about his relationship with the Corinthian Christians. This shows that people were just as important to Paul as ministry. He didn't want to do "ministry" at the expense of his relationships with people. One of the most difficult things to do is to rebuild a shattered relationship whether it be in our homes, friendships, work relationships, and even in the church. But they can be repaired because



**God gives us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). The ministry of reconciliation is realized when people face problems honestly, deal with them Biblically and lovingly, and seek to get right with God.**