

Parson to Person

2 Corinthians 7 – Part 4 (They Did It! Let's Do It Again!)

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

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

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. 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.

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. Nevertheless, God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 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.

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. 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. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 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.

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” (2 Corinthians 7:1–16).

A Reflective Change of Gears

In reflective tone from earlier in the letter (1 Corinthians 6:13), Paul again asked that the Corinthians “*open [their] hearts*” (vs. 2) to him—and his traveling companions. Self-defensively, he once again pointed out that there was no reason the church in Corinth should be anything but open and welcoming to him/them.

From this point he jumped into a long and detailed, apparently calculated, encouragement of the Corinthians’ need to listen, repent, and obey and move forward.

The monolog began with “*I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation*” (vs. 4b) and ended with “*Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything*” (vs. 16). Verses 5 through 15 contain the personal notes.

Paul had written to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians) and had awaited a report of their reception, repentance, and actions. Titus gave the long-awaited (positive) report (2 Corinthians 2:12–13, 7:6–15). Therefore, Paul used this report/review/account to motivate the Corinthians to action—essentially saying, “you did well before, let’s do it again.”

The “do it again” in recognition of the “you did well” pointed back to the repentance they exercised concerning the man in sin and those affected by the actions (1 Corinthians 5 and vs. 11–13). The then-present injunction related to the fact that the Corinthians were still entertaining the false apostles/teachers—and needed to repent: “*Come out from among them*” (6:17a). Forthcoming we will see that the “do it again” will relate to their giving and otherwise needed correction and self-examination (2 Corinthians 8–13).

Repentance via Godly Sorrow

In verses 8–12 we read, “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. 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. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. 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.”

The theme of these few verses is documentation of what Godly sorrow will produce: heart-felt repentance. To the contrary would be “selfish sorrow,” which may produce a begrudging change. Illustratively this is the child who was “caught with his hand in the cookie jar” but feels only anger about being “found out” rather than true recognition of the error.

“Religious Exercise” may effect change in a person’s behavior, but change from without is not change of heart. Pure repentance recognizes error that leads to the needed changes from within.

The one who is compelled to make active changes apart from changes in the heart will most likely generate a grudge, anger, and/or bitterness. Bitterness will lead to depression. This is not the fruit of the Spirit!

Action Required

The Corinthians were encouraged to receive correction—and that correction from the heart (within). I must admit, this form of repentance is what every Godly pastor desires for those he serves.

All believers (at times) need correction. To this we must all say amen! However, I do pray that as we grow, our growth will come from within—rather than via “Religious Exercise” from without.

To that end I pray! *“Therefore, I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything”* (vs. 16).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul