

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

JUNE 1ST-2ND, 2024 // 2 CORINTHIANS

MAKE ROOM (2 CORINTHIANS 7:1-4)

The ministry of reconciliation, to which every Christian is called, is costly and urgent.

- It requires us to live a holy life that is different and distinct from the world and set apart for God's purposes.
- Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 6:14-18 about the need for us to separate ourselves from worldly influences so that we can live a close life with God and not be pulled into a fruitless, compromising lifestyle.

"SINCE WE HAVE THESE PROMISES..." (V. 1A)

Because God has promised us a close, intimate relationship with Him as our Father, if we will separate ourselves from the world, the natural conclusion is for us to cleanse ourselves.

- If we want to be close with God and set apart for His work, we are to remove and take away anything in our lives that is impure to our flesh and spirit.

"...BRINGING HOLINESS TO COMPLETION..." (V. 1B)

Genuine, sincere holiness is not just receiving some rules and trying through the power of our own flesh to not break any of them.

- It's to grow in our maturity to a point where we fear God enough to earnestly desire the things that would glorify God and bring us closer to Him. We then willingly and gladly remove things that pull us away from God.

"MAKE ROOM FOR US IN YOUR HEARTS..." (V. 2)

Perhaps one reason some within this church didn't have any room for Paul and his ministry was because their heart was divided between worldly attachments and allegiances.

- Paul reminds these Believers that he has not done anything to wrong them in any way, so they should receive him with open hearts.

Paul has no interest in condemning these Believers, but rather in restoring their relationship (v. 3).

- Paul corrected them sternly, but his correction was out of love, not condemnation.
- Godly correction is centered on restoration, while condemnation is about guilt, punishment, and pronouncing final judgment.
- Paul loves them so much that he's willing to die with them and live with them.

Paul has been very honest, raw, and real with the Corinthians (v. 4).

- His authenticity and transparency haven't just been him sharing frustrations and concerns with them—he has opened up his heart to share with them his great love and pride for them.
- Authenticity isn't always just us being negative, it's also us making ourselves vulnerable enough to share what we love and who we care for.

COMFORT IN MACEDONIA (2 CORINTHIANS 7:5-7)

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to deliver his letter and to collect money for the Believers in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 2:3-4).

- Paul didn't find Titus in Troas, so he journeyed to Macedonia to hopefully meet up with Titus and hear about the situation in Corinth.
- While he was in Macedonia awaiting the arrival of Titus and the report on how the Corinthians received the letter, Paul struggled.

"WE HAD NO REST. INSTEAD, WE WERE TROUBLED..." (V. 5)

Apparently, there was significant opposition and conflict related to Paul's ministry in Macedonia.

- Paul also battled fear, stress, and anxiety because of ministry.
- Anything you put your heart and soul into will cost you something. If you care about something or someone, you must be willing to fight for them! It's never going to be easy if you're invested.

"BUT GOD, WHO COMFORTS THE DOWNCAST..." (V. 6)

Even as Paul and his team felt stretched beyond their breaking point, at just the right time, God sent them relief in the form of Titus bringing the good report from Corinth.

- This is what God does—He allows pressure in our lives to mold and form us to make us like Jesus, but never to break us beyond repair.
- God comforts us when we are discouraged.

The comfort Paul received was not just because of the coming of Titus, but also because of the report that the church in Corinth had received Paul's letter well (v. 7).

- Paul's letter of correction and rebuke had produced in these Believers sorrow, deep longing, and a zeal to make things right with Paul.
- This made Paul rejoice all the more.

Caring deeply and investing our lives into other people in ministry is the ultimate act of vulnerability and love.

- In pouring ourselves out for others, we give them permission to hurt us.
- Sometimes we feel stretched beyond our breaking point, but God always knows what He's doing in allowing pressure and pain.
- God knows when and how to encourage us.

REPENTANCE (2 CORINTHIANS 7:8-13)

"THIS HURTS ME MORE THAN IT HURTS YOU!"

Paul wrote some very tough, difficult, painful words of correction that caused the Corinthians some grief (v. 8).

- And while it caused Paul some regret initially, in the long run, he saw it was needed, and he didn't regret sending the letter.
- We need to hear tough truth that stings at first but ultimately leads us to change.

Tough truth from God's Word that stings and sometimes even offends our pride is not easy to hear, but that God-designed grief is intended to lead us to repentance (v. 9).

- Repentance is a beautiful thing because it rescues us from destroying ourselves by our sin.
- These Believers responded appropriately to correction by practicing repentance, so they didn't experience any real loss.
- "Godly grief..." – there is such a thing as real, genuine, holy remorse and sorrow over sin.
- "...produces a repentance" – if sorrow over sin is genuine, holy, and godly, it will always lead to a change in heart, mind, and actions.
- "...that leads to salvation" – without that change, saving faith doesn't happen (it's a part of saving faith and needed for Christian maturity).
- "...without regret" – the outcome is always good.
- "Worldly grief..." – there is a way in which Satan capitalizes on the regret we feel over our sinful choices by piling upon us condemnation, guilt, shame, and feelings of worthlessness.
- Satan doesn't want us to repent and receive God's restoration, forgiveness, and new life.
- "...produces death" – a perfect example of worldly grief is found in the actions of Judas Iscariot after he betrayed Jesus (Matt. 27:3-10).

Godly sorrow and real repentance produce in us...

- A readiness to make amends ("desire to clear yourselves")
- A proper anger, alarm, and concern over the seriousness of our sin ("indignation," "fear")
- A zeal and earnest desire to behave and live differently ("deep longing," "zeal...")
- A commitment to doing what's right and living righteously ("justice")

Paul's motivation for bringing sorrow was not to take sides in any dispute among the Corinthian Christians, but rather for them to clear things up so their devotion to God may be made plain (v. 12).

- To get right with God often requires us being willing to let Him get inside our messes.
- Sometimes acknowledging how big of a mess things are is painful and embarrassing.

Paul was comforted and Titus was overjoyed because these Believers in Corinth received tough truth, experienced godly grief, and responded with appropriate repentance and action (v. 13).

- What are some tough truths from God's Word that you've been avoiding because it stings a little too much and makes you uncomfortable?
- What God reveals in you, He wants to heal in you.

ENCOURAGEMENT (2 CORINTHIANS 7:14-16)

The impression the Corinthians had made on Titus also delighted Paul because he had boasted about the Corinthian church to Titus (v. 14).

- It may seem like the Corinthian church got nothing but correction and harsh words from Paul, but many times, Paul bragged on the Corinthians and God's work in their midst (1 Cor. 1:7).
- The affection and admiration of Titus toward this church grew as he saw their response (v. 15).

THE CORINTHIANS' RESPONSE TO CORRECTION (V. 15).

1. Obedience: Instead of getting defensive, downplaying the problems, or simply verbally acknowledging the issue without actually doing anything different, these Believers changed.
2. Fear and Trembling: They received Titus and his message with appropriate concern and alarm over their sin.

"I REJOICE THAT I HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN YOU..." (V. 16)

There's been some ugly, messy, and complicated contentions amongst these Believers in Corinth.

- But because they received correction and truth by responding in a God-honoring way, Paul is confident that this church is going to be stronger than ever before.
- It's the exact same in our lives.

No matter how ugly, messy, or complicated the issues and sin that are present in your life, if you receive the correction of God's Word with humility, appropriate concern and alarm, and obedience to the Lord, you're going to be stronger and closer to God than ever before.

- Repentance is a beautiful thing because it rescues us from destroying ourselves and others by our sin. We must actively choose repentance.

"LASHES AND WOUNDS PURGE AWAY EVIL, AND BEATINGS CLEANSE THE INNERMOST PARTS." (PROVERBS 20:30)

- Sometimes the truth hurts. If we will allow the unpleasant fire of painful correction to refine and cleanse away evil by learning from it and repenting, then we can grow. If we plug up our ears and turn away, we will never change.

AN ABSENCE OF SORROW OVER SIN.

- If we don't care how our sin hurts the heart of God, affects those around us, or harms ourselves, we are in a very dangerous place spiritually.

WORLDLY SORROW OVER SIN.

- If when we sin, we give into condemnation, guilt, shame, despair, and hopelessness, that reveals a lack of faith in the power of the gospel.

GODLY SORROW OVER SIN.

- Godly sorrow is a genuine and holy remorse, alarm, concern, and sadness over sin in our lives.
- If it is real, it will always lead to a change of heart, mind, and behavior.
- When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, do we just "feel bad" and do nothing? (Matt. 19:22)
- What obedience to the Lord needs to take place in our life?