

***“Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians —
Godly Sorrow and the Sorrow of the World, Part 2”***

- *There is a difference, and it is a very large one indeed, between the sorrow which is godly and the sorrow of the world which is at root ungodly. For the one leads always to blessing whether in this life or eternally. The other leads to death. For unbelievers, that death is ultimately eternal. For believers, that ungodly sorrow leaves the believer in life situations that are not the best that the Lord offers. In particular, there is the loss of the comfort and rest of Almighty God which is the gift to all believers who are dwelling in his wonderful and abundant grace and truth. This will be our focus today as we continue in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.*

2 Cor. 1:1-5

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

4 Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.

- *The theme of the letter is expressed here in these opening verses. It is comfort, the comfort of Almighty God, bestowed on sinners as part of God's redemptive plan under grace. Paul uses this word “comfort” over 40 times in this letter and it is surely the word that best tells the story of Paul's love for the Corinthians and God's love for us all. There are two sorrows as we are seeing here in this section and today we will finish our study of that. And one kind of sorrow is godly and God's comfort comes in the end from that, while the other kind of sorrow is ungodly and rebellious and ends, he says here, in death, death with all of its manifestations here in this life and then in eternity. Corresponding to those two kinds of sorrow are our two enemies as we noted last time, the one of the flesh and the other of the spirit:*

Review:

- ***Two Enemies for the Believer Threaten Us All, The Flesh and the Spirit***
- ***But God Is There To Comfort Us In Both Great and Small Ways***
- ***Two Enemies for the Believer Threaten Us All, The Flesh and the Spirit***

[READ] 2 Cor. 7:1-4 “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit”

1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

3 I speak not *this* to condemn *you*: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with *you*.

4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

- ***There is so much here stated in so few words. But again, Paul’s subject, AND HIS TESTIMONY, is regarding the comfort of God!***

To turn back to the religious and inherently evil and as he calls it here the “filthiness of the spirit” apart from the guidance and blessing of God under grace, while an option for believers, is to refuse the free blessings of God offered by his grace. Religious systems are always based on works, ultimately works of law, and they can never deliver grace and peace to their devotees. Amen.

- ***But God Is There To Comfort Us In Both Great and Small Ways***

2 Cor. 7:5-7 “God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus ...”

5 For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, *[The general principle ...]* comforted us by the coming of Titus; *[The application of the general to the specific circumstance ...]*

7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

- *But this reminder of how the Lord God had faithfully cared for Paul in this special and very personal way, is used by the Holy Spirit as he inspires this letter to hammer home to the Corinthians how the Lord God, the father mercies, would do the same for them, for “God comforteth those that are cast down”, the general principle being now taught here. But how to apply it? I believe the teaching here is that we must not forget to count the small stuff! In other words, we shouldn’t be looking only for the great and miraculous evidence of the working of Almighty God. For he is working “all things” together for our good! The small things count too. Let’s never forget that.*

Our Outline Today:

- *Godly Sorrow Brings Benefits to Believers and Glory to God*
- *The Sorrow of the World Can Never Bring Life But Only Death*
- *Godly Sorrow Brings True Comfort As the Mark of His Working In Us*

I. Godly Sorrow Brings Benefits to Believers and Glory to God:

- *As we have seen as we have studied this letter, the situation in Corinth was a difficult one. One man had been engaged in sinful behavior of such a gross sort that even the unbelievers in Corinth would not easily speak of it. And yet for some in the Corinthian church it had become acceptable behavior and was even honored by some. This caused the apostle to write his first letter to remedy this most disappointing of situations. In time, some did repent and change their ways including the sinner of note. But there was apparently an overreaction on the part of some prompting the apostle to write another letter which has been subsequently lost. That is the background of this letter which we call the second letter to the Corinthians, a letter written a while later after Paul’s trusted co-minister Titus had arrived bearing such good news from Corinth.*
- *Paul in this section of the letter seeks to walk a fine line since he has multiple issues to address and also due to the divisions among the believers in Corinth each with different issues, it seems. If we keep these groups in mind we will be better able to understand what he has written here:*
 - *One group contains the repentant sinner.*
 - *Another group contains those that had forgiven him.*
 - *A third contains those that had not yet forgiven him.*

- *And the final group contains those that now sadly might be questioning the apostle's motives and even his love for them so overwhelmingly appreciated previously. False teachers were in their midst to take advantage of this situation, of course, blaming the apostle for the divisions in this assembly and promoting themselves while blaming Paul.*

[READ] 2 Cor. 7:8-9

8 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

- *The application of the general principle to the specific circumstance now follows as Paul explains himself by applying it, first to himself and then to them. Therefore his example works to their benefit as well, and that is the whole point of his writing, isn't it?*

As I have studied this letter, it has become increasingly clear that the apostle believed that his own testimony did and should mirror that of the Corinthians, whether in regard to his sufferings, his repentance, his regrets, and then finally the bestowal by his heavenly father of that without which we have surely lost so much, God's most blessed comfort. And in the end it was that which motivated him so much in the writing of this letter.

- "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent": *In other words, I am not now regretting or sorry though I was after sending that letter.*
- "Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance, for ye were made sorry after a godly manner": *Paul helps to explain his use of the words here illustrating how their sorrow through the reception of that letter led them to a change of mind and that this was in fact the work of God in them and not some kind of human reform which commonly occurs in the lives of many.*
- *These words set the stage for the rest of the chapter where in starkest contrast he compares two varieties of sorrow. The difference may seem subtle but for Paul the difference is the heart of*

his message in this section. And perhaps this is the heart of his teaching in this letter as well. Let us see:

II. The Sorrow of the World Can Never Bring Life But Only Death:

- *As he had written here, a major issue was their forgiveness of the sinner himself. And then there was the further issue of their forgiveness of the apostle himself due perhaps to the severity of the previous letter (now lost). But now the circumstances have changed since Titus has arrived with the good news of their repentance and accompanying forgiveness of the apostle. Praise God.*

[READ] 2 Cor. 7:10-11

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge! In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

- “repentance to salvation not to be repented of”: ***Literally, this could be translated “repentance to salvation not to be later regretted”. In other words, this was a repentance or change of mind that was not regretted later ...***
- ***What is this “salvation” and what does death mean here in the context of this letter? Salvation has a number of meanings in scripture depending on its usage. The root meaning is “deliverance”. Here he refers to the deliverance from the former circumstances that motivated him to send the first letter. Titus had reported positively on that, it seems.***
- ***He writes here also that there are no regrets for that deliverance since it was the fruit of the working of Almighty God. But the other kind of sorrow could never lead to those blessings, he writes here as well, for that kind of sorrow in the world of unbelief can lead only to constant conflict and disappointment as all unsaved learn eventually. It even leads to eternal death! So the stark contrast is well described here by the apostle, between faithful living and unfaithful “existing”, possible for believers but only manifested when they live like unbelievers.***

III. Godly Sorrow Brings True Comfort As the Mark of His Working In Us:

[READ] 2 Cor. 7:12-16

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which *I made* before Titus, is found a truth.

15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

16 I rejoyce therefore that I have confidence in you in all *things*.

- ***This seems difficult to understand. Let's look at it, carefully step by step, to see exactly what it says:***
 - “I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you”: ***That Paul still cared greatly for the Corinthians even though he had written that harsh letter was very much on his mind as he writes here. We may find it difficult to understand his comment here but he goes on to explain it:***
 - “we were comforted in your comfort”: ***All the various dimensions of God's work in Corinth as reported by Titus to Paul are listed here in short form.*** “Yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all”: ***Perhaps that was the greatest of all to Paul as he writes here with the words “Yea, and exceedingly the more ...”. In the Greek this is a very strong phrase as our translation indicates!***
 - “For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. ***I rejoyce therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.***”

These last words say it all: Even of the Corinthians, perhaps the most difficult assembly of them all, the apostle was confident of what their end would be. Why? Ultimately, I am

convinced that his confidence overall is for the same reasons he had stated so well in a number of other places earlier in this letter. For example:

[READ] 2 Cor. 5:19-21

19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Application / Conclusions:

- ***Let's close by reading again some key verses:***

[READ] 2 Cor. 6:1-2

1 We then, as workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

[READ] 2 Cor. 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

- ***Considering these, how could the apostle have had anything less than full confidence in what the Lord God was doing through his ministry in Corinth? Do we have that level of confidence?***
- ***To conclude, we have seen how the tone has changed here to comfort and the comfort of God. And this is the overriding theme of the letter as the opening verses made clear: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."***
- ***This is especially relevant to the Corinthians, Paul writes here, since now the pendulum has apparently swung all the way to the opposite extreme.***

As they had over-reacted it seems and now felt very guilty regarding their former failures. This is a normal human response but contrary to the way God works under grace. Instead, Paul writes about how God has provided comfort to him and will do the same for them, if only they would receive it!

- ***This letter is so different from the ones we may be writing today, aren't they? Do we also have this same comfort to share with others? I hope and pray that we do.***
- ***Two kinds of sorrow, the one godly, the other of this world. Which one do we have from time to time? The comfort of God should be our mark, and a precious one indeed it is. Amen?***