The Gift of Godly Sorrow
2 Corinthians 7:6-16 (NKJV)

Background to Paul and this second letter to the Corinthian church.

The Apostle Paul endured great hardship to spread the Gospel message of Jesus Christ everywhere he went, and he paid dearly for this as he faced great perils and persecution.

We are told Paul was whipped 5 times (2 Cor. 11:24)—each time with 39-lashes. The whip or “Scourge” as it was known, had tiny pieces of metal, bone, wire, or hardened clay attached to the strands so it would rip the flesh open.

In addition to these scourging, Paul was beaten with rods three times, stoned once, and shipwrecked another three times. He was often without sleep, food, or clothing as a result of the perils he faced.

But what broke Paul’s heart more than all these afflictions was what the church had done to him.

Paul had invested 2-years into establishing the church of Corinth, and they had repaid Paul with disloyalty by allowing false teachers to come in the midst of them and attack Paul’s character and ministry.

Some of the church members believed the lies of the false teachers and joined them—one of them had even apparently verbally assaulted and abused Paul.

All this while the majority of the church sat by and watched

We’ve all experienced broken relationships throughout life—they are all painful.

But there is something even more painful when the broken relationship is between fellow believers—
I believe the pain is even more severe because it entails a division, disunity and a tearing of the Body of Christ.

- We as individual believers make up the Temple of God, where the Holy Spirit dwells
- 1Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house…

Last week we looked at two verses in 1Corinthians that very much spoke about this truth—

1Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1Corinthians 3:17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.

And so Paul decided to confront the believers at the Church of Corinth on these things they were doing, so he wrote 1Corinthians—a very stern letter to address and correct improper things that were occurring.

Paul had a hard time writing this letter—it was painful for him
He had a heart and sincere love for those who he was admonishing and correcting—

We can see Paul speaking of this in his 2nd letter—

2Corinthians 2:4 For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.

2Corinthians 2:5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent—not to be too severe.

So this is the background to chapter 7.

Let’s pick up in verse 6 here in Ch. 7—
2 Corinthians 7:6 Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus,

2 Corinthians 7:7 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.

- Paul was so bummed at how they had treated him when he had visited that he decided not to go to them in person, but opted to write his letter and give it to Titus to deliver.
- Titus came back with great news!
- The Corinthians didn’t scoff at Paul’s stern letter of rebuke, and in fact they were very sorry for their actions when they were confronted with God’s truth.
- They began to mourn and grieve over the break in their relationship

Application: We have to ask ourselves—
Q: What is our reaction when are confronted by another person who may be holding us accountable?
Q: Do we receive it with a proper heart and accept responsibility for our actions, or do we attempt to cover, deflect, blame shift, or even attack back?

When I am confronted by someone who I have offended or hurt, I try very hard to evaluate my actions to see if my heart was proper, or if my actions could have been hurtful,

But even if my heart was right, and I never intended to hurt them, I will say with all sincerity, “That was never my heart…I am so sorry for hurting you…will you forgive me?”

We should always be willing to do this! It is a biblical principle of taking the wood out of the fire…

- If we did something and meant to do it then we should examine our hearts and repent and say we are sorry…
- Some people just won’t say they are sorry—their pride won’t let them
On the other hand, if we did or said something without knowing or intending to hurt or harm the other person, but then are made aware of it, then we should be willing to apologize sincerely as unto the Lord.

That is taking the wood out of the fire...And then let it go...don’t talk about it...

Proverbs 26:20 Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; And where there is no talebearer, strife ceases.

Hey, They may not receive our apology—but we have to do our part.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Let’s pick up V. 8—

2 Corinthians 7:8 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.

- There are times when we have to confront someone in sin and we might be stretched beyond our comfort zone—we may even have to confront strongly
- But we need to be willing to do this because sin is a deadly killer
- Paul had this love, and he knew he needed to confront these sinful things that had made their way into the church

Q: So what is the best way to confront another believer in sin?
We should always pray before doing anything. We should always have their best interests at heart (Agape Love), and we should do it in a spirit of humility “There, but for the grace of God, go I”

Proof text for How to Confront one in sin

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.
Galatians 6:2 Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

So we can see 3-principles for confronting someone in sin in these verses—

- 1. We are first called to “Restore” the person falling into sin
  - The verb used here is a medical term used for setting a fractured bone; what is wrong in the life of the fallen Christian must be set straight. It is not to be neglected or exposed openly
- 2\textsuperscript{nd} The work of restoration must be done by those who are “spiritual”
  - Only those who are genuinely led by the Spirit will have the maturity to deal with sin in others
- 3\textsuperscript{rd} The restoration should be made “gently” being aware that no one is immune to temptation and that everyone can fall.
  - This type of attitude avoids retaliatory gossip; it prevents more serious backsliding in the person being confronted, and it glorifies the name of Jesus.

- And we can clearly see this is exactly what Paul did in his letter of confrontation—

Let’s continue with v. 9—

2Corinthians 7:9 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.

2Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

So we see Paul declaring that the Corinthians sorrow led them to repent.

He writes that they were made sorry in a Godly manor.

Paul’s letter definitely made the Corinthian Christians feel bad for their sin—but he did it in a godly manor.

Paul used the truth, he didn’t lie or exaggerate—He was honest.
He didn’t use hidden agendas or try to manipulate them—He simply told the truth in love.

Paul points out that there are 2-ways in which we can become sorry

1. The First type of sorrow we can posses is Worldly Sorrow— we are sorry that we got caught in our offense and for what we are going to have to pay back or restore as a result”

   This is the type of sorrow that springs forth out of self-pity, despair, bitterness, manipulative remorse, or just a wounded pride.

   When sorrow is received or borne in a worldly way, it has the deadly effect of producing resentment or bitterness. We can regret that kind of sorrow…David Guzik

   There is no fruit of true repentance in this type of sorrow—only a shallow remorse for the impact of being caught—this type of sorrow leads to death.

2. The 2nd type of sorrow we can possess is “Godly Sorrow.”
   It is a gift from God through The Holy Spirit
   It is a sorrow that leads to true repentance and restoration with God.

Now Paul is speaking of a godly sorrow here that leads to repentance leading to Salvation.

It is the same Godly Sorrow that will guide us in our ongoing sanctification process as Christian believers.

- The Holy Spirit pricks our conscious to let us know we have done something against the will of God—
- He will do this through our conscious and in reminding us of God’s Word (John 14:26).
- Our conscious is the tool God has created for the Holy Spirit to guide and lead us in our decision making process—
• And if our heart is proper then we will willingly receive the gift of Godly Sorrow, which will lead us to earnestly repent of our sinful behavior.

We are responsible for keeping the soil of our heart good so we can receive the Word of God—to save us, and to continue to sanctify us so we can become like Jesus.

We do this by casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and by bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2Cor 10:5).

God is very much clear that we are not to walk in the ways of our former flesh—we are to put off the fleshly ways (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:8-9), and put on the new man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10, 12, 14).

This is why there is so much writing within the New Testament to Believers exhorting us to repent, to flee from, or turn away from sin.

Repentance may sound like a harsh word to many. But it is an essential aspect of the gospel.

• When John the Baptist preached, he said Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! (Matthew 3:2)
• He told the Pharisees and Sadducees to “Bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matthew 3:8).
• When Jesus began to preach, He said Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17)
• When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, he told his listeners to repent (Acts 2:38)

In his book I Surrender, Patrick Morley writes that the church's integrity problem is in the misconception "that we can add Christ to our lives, but not subtract sin. It is a change in belief without a change in behavior." He goes on to say, "It is revival without reformation, without repentance."
As believers we are not to live in sin anymore—Romans 6:6-7 tells us that we have been freed from the bondage of sin—we are no longer slaves...we are free! AMEN?

This should impact how we live, and we must understand that this freedom came at a price—the death and blood of Jesus Christ.

We made a covenant when we accepted Christ—we received His payment and in exchange we gave him our life.

We are now to be Vessels of Honor in His hands submitting to His will for our lives, and surrendering to His Lordship over how we live.

This is what Paul had written to the new believers in Corinth about in 1Corinthians.

1Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

1Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

So Paul tells them here in v. 10 godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Our Repentance must be genuine—If we wish to escape the coming wrath, our lifestyle must be in harmony with our oral repentance.

Continuing with Verse 11—

2Corinthians 7:11 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.

So we see Paul now telling the Corinthians how he knows theirs was genuine repentance. And v. 11 gives us 7-characteristics of the purity of true repentance.

This is probably the clearest definition of repentance anywhere in Scripture.
1. Godly sorrow will produce Diligence in us—We will have an eagerness for righteousness on our part. Repentance means to turn around, and it takes diligence to stay turned around.

If we give up easily, we will never walk in repentance, even though we may perform acts of repentance.

2. Godly sorrow will manifest itself in a desire for us to clear ourselves—we will have a strong desire to clear our name; remove the stigma of our sin; rid ourselves of our guilt, and prove ourselves trustworthy.

We’re going to find that we want to make sure that everyone who knew of our guilt also knows of our repentance.

It is also a clearing of guilt and shame, from knowing that we have brought our sin to God, and we are now walking in the right way.

3. Godly sorrow will result in indignation—we will be outraged at our own sin, and angry that we have brought shame upon ourselves, and the Lord.

This is the kind of attitude that makes repentance last.

I will usually say, “Until we hate the sin, we won’t truly repent.”

4. Godly sorrow will produce fear within us—Paul isn’t writing about a trembling type of fear of God here, but more of a reverential fear and awe towards God as we acknowledge that He is the one who chastens and judges.

He is speaking of a fear of sin, and a fear of our own weakness toward it.

5. Godly sorrow will produce a vehement desire for restoration with those we have offended—we’re going to want to see our relationship restored and healed.
6. Godly sorrow will produce a renewed zeal for holiness—This is a heart that really desires purity and godliness, and doesn’t want to sin any more.

   This zeal for holiness is expressed through heartfelt prayer and total dependence on God—“Lord show me how to live.”

7. Godly sorrow will produce a desire for vindication—we will have a strong desire to see justice done, and to make restitution for the things we have done wrong.

   We will not deflect or attempt to protect ourselves, but will submit and accept the consequences of our sin.

   We will be vindicated as a Christian, even though we have sinned.

   No one can doubt it, because the measure of a Christian is not whether or not we have sin, but whether or not we repent.

   True repentance purifies our heart and our actions will be reflective of this

   The result is that we will have proved that we are clear—the same way the Corinthians did as stated here in v. 11.

   Repentance must never be thought of as something we must do before we can come back to God. Repentance describes what coming to God is. You can’t turn towards God without turning from the things He is against…

   David Guzik

Let’s finish these last few verses—v. 12

2Corinthians 7:12 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.

2Corinthians 7:13 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.
2Corinthians 7:14 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.
2Corinthians 7:15 And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.
2Corinthians 7:16 Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.

And so we see that the godly sorrow led to the fruit of repentance in the lives of those who were in sin in Corinth—

Paul had confronted them in love, and they chose to receive what he had to say.

- They didn’t get puffed up in the flesh
- They didn’t get prideful
- They didn’t get bitter
- They didn’t slander Paul, or go around attempting to discredit him

They stopped, reflected and concluded that they were not doing what God wanted them to do, and they decided to change their ways.

This is the godly principle of Iron sharpening iron…

Proverbs 27:17  As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Hey, maybe you are in a relationship that has been a little tough, or just downright brutal

- It might have been with a boss, co-worker, family member, a spouse, or even a brother or sister in the Lord
- There may have been some issues that caused anger, bitterness, or just caused you to draw back from the relationship
- We will all find ourselves in this situation at some point…
- Hey, We may only be 10% at fault, and the other person may be 90% -- the questions is—

Are we sorry for our part, or are we simply focusing on their 90%?
Are we truly sorry to our Lord for our part of the situation?

Whenever someone tries to justify their improper actions based on what someone else did to them I will always ask them—“What does that have to do with you and God?”

Here me in this—You confess your part unto the Lord, and then apologize to them as an act of worship unto the Lord.

It doesn’t matter how they receive it…that’s not the primary issue—

We need to focus on doing our part and do it with a proper heart—not begrudgingly, but as unto the Lord

We then let God do a work on their heart, and make changes in their life.

- We have an opportunity when confronting or being confronted by others in our Christian walk
- We cannot allow pride to come into our hearts in either case—when confronting, we must do it with grace, and in love
- And when we are being confronted we must have a heart willing to receive—always willing to take the wood out of the fire
- When God attempts to give us The Gift of Godly Sorrow for something we have done—regardless of how small it may be— we must be willing to accept it and allow Him to guide us in true repentance

Here me in this—each one of us is called to be an Aroma of Christ—

Our life should reflect Jesus in everything we do.

- Our witness and our testimony of what Jesus has done in our life is a reflection of our heart,
- And if our heart is in alignment with Jesus’ heart then there will be a fragrance of Christ about us.

We are told this in 2Cor.—

2Corinthians 2:15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.
2Corinthians 2:16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?

To some people our aroma of Christ will be an ugly smell—one leading to death—and we may face persecution—Jesus told us to expect this…

But to others this fragrance will smell wonderful, and it will draw them closer to God, and it will have an eternal impact on their lives.