

From Hurting to Healing

(Scripture: 2nd Corinthians 7:1-16)

Introduction:

A. Why are you here?

I know the answer most people give, “To worship God and build up my Christian family.”

It is a good answer, a right answer, but is it a complete answer?

When we come together as a church family several things take place. Our worship and praise to God is seen more in our singing, prayers, and communion than it is in the preaching.

In preaching, we open together the word of God and allow the Spirit to teach, rebuke, correct or train us in righteousness.

B. There are times that the sermon will be challenging, thought provoking and causes some to feel guilty.

But the bigger question becomes what will I do with the conviction that the sermon brought?

Some people call it guilt, but it is God’s calling.

I. The Purpose of Paul’s Letter

A. Matthew 10:32-39, Jesus says he came to bring a sword.

³⁴Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

What is that sword that divides even a family?

It is truth, pure truth.

That truth is found in the Word of God. (Hebrews 4:12; John 8:32)

When God exposes our sin through the truth of His word it is designed to attack the grip of sin.

B. Now listen to Galatians 5:7-12.

Paul tells us that the message of the cross is offensive.

The very reason why the message attacks the sinful nature within us, convicting us, calling us to repentance.

C. That brings us to the passage of our text.

Do you think Paul wanted to hurt the feelings of the Christians in Corinth?

Do you think it was his nature to cause others to be in pain?

I don't believe Paul liked doing what he did. (2nd Corinthians 7:3)

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

Paul wrote a harsh letter to the church in Corinth because he knew the power of the truth given by God and how that power can push the advances of sin back.

D. With the truth of God we attack sin in our own life and in the lives of those around us whom we touch.

It is not "I'm better than you" attitude, but "Through God we can both grow and change."

Paul didn't call himself perfect and the Christians in Corinth evil.

He loved them as family and didn't want to see his family hurt so he allowed God to expose His divine light upon their actions.

The response in this case was one of godly sorrow that led to repentance that brought about life.

The end result was exactly what was desired.

II. Godly Sorrow versus Worldly Sorrow

A. As we examine the text, the idea is clear.

Paul struggled with writing a letter to people he loved and in that letter exposed their sin and failure to act as God desired.

He knew that saying nothing left these Christians in a sinful state. Therefore he risked his relationship with them by writing the letter in such a tone that produced some type of result – either changing their sinful ways or breaking off all relationship with Paul and possibly going back to the idols from which they left.

B. He asked them in verse 2 to *“Receive us.”*

He knows they are hurt, but they were not harmed.

In fact, he hears from Titus that the church in Corinth responded in such a powerful way that their repentance brought them back to their salvation.

God did not allow their grief to become unbearable and therefore they were not harmed by the letter.

The conclusion is verse 10. *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation”*

C. Let’s consider these two types of sorrow.

First, guilt is a means to an end, and the end itself.

Look again at verse 9.

⁹Now 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.

Their guilt led them to repentance.

Or as we just saw in verse 10, godly sorrow brought them to repentance which led them to salvation.

Guilt is a motivator not a manipulator.

Guilt is God’s calling us to holiness not Satan’s stronghold to keep us down.

Worldly sorrow has guilt, but it is simply guilt based upon the consequence and not guilt for the action.

Godly sorrow prompts our heart to say, “What I am going to do about this sin in my life? It is affecting my relationship with God and others.”

D. Worldly sorrow does not go beyond the emotions and the consequences.

Because of that Satan uses it against Christians by prompting us to think, “I’m okay now because I feel guilty.”

III. Repentance

A. The key difference here is the word “repentance.”

At the core of the word repentance is the meaning of conversion.

It is about changing the way you think and act.

The calling from John the Baptist was not to join a new religion, it was not to make people feel guilty as Jews, but to bring them to a conversion – a change of life.

That repentance would lead them to Jesus the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”

That repentance was called upon to be seen, or as John put it “fruits of repentance.”

There is a sense of urgency in this word.

Why would a person repent – change their thinking and actions – unless they saw something in them that was not in line with the teachings they believed?

If I know something I am doing is wrong and it hurts my relationship with God and others, repentance prompts me to act quickly.

B. We don't talk much about repentance today because it means people “feel” their way of life is not in line with God's teaching of holiness.

Instead of letting the Sword of the Spirit convict, we seek to make it more acceptable.

That's why people don't repent or change.

But drinking poison will still kill you even if it tastes like Gatorade!

¹²There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

²³O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. (Jeremiah 10:23)

C. Paul wanted them to see how God motivated this great change in these Christians so he simply tells them the results (verse 11).

¹¹For 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.

Examine yourself this day and see how God has led to changes within your life.

God's desire is not for you to leave this worship the same as you came. Instead, leave with the joy of freedom from sin.

Conclusion:

A. One of the reason we come together each week is for a spiritual revival.

A revival allows the Holy Spirit to speak to us through the Word of God and challenge us to see ourselves in light of God's holiness.

John 3:19-21 tells the power of the light of God shining in our hearts.

B. If you are tired of being stirred but not changed, then you have the chance today to show the fruit of repentance in your life.

You can step forward in your battle against sin and say, "no longer will you keep me in guilt and depression. Through the grace of God I will live a life of repentance and live his joy."

If we can help you make such a statement in your own life today, then come as we stand and sing.