

Godly Grief

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[0 : 00] Shall we read some verses from 2nd Corinthians in chapter 6? 2nd Corinthians 6 reading from verse 14.

We'll read into chapter 7. 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 at verse 14. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?

For what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? For what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

For we are the temple of the living God, as God said. I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them. And I will be their God and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst and be separate from them, says the Lord.

And touch no unclean thing, then I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty. Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

[1 : 20] Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one. We have corrupted no one. We have taken advantage of no one. I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.

I am acting with great boldness toward you. I have great pride in you. I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy. For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest.

But we were afflicted at every turn, fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you.

As he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it.

For I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting.

[2 : 25] For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret. Whereas worldly grief produces death.

For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you. But also, what eagerness to clear yourselves. What indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment.

At every point, you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong.

But in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. Therefore, we are comforted. And so on. And may the Lord bless.

A reading of his word. We want to consider some parts of this chapter this evening. Reading again, if we may, at verse 10. It's chapter 7, 2 Corinthians, and verse 10.

[3 : 29] For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret. Whereas worldly grief produces death.

We'll gather from the context here that the Apostle Paul is referring to a certain event that happened in the life of the congregation, the church at Corinth.

Where he had to deal with them in a very stern way. And the outcome was a blessed turning into the ways of God.

It was a repenting. A turning away from the way they were going to the way that they should be going. It is amazing, really, that there was a church in Corinth at all.

The way the Apostle speaks to these believers in the opening of his first letter to them. He speaks about those in Corinth who are called to be saints.

[4 : 27] He commends them. He has such high esteem for them. The wonder about that is that Corinth was riddled with many, many faults. Whether they were theological, personality, situations. Whether they were moral. Whether they were to do with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The place was riddled with faults. But Paul could see behind the faults. And he could see the hand and work of God present.

Tonight we want to notice just three things from these words that we've been reading. First, recognition of their position. The Apostle is bringing arguments towards the mind and the heart of those to whom he's writing.

In order to make them realize what kind of people they should be. And particularly in the context in which they find themselves. The recognition of their position.

Secondly, the reason for the letter. And lastly, the repentance. That's true. The recognition of their position. Notice how clear it is.

[5 : 32] In verse 14 of chapter 6. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. There is really separation being called for in these words.

Now we can apply them in different areas of life. And we can have them to mean something that they don't actually mean at all. What these words do not mean by not being unequally yoked with unbelievers.

Is they're not saying have nothing to do with unbelievers. Paul himself speaks of that elsewhere in these Corinthian letters. That it is impossible to not have any dealings or contact with people who are unbelievers.

Then we would have to go out to the world itself. But there is a certain kind of separation from the world that is unbiblical. It's possible for us to isolate ourselves.

Confine ourselves into our den. And be safe in our own comfort zone. And do nothing by way of advancing in our lives with our witness, with our words.

[6 : 39] Into the realm where our unbelieving friends and family live. But at the same time there is something clearly spoken of here by the Apostle. That we need to take on board as Christians.

That there is to be a very clear difference between the Christian, the believer and the unbeliever. In this sense, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

I think that's really saying don't come into any close association with unbelieving people. That will compromise your position as Christian men and women.

And that's very easy to do. I think the language goes back to the Old Testament. Mosaic law where yoking together two different animals was forbidden.

It had to be two of the same. I think Paul is building on that Old Testament prohibition in a spiritual sense and applying it to the Christian life. Don't be in any relationship of union, whatever that might be, as a Christian with an unbeliever.

[7 : 40] Because it is wrong. It's just one of these absolute facts. But Paul being a very logical, thoughtful and reasonable man gives reasons for doing this.

The people we mustn't be unequally yoked with. In this sense, in participation. He says, look, what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?

When you think about being in a close relationship of whatever kind it is, as a Christian with people who aren't Christians, we have to think about that. What fellowship, what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?

They're both mutually exclusive. They're opposites. They're at odds with each other. You can't reconcile them. And they're not to be found together. As well as that, he says, what fellowship has light with darkness?

Now we know that. You just need to look out the window and all you see is darkness. You cannot have both coexisting at the same time equally. It's either one or the other. But here he takes that step further.

[8 : 50] What accord has Christ with Belial or with the devil himself? Does Christ have partnership, friendship, fellowship with the devil? The answer is obvious.

It's implied in the very question. And we know it is absolutely not. What portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

He's saying, look, there are reasons why you need to be separate from the world. Not to isolate yourself from the world, but to be in the world, but not being off the world, as we so often say. And that is not an easy thing to do. We're so prone to compromise rather than stand out in the best way. And I say that about myself before anyone else here tonight.

And it's wrong. We're so, particularly maybe in our circumstances in home, it can happen in a marriage. It can happen in school.

[9 : 45] It can happen in college, a place of work. It can happen with your neighbours. It can happen in many different places where you're tempted to compromise. You're tempted to blur the demarcation between yourself as a Christian and those who are not Christians.

And it should, I think, as something of demarcation, prohibit us from involvement with certain people, certain places, certain practices.

Now you can think for yourself maybe tonight as I can. Are there any of these things in us or about us that we could point the finger on tonight and say, well, we're actually compromised at that point?

In recognising their position. They recognise that they're not to be involved with certain people.

They recognise that they're not to have certain participation with these people.

But the third thing in this point is they're to realise the promises of God. If we needed any incentive to separation from the world and not being unequally yoked, it is the promises that God has given us.

[10 : 52] And there they are. He says, for God said, at the end of verse 16, well, even before that, what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of God. Isn't that a wonderful thought?

There is the collective sense where the church as a body has the dwelling of God as a reality. God is in the midst of his church.

That's a wonderful thought. But more than that, on a personal level, you and I, as Christians, are also the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Isn't that a thought? That the Spirit of God actually dwells in you. What a reason, what a motive, to spur us on to having that separation from the world around us.

God has also promised, I will make my dwelling among them. I will walk among them. I will be their God. They shall be my people. Isn't that not what you want in your Christian life?

[12 : 01] Not what I want in my Christian life. The presence of God. That awareness of his nearness. There's nothing like it. You know what it is when you come to church, when you come to your Bible at home, and when you pray and seek God, and you can realize the presence of God.

You can be aware that he is in the midst. There's nothing like it. It's possible for us to forfeit that through compromise, by going against what we're told in these words.

We can lose the blessing because the Lord say, I will be dwelling among them. I'll walk among them. I'll be their God. They'll be my people. Therefore, notice, in light of what God is promising, he says, go out from their midst.

Be separate. There's a reason. If you want me to be present, if you want me to be with you, if you want me to be your father and you to be my children, for me to be your God and you to be my people, go out from them.

Make the difference between yourself and themselves and make sure that there is no compromise. Touching the one clean thing, I will welcome you.

[13 : 11] Well, there he's talking about recognizing our position. You know, there are some things, maybe everything that we're taught in the Bible, some of the greatest truths that we've ever encountered in our whole life and fail to understand, but more than failing to understand, we maybe fail to appreciate them.

If we're honest, we can maybe take them for granted. Almost feel we have a right to the blessing of the Lord. Well, this blessing is conditional.

I think that's what the apostle is saying. And these Corinthians were far from a separate people. Theologically, morally, culturally, they were blending with the environment around them.

The problem was they had been immersed in their unconverted days in that environment, that it was very hard for them, maybe, as young Christians, to realize there are certain things they cannot, as Christians, be involved in.

Not only young Christians, the same can be through for older Christians. The apostle had to make the line very clear to them. The principles are there. We take them to ourselves.

[14 : 21] Notice, secondly, the reason for this letter. Paul is referring repeatedly in this chapter to a letter that he wrote them.

It was a particular situation. There's debate about which situation exactly it was that he's addressing. We don't need to go into that just now, but only to say, in passing, that it was very serious.

And Paul was the kind of person who wouldn't, because he couldn't, just let it pass. He's not the kind of man who would just sweep it under the carpet and leave it, hide it, conceal it from sight, and just hope it doesn't raise its ugly head.

He's someone who would highlight and eradicate the problem. And that's what he did. But what the apostle, taking it all together, you might want to do a study yourself and search out the references to this, what I'm going to say.

I don't want to try, it'll take maybe time to try and prove it, but just to refer that the apostle wrote to the Corinthians, Corinthians, I believe, a letter that isn't in the Bible, isn't, there aren't three letters to the Corinthians.

[15 : 24] And it seems that he wrote one initial letter that isn't recorded, it wasn't inspired. That might sound quite surprising to you, but it shouldn't. He refers in his first epistle to a letter he wrote, and here, in general, to a letter he wrote.

It seems he wrote an initial letter to Corinth, the Corinthians sent a reply to him, that he then addresses in response in 1 Corinthians. And then, having sent Titus to go to them, Titus comes back, and then Paul, in response, writes 2 Corinthians.

But notice as he's writing this letter, he's bearing his heart to them. Because in writing to them, he's emphasizing the fact that he didn't write a nice letter.

Well, what does that mean? He wrote a letter that they wouldn't want to read. It wasn't nice in that sense, but it was nice in another sense.

Paul was faithful to them. He realized what was going on, he realized what had to happen, so he did it. In that sense, it was nice. You know what it's like. You go to a doctor. You're not feeling too good.

[16 : 37] He tells you, maybe, you're fine when you're not, and you know you're not. You maybe get a second opinion and you realize that your own feelings and thoughts were right.

What do you think about the first doctor? He's very unprofessional. He lacks dedication. He lacks commitment. He lacks patience. Maybe you've been going back many times and you've got the same response.

There's nothing wrong with you. It's in your head. Then you realize that he was wrong. Paul was someone like that who would just tell you straight. and in uncouched terms.

When he wrote this letter he says he felt a bit of regret. Now this is amazing. Then in verse 8 you find the human element. You know we think of the inspiration of the Bible how God breathed out his word and gave it to us through men.

Through their own thoughts. Through their own personality styles. They're stamped on the right things. Paul himself says notice in verse 8 for even if I made you grieve with my letter I do not regret it though I did regret it.

[17 : 45] God gave him a message. We believe that. He was writing with the authority as an apostle. But then you know what it's like you send an email or a letter and you think I shouldn't have done that.

You do something that's right and maybe you think should I have said it that way? Should I have done it that way? Possibly he's referring to the letter that isn't included in the Corinthian correspondence.

Either way he's saying he wrote a letter that grieved them. Now when we come to church if we're honest we often maybe more often than not want to be comforted.

We want to be encouraged. We want to be built up. We want to be joyful. We want to be going away from God's house with our hearts filled with gladness for all that he's done.

Sometimes however what we need is rebuke. Sometimes what we need is a stern word from God. What a blessing that is. I wonder if the Lord were here tonight in a very special way and we just look into each one of our hearts and point out certain things how would we feel?

[18 : 58] Maybe you know already maybe I know already certain things he is looking at. And when he points them out it's like pressing a raw nerve. It's uncomfortable.

We don't like it. But we need it. The apostle wasn't sitting in an armchair when he wrote this epistle or dictated it or whatever way it was he committed it to writing.

He was someone who was wrestling with afflictions and trials. He was depressed at times. He was in the depths. Even verse 5 when we came into Macedonia our bodies had no rest. We were afflicted at every turn fighting out without and fear within.

You know he's writing to these Corinthians as he did and he's saying look I'm not writing as someone who is unfeeling disconnected thoughtless careless or even indifferent.

He's saying he's gone through the mill for the gospel and for them and he wants them to know that this isn't anything that he takes lightly at all.

[20 : 04] And he brings it there before them but God verse 6 who comforts the downcast comforted us by the coming of Titus and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you as he told us of your longing your mourning your zeal for me so that I rejoiced still more.

Now that's really the point as we look briefly in conclusion at repentance. The recognition of their position as Christians was the motive for their separation from the world.

The reason for the letter was to correct what was wrong. Point out address challenge these Corinthian Christians to fix what was wrong. The last thing is Paul's definition of their repentance. The reason he gives for his gladness. He's happy. He's happy that Titus has come back. and told them that they've responded positively to his letter.

You notice he speaks there about verse 9 as it is I rejoice not because you were grieved but because you were grieved into repenting.

[21 : 16] The way down is the way up very often in the Christian life. And the way to coming back into fellowship with God is through grief and through repentance.

You need to read only Psalm 51 some of the Psalms of David and it's clearly pointed out what exactly he felt going through the mill in coming back to the Lord in repentance.

It's no comfortable thing but when the Lord points it out to us the question tonight we have is are we repenting of our sins? As we come to communion Thursdays usually set apart to think of that.

Are we repenting of our sins? Well the Apostle says there's two different kinds of grieving over sin. One leads to death and one leads to salvation.

The one that leads to death he says is worldly grief. Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret whereas worldly grief produces death.

[22 : 28] What is this worldly grief? Well first thing we can say about it it is inactive. It doesn't move the person a single bit. By moving I mean it doesn't change their life really it doesn't change their conduct in any determined and persistent and constant kind of way it's temporary.

So long as the feeling of grief is there the reformation will be present too. Think of King Saul. Repeatedly he sought he confessed his sin.

Given occasions in pursuing David and being found out to be wrong David to be right he was convinced and convicted of it and asked David for forgiveness and he sought to confess his sin and when you read the words it seems well this is a genuine confession of sin he's really sorry for what he's done but it's a self-centered sorrow it's a self-centered grief I've been caught I'm humiliated I can't deny it or cover my tracks and I'm ashamed of the fact that people now know what I've done but it goes no further it can lead to bitterness you remember Judas Iscariot when he realized what he'd done in betraying Christ he couldn't cope with it he had sorrow but it wasn't a godly sorrow the godly grief that leads to true repentance is active it is a thing that moves us turns us around and changes the course of our lives godward the reason for our grief and sorrow with godly grief and real repentance is not so much me but God that I've wronged

God that I have grieved God that I have offended God that it's against him alone that I've done this though it involves other people maybe maybe not maybe it's personal secret hidden but still it's the fact that it is against God that we've sinned that is what gets us that is what grieves us that is what puts us in the depths against you only have I sinned that is like David King Saul had this worldly grief inactive selfish sorrow David had this active godward sorrow notice how Paul explains it we maybe wonder tonight what is repentance if I'm meant to think about repenting tonight how do I know what does it look like well it's not just confession it will involve conversion not initial conversion but repeated conversion turning again and again and again notice how the apostle speaks of it verse 11 for see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you it doesn't just affect the feelings it affects the understanding and it affects the will that part about me that determines the

course of my life repentance gets me there it changes me there because god is active in that repentance the eagerness to do what is right can you follow this one tonight when you've when you're convinced of your sin before god maybe today if you're in that position have you got have i got this reflex reaction in confessing your sin that we have an earnestness about us to do what is right and not to do what is wrong we will fail again we will fail maybe in the same area maybe repeatedly but we have a resolve an earnestness a determination never to do that again see he says what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you and also what eagerness to clear yourselves what indignation what's he talking about well surely it's indignation it's anger with self being angry with ourselves for having done what we've done it's not that we've been caught it's not that we've failed it's not that we've slipped up in one sense but it has this god word element always it has to and when you think of all the blessings he's given all the promises he has written and all the sin we commit it should make us indignant with ourselves

Joseph was tempted he was cornered by Potiphar's wife every argument under the sun was brought before him husbands away doors are shut no one will ever find out he got up and ran how can I do this and sin against God that was his resolve when we sin without that resolve we should be indignant with ourselves that that is how we conducted ourselves God will forgive me and there will be this voice whispering and whispering he forgave you last time you got peace you were in fellowship with him once again doesn't matter the first time was difficult the second time will be easier the third time fourth time you won't maybe be bothered by it at all nor would I to be indignant but also he says not only what eagerness what indignation but he says what fear this is in verse 11 middle of verse 11 this is the outcome this is the evidence of their repentance their eagerness their indignation and their fear the element of fear in the

[28 : 37] Christian life will keep us from doing much wrong fear not in the sense of terror not in the sense of dread not in the sense of wanting to run away but fear in the sense of recognizing the majesty of our God that in itself if we once got a glimpse in our mind's eye of the glory of God and what it means to sin against that God that God who dwells in us by his own promise that God who is holy indescribably holy the fear we should have notice how he begins chapter 7 since we have these promises beloved let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit everything on the inside everything on the outside that defiles us as the temple of God bring holiness to completion in the fear of God God fearing people

God is absolutely other transcendent we're told he is beyond us beyond our highest understanding but in himself he is beyond everything he has created and everything that is tainted or contaminated with sin the question we have the fear of the Lord the Proverbs tell us is to hate evil the fear of the Lord that controlling dynamic in our mind that awareness inside us that God is who he is he's not in our image he's not as we want him to be but if we see God in his sheer Godness as revealed in the Bible we'll be afraid of him we'll have that reverent respect for him we won't want to offend him not as our judge but as our father who is so glorious Paul is saying we can see that you have this fear that's showing that you have repented but he also says you have longing they've lost something they've lost fellowship with

God I think that's on the surface they've lost fellowship with each other they've lost fellowship with Paul the Corinthian church was disintegrating it was fragmenting through their own sin and they seem to have a longing for everything to be the way it should be do you have that tonight if we know that is wrong if we can pinpoint wrong do we find ourselves longing for it to be right longing for it to be perfect they had zeal they weren't half-hearted or cool they were animated they were determined their hearts were in it but as well the last thing you notice there he says middle of verse 11 what punishment what I think that is saying is that the Corinthian church dealt with all the problems that were outstanding for long enough it seems they were just leaving things to roll on in their own lives in the lives of others

Paul pointed out things that had to be fixed he couldn't maybe believe in some ways that Christians particularly and you can understand if they were converted under his ministry seeing these people going away into their own their old habits and their old places participating in idol worship in the temples and all that went along with that siding with people who were coming along and preaching to them and saying don't listen to this Paul he's not a real apostle anyway you know as you go further on in this epistle he speaks of his experience of the third heavens and he's he's he's prized into that corner by the people who are discrediting him and Paul is wanting them to fix all of this whoever is causing the problems whatever sin is there and present get rid of it he's saying warning

[41 : 19] I shall watch He has gone. I cried out to Him when my heart His praise was on my tongue.

If I had yet any sin, the Lord would know not care.

But surely when I pray to Him, I shall worship my word.

Whatever God be raised, who hears me from above, He has not turned away, my prayer, or yet love me, His love.

Let's conclude. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.