

The Fruit of True Repentance

D Reeve - 9/20

Readings – 2 Corinthians 7

Open

We **occasionally** carry over from one chapter to another in our Bible studies because they obviously follow logically. However, we **generally** restrict ourselves to one chapter or a portion within a chapter. There were no chapters and verses in the original and these divisions can be a very real problem. Of course, the divisions are helpful in finding specific Scriptures, for memorizing and for comparisons with linked passages etc. **But**, be careful that you are not trapped into thinking (because of habit) that the divisions are inspired or even (dare I say it) important in understanding the Word of God.

The passage under consideration today is very typical of **natural and God breathed, logical follow on** and the divisions can be a real stumbling block if they pressure us into starting and stopping at the beginning and ending of the chapters.

In fact, to appreciate 2 Cor 7, you really need to read the whole of 1 Cor and 2 Cor

A Brief Summary

In 1 Cor, Paul rebuked the believers strongly for many problems and sinful behaviours that are still sadly occurring in many churches today: -

- * Ch1 - **Divisions** - 1:-11-17 - some claimed to be following Paul, some Apollos, some Peter and some Christ. **Christ is not divided** but too many believers today follow their so-called Christian heroes or leaders - all doomed to utter failure!
- * Ch 1 - **Earthly wisdom** - 1:-18-31 - God chooses 'not many mighty, not many noble' but the 'foolish and weak and base and despised' (v26-28)
- * Ch 2 - **Intellectual preachers** - rather than Spirit led power
- * Ch 3 - **Carnality** - 'Let no man glory in men' v21
- * Ch 5 - **Gross immorality** - 'Purge out the old leaven' v7. Must have been 'rock bottom' for a church experience!
- * Ch 6 - **Legal challenges and Impurity**
- * Ch 8 - (also Ch 10) - **Eating meat offered to idols**

* Ch 11 - **Gluttony and drunkenness** at the Lord's Table plus women acting out of place and uncovered.

* Chs 12,13,14 - **Misuse of God's gifts - used in competition as well**

There is much more but these examples will give you the general picture. The church at Corinth was not a pretty picture at all.

2 Cor 7

In 2 Cor, Paul spends a lot of time in justifying his position - explaining why he wrote as he did in 1 Cor - explaining his own ministry and authority in great detail Then in Ch 7, he pleads with the believers - 'Receive us; we have wronged or defrauded no man' v2. Then he reveals his heart in v 3 - 'You are in our hearts to die and live with you.'

7:-4 - Amazing statement - 'Great is my boldness of speech to you; great is my **glorying of you**: I am filled with comfort, I am exceedingly joyful etc.' Paul - why are you saying this? You have sent a rebuking letter (No 1) and now you have justified your position and authority in this letter (No 2) Chs 1-6 - so why the change in heart? Why are you glorying in these wayward Corinthian believers?

Why indeed? v5-16 - Now he gives us the reason:

v 5 **For (because)** - I had real trouble in Macedonia **but** (v6) Titus came (from Corinth) and (v7) he was **comforted in you** - he told us of **your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind towards me - 4 good things about you** (the former wayward Corinthians) - **so I rejoiced** - that's why - my 1st letter did its job! V 8-10 - Now I rejoice - not because I made you sorry (we must not waste time trying to make others sorry - that's God's business through His Holy Spirit) **but because your sorrow led to repentance**. You were made sorry in a Godly way **for Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation!** - delivers you from evil and never brings regret compared to worldly sorrow that just brings death. So, here is the answer - **From** - divisions, earthly wisdom, intellectual pride, carnality, immorality, poor judgment, idolatry, gluttony, drunkenness, gifts misuse etc. **all changed to →** comforting, earnest desiring, mourning, fervent mind (towards Paul), Godly sorrow, **true repentance**, deliverance.

Oh that believers and Christian churches today would hear the sharp rebuke from the Lord - whatever the cause and reason - and have Godly sorrow and repentance!! Think about the Spirit's word to the Laodicea (Rev 3:-14-22) and hear Him knocking - be zealous therefore and **repent** (v19).

Was it True Repentance?

Look at 7:-11 - the results; the changes - now they are - eager, earnestly careful, have cleared themselves, have indignation and fear of sin, fearful, zealous etc. Oh what a change that has resulted from **true repentance!** - Summed up at the end of v 11 - **In all things, you have proved yourselves to be clear (guiltless).** No wonder Paul was rejoicing. This theme continues to v16. **These are the fruits of true repentance** - actions speak louder than words. Just saying sorry is far from enough. How often do we here of (or have personal experience of) Christians saying sorry for something and then the 'not so penitent' walks away and continues to do exactly the same thing again or even worse. Accepting the Gospel is a classic Biblical example of this - without **true repentance**, nobody can be saved from sin. I am sure that we all agree. God forgives and forgets (our sin) **if we truly repent** and that means hating the sin and turning away from it. God also **forgives** the Christian's sin **if we confess (repent)** 1 John 1:-9. **Godly sorrow and true repentance** are always pre-requisites for God's answers and blessings. Too much is said about forgiving everyone full stop without the very necessary act of **true repentance**. One of my sons reminded me of this recently by saying that God will not forgive the unbelievers on judgment day - sadly they will end up in Hell. God only forgives those who repent and we should do likewise. The potential for forgiveness must always be present but it cannot be enacted without repentance. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance 2 Pet 3:-9. Then, remember the disciples asking the Lord - and how many times should we forgive - up to 70 x 7 - hard to imagine anyone being **truly repentant** that many times! There are the rare exceptions like Stephen and the Lord who asked God to forgive those murdering them in innocence but only for that specific sin. Did God really forgive them?? (He may have said No - like He did to Jesus when He pleaded that the Father might remove the cup [Calvary] from Him - 'not My will but Thine be done')

Anyway, in the case of the Corinthian church, they were **truly repentant** and proved it by showing the **Results of True Repentance!**

Further Proof of True Repentance

Paul continues in Ch 8 - 'Moreover' (further), I want to tell you about (give you an example from) the blessings in the Macedonian church. Even in great affliction and poverty, they had great joy and this prompted them to give beyond their means (like the Widow's mite) - they first gave themselves to the Lord, then to us and to the ministering of the saints - great grace - voluntary - not via the Law. See v7 - Paul brings a further challenge to the Corinthians then and to us now. Therefore - as you excel in faith and zeal and love (as shown in Ch 7 as the result of your **godly sorrow and repentance**), now (says Paul) you should **abound in the grace of giving** (proof of the sincerity of your love). He then goes further and uses the greatest example of all - the Lord Jesus, who, was rich, yet for us He became poor so we might be rich. **How can they/we resist this challenge from the Lord Himself?**

Note well v11,12 - First comes a willingness, then the performance - not according to what we do not have but according to what we do have - then the blessing comes.

You should read the rest of the Book, forgetting the Chapters and verses divisions.

Challenge

Ask yourself - what am I and/or my church like compared to believers at Corinth in Paul's first letter? How do we rate? Not as bad as them surely! Try and make a list of the short comings - honestly!

Then hear the Lord, via Paul, **rebuke us and challenge us** - not easy and it will probably hurt deeply. Then, we should proceed to the **Godly sorrow and true repentance** and show the results of them in the changes required and giving (first ourselves) then our offering (service) to the Lord and His people.