

7:2-7

4 I am filled with comfort...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. Here, we see the power of encouragement. Please see that the Corinthian church's desire to be a forgiving church was a particular encouragement to the apostle. Have you considered that this is why some choose not to forgive? Have you seen that the reason we don't forgive is because it causes the other party to carry a heavy, heavy weight within them?

7:8-11

7 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. 9 Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. It is interesting to note that **sorrow** and **repentance** are not the same. May pastors be quick to remember a good warning on self-preach from Mr Baxter:

The sorrow of Repentance may be without the change of heart and life; because a passion may be easier wrought than a true Conversion; but the change cannot go without some good measure of the sorrow. Indeed, we may justly here begin our confessions: it is too common with us to expect that from our people, which we do little or nothing in ourselves. What pains take we to humble them, while ourselves are unhumbled! How hard do we press them by all our expostulations, convictions, and aggravations, to wring out of them a few penitent tears, (and all too little,) when our own eyes are dry, and our hearts are little affected with remorse, and we give them an example of hardheartedness, while we are endeavouring by our words to mollify and melt them.¹

For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. 10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, Again, when we see the switching back and forth between salvation wrought by God at Calvary (5:18) and wrought by God and the preacher at the moment of faith to be experienced thereafter in the life of the Christian (5:20-6:2), one has to wonder if he is referencing salvation as something they should fear losing. I hesitate to answer on the grounds that it may cost me readers, but in view of 2 Corinthians 11:1-15, does it not appear that if they leave Paul they leave his message? Is not his message the Gospel? Is not the Gospel the message that saves when one continues to believe in it (1 Corinthians 15:1-2)? Is not this context one of following Paul's leadership in the application of forgiveness?

The most frightening thing, then, is that these folks wanted to exercise church discipline because of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 5:7 compared with 2 Corinthians 2:7 does lead us to believe that they did, in fact, separate from this man) and then withhold forgiveness by some other standard. **not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.**

We would think that those who were Christians would already have the assurance of salvation.¹⁰²⁸ But Paul's worries about the Corinthians (see 5:20; 6:1, 14-7:1) are evident. Later in the letter, he will express his fear that not all will have repented of the "impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged" (12:21)²

7:11-12

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. Have you noticed what a clean conscience can do? Have you noticed that when you feel lighter through repentance and reconciliation, you take

¹ Richard Baxter and William Orme, *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter*, vol. 14 (London: James Duncan, 1830), 133.

¹⁰²⁸ *T. Gad* 5:7 is apropos: "For according to God's truth, repentance destroys disobedience, puts darkness to flight, illumines the vision, furnishes knowledge of the soul, and guides the deliberative power to salvation."

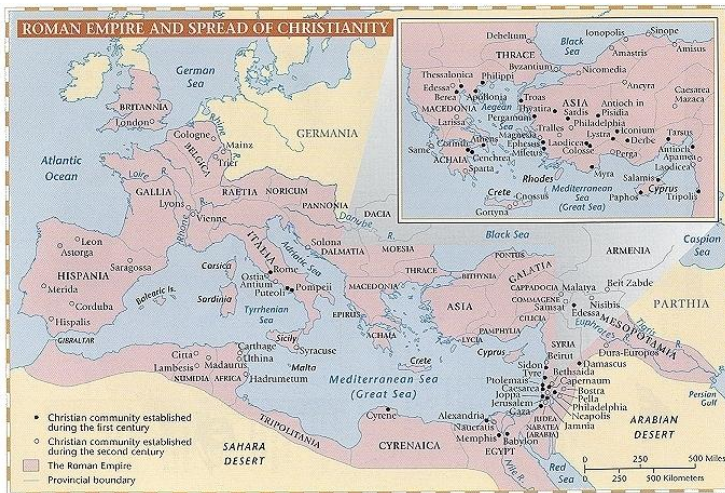
² David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, vol. 29, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 356.

a vengeance on your “old self?” That is the result of godly sorrow: “repentance.” Repentance is described in verse 11 as “standing on God’s team against yourself.” Repent of strange ideologies and anti-holinesses that creep up and you speak against them (10:4-5), and you “stand on God’s team against the mediocre standards of so-called “good.”

“When a man is conformed to the mind of God, or is troubled by a regard to God on account of his sins, he will turn from those sins with all his heart; and he will become totally opposed to all that once was pleasant or seemed indifferent to him (μετάνοια).”³

The power of a moving, clean conscience will make you do things that the “fear of God” (5:11) and the “love of God” (5:14) prod you to do. Behold, the power of a clean conscience. What have you stood against recently? If nothing, you’ve repented of nothing. You’ve changed your mind about nothing.

One more thing, church, this was a collective thing. Paul is talking to a church. They took action. Churches take collective action through voting membership. How else would Titus have had the reason to tell Paul that the church had taken action? We can’t simply say that the “elders did it on behalf of the people like a democratic republic,” or else would they have enforced their non-voting or non-present members at the individual level? If it were not the choice of the individual, this would have been an obligatory, authoritarian chore indeed.



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. Here, we see the gravity of dissension. Imagine sending somebody such a distance away. Titus goes 250 miles away—500 away from where Paul intends to minister (Troas; 2:12), and it is important enough to be separated in that ancient world from a dear friend for the sake of making sure there is no division in the body that is outside of the scope of Gospel-esque forgiveness. This is the value of one believer. **I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong,**

However, this is more to show us the value of the church. **nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you** Great effort and mental energy was expended on this clarity in the church. A man like me wonders how many pastors would be bored if they were concerned helping their churches perfect (1) accountability, as in 1 Corinthians; and (2) forgiveness, as in here.

7:13-16

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...15 And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. Can we just remind ourselves that this is Titus preaching the message of the Apostles? Can we just remind ourselves that the church shared in the “Apostles’ Doctrine?” May I furthermore remind us that when somebody preaches the words of the apostles as Titus did here, it emphasizes not only the strategy of preaching—but, and we say this carefully—the timeliness of preaching (that the message of the apostles is both planned and momentarily necessary). Imagine the effectiveness of one man who brings the message to a people; doing the will of God; allowing Himself to be carried by the will of God, and finding refreshment from the people of God as in verse 13.

³ John Peter Lange et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: 2 Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 129.