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2 Corinthians

For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears.

2 Corinthians 7:5

As you read this letter from Paul, there is a journey that he refers to and then digresses from to insert key theology and personal notes. He noted this first in Chapter 1 -

"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life." 2 Corinthians 1:8

After this, he diverted until Chapter 2 -

"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, ¹³ I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia." 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13

He now resumes this journey here with the words, "For indeed, when we came to Macedonia..." He has a story to tell, but he also has doctrine to relay and heartfelt notes of petition and encouragement to fill in as he does. There in Macedonia, he says that "our bodies had no rest, but were troubled on every side." He and his traveling companions were constantly harassed at every turn. And because of this, he says that, "Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears."

It needs to be remembered that italicized words are inserted for our clarity, but these words of Paul are more emphatic - "outside conflicts, inside fears." It is an explanation of "our bodies had no rest." They faced trouble on every side and they were fraught with turmoil in the very fiber of their being, fearing their safety as they traveled. Such was the life of an apostle. But the message of Christ impelled them forward.

Life application: Paul explains the plight of an apostle in today's verses. In the verses to come, he will show that the Lord was with them and directing them. Let us each be confident that the Lord is also with us in our own trials. He has a plan for us and he is working it out in a marvelous way, even though it may not seem like it at times. Be confident that it is.

Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 2 Corinthians 7:6

There is an emphasis which is unfortunately lacking in many English translations in this verse. God is put in an emphatic position at the end of the verse in the Greek - "The Comforter of the humble comforted us, even God" (Pulpit Commentary). Paul is taking what occurred in his own experience and he is assigning it, as it were, to being an attribute of God. It would be like someone finding a large nugget of gold on the side of the road and exclaiming, "The Giver of grace has lavished His grace upon us, even God!"

Paul's acknowledgment of God's comfort upon the downcast is uttered because of "the coming of Titus." In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul had noted that his spirit lacked any rest because of not finding Titus -

"I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia." 2 Corinthians 2:13

Now, five chapters later, he reintroduces the narrative to explain to the Corinthians the immense comfort he found at the arrival of Titus. The reason for it will be explained in the verses ahead, but it centers on the message he brought concerning those in Corinth. Paul has skillfully and masterfully organized this letter in a way which would bring a slowly-emerging display of his personal feelings for the Corinthians, and his desire for them to be in a like-minded harmony, as a father to a son.

Life application: When you are downcast, where is it that you will turn? If the Bible reveals the heart of God for His children, then turn there. For times of true disheartenment, try the 42nd Psalm.

...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. 2 Corinthians 7:7

Paul just noted that he and those with him were comforted in the coming of Titus. Now building on that, he says that it was "not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you." They were certainly relieved to finally meet up with Titus, but when they met up, great news about the status of Corinth came with him. The words indicate that when Titus was there, he was greatly encouraged over the effect that Paul's words from his previous epistle had brought out in them.

For Paul and those with him, the words relayed by Titus "told us of your earnest desire." This would be referring to the desire for them to make the changes necessary to be right with the Lord and working together as a harmonious congregation. "Your mourning" indicates that the desired change was sincere. The word Paul uses for "mourning" is *odurmos*. It is found only here and in Matthew 2:18 and it indicates an actual audible lamentation. They literally broke down and wept at how their behavior had been the source of Paul's needed letter of discipline.

From there he notes "your zeal for me." The words were taken as they should have been. Instead of a commanding bully, he had written in fatherly tenderness. It was taken in that context and the zeal for those in Corinth to come in line with his fatherly advice was well received. In the hearing of all of this good news, he "rejoiced even more." His happiness at the coming of Titus was only bolstered by the news he brought!

Life application: The Bible says that the feet of those who bring good news are beautiful. Let us keep our feet looking as lovely as possible at all times!

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.

2 Corinthians 7:8

Paul now refers to the previous letter that he sent to them by saying, "For even if I made you sorry with my letter..." The KJV erringly states "with a letter." There is an article in front of "letter" and therefore either "the letter" or "my letter" is appropriate here. He isn't referring to any letter, but to the specific letter which brought about their sadness.

In having sent it, sorrow came upon the recipients. Despite this, Paul could not feel regret over the sternness of the words he used. However, he does qualify his thought by noting that "I did regret it." At first, he realized that his words had been taken as a point of grief and anxiety by the Corinthians and he felt a bit remorseful about his comments. But when he saw the temporary nature of their remorse and the quick turning about in their conduct, he realized that no true regret was necessary.

This is explained clearly in his words, "For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while." Paul had no intention of bringing permanent unhappiness to the Corinthians. Instead, he intended to bring about true correction leading to restoration. When it became evident that this had happened, instead of regret, he certainly felt relief.

Life application: Sometimes a stern approach is necessary to wake someone, or even a group of people, up from their slumber. In many parts of the Bible, this is exactly what the Lord does for His people. He sends them sternness in order for them to turn back to Him. When the intended correction is realized, there can only be joy all around.

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. 2 Corinthians 7:9

Paul now introduces repentance of the Corinthians into his thoughts. Unfortunately, the KJV makes the entire thought convoluted by using the term "repent" in both the previous verse and this one -

"For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

⁹ Now 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."

However, two different words are used in verses 8 and 9. The "repent" of verse 8, is more appropriately "regret." Now in verse 9, it is correctly rendered "repentance." This might seem like hair-splitting, but Paul is making a point concerning emotions and doctrine which needs to be carefully worded.

He begins with the thought, "Now I rejoice." His heart has been made to flow with joy because of the situation at hand. The letter had made the Corinthians become sorrowful and to regret their actions. Now, to ensure that they understand that he wasn't happy about their sorrow, but rather the regret which the sorrow led to, he adds in, "...not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to

repentance." In regretting their actions, they had in turn repented of them." This is the intent of discipline and words of correction, and in this case it has worked.

To show this, he says, "For you were made sorry in a godly manner." There are different reasons for sorrow. In the case of what has occurred, their sorrow is based on a right response to proper chastisement. All we need to do is think of our own children. If we punish them for stealing, they will be sorrowful. If they repent of their stealing and steal no longer, then they have united their regret with true repentance. This is the same line of thought that Paul conveys here. The parents aren't happy about their child's sorrow, but they are happy about what the sorrow has led to.

Paul finishes this thought with, "... that you might suffer loss from us in nothing." What he is saying is that no true harm came to the Corinthians by Paul's letter of correction. Rather than loss, it is the intent of him and the other apostles that they receive gain, not suffer loss. When correction is properly acted upon, then gain is the result. Such is the case now with the Corinthians.

Life application: It can be difficult to punish those around us that we love. But it is at times necessary. Children need right direction and even stern correction to keep them from straying into even worse situations. Those in the church will likewise need correction when they stray from what is acceptable to the Lord as is revealed in His word. When a pastor or group of church members has determined correction is necessary, be ready to evaluate the situation and support the decision if it is truly in line with precepts laid out in the Bible.

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

Many English translations deviate from the Greek in the structure of this verse. There is no adverb in it. Using the word "godly" causes the verse to be cumbersome and unnatural. The New Living Translation makes it much easier to understand -

"For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There's no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death."

The "godly sorrow" then that Paul is speaking of is a sorrow that explains verses 8 and 9. Paul made them sorry with his letter, but there was a good reason for it. When they regretted of their ways and then repented, the purpose was realized. This is exactly what Paul is now explaining to them. Through the sorrow that God would want in them, they repented of their actions. It is a repentance that would not be regretted because it was in line with what God intended for them in the first place.

In a non-believer, such sorrow will lead towards salvation. In a believer, it will lead towards restoration and renewed fraternity between God and His wayward child. For the most part, Paul was writing his letter to saved believers at Corinth, but how could a non-believer come to know Christ with no correct example to follow? Therefore, this "salvation" isn't speaking of those who were already saved, but of those who still needed to be saved. Those who repent will not regret of their repentance because it will lead to salvation.

It must be remembered though that salvation is based on faith in what Christ did, not on works. One cannot be saved by merely repenting from sin. If a drunk gives up drinking and yet has no faith in Christ, he will never be saved. We cannot use this verse as a verse which says "repentance leads to salvation" in and of itself. Instead it is the grace of Christ which saves. The repentance of a sin may lead to faith in Him, or it may not. Either way, it is only by grace through faith that one is saved.

On the other hand, there is a sorrow of the world that he also writes about. There are many types of sorrows in the natural world. If we are sorry over losing a bank account full of money, that doesn't lead us to God. Instead, it just leads us to frustration and bitterness. If we are sorry over losing our girlfriend, that hasn't helped us in our spiritual life at all. Instead, it is simply a sorrow which is natural and of this world.

Or let's go back and revisit the drunk from the previous paragraph. If he is sorry for being a drunk because it led him to lose his job, he may give up drinking and get his job back. In this, he may become proud and say, "Look at what I have done." This sorrow then only produced death in him. Ultimately, through such sorrow there can only be regret. In the end, it produces nothing concerning salvation, but it continues to produce death in the unbeliever.

Life application: Paul's words concerning the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience are directed towards things which are contrary to His holy character and which separate us from Him. And so we can see that not all sorrow is bad. Those who refuse to show sorrow over their sin show that they have no care or regard for their Creator. Only when we have sorrow for our actions can we turn from them and be saved from them.

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. 2 Corinthians 7:11

Paul's words in this verse show the fulfillment of the words of the previous verse in the believers at Corinth. That verse said, "For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted..." And sure enough, Paul confirms that this has been evidenced in them as seen in the words, "For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner."

After this introductory statement, he lists the things which he had heard about from Titus concerning them. He begins with, "What diligence it produced in you." The word he uses indicates speed or haste. They quickly made every effort to correct those things which were wrong and to restore the congregation to a doctrinally sound one.

"*What clearing of yourselves*" is the Greek word *apologia*. It is a logical defense of the actions they have taken. The word is used particularly in a court of law when

clearing oneself of charges. In the case of the Corinthians, they took necessary action and have made their defense based on the actions they took.

"*What indignation*" uses a word, *aganaktésis*, which is found only here in the NT. The indignation certainly wasn't against Paul or his words of correction, and they were probably not against the offender directly either. Rather, based on Paul's words, their indignation arose against the sin which existed. Once it was brought to their eyes, they realized the seriousness of it.

"*What fear*" wouldn't be connected to condemnation. Paul writes elsewhere that there is now no condemnation for the believer in Christ. However, for the sake of the church, there was fear. It is what any congregation should feel as they see sin entering the body. As Paul says in Galatians 5:9, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." In the book of Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus speaks of the consequences of a church when it departs from sound doctrine. The congregation in Corinth feared and so they made the necessary corrections.

"*What vehement desire*" indicates their desire to clear their name and to be shown in right standing before the Lord and in the eyes of their beloved Apostle Paul. He was as a father in the faith to them and his words touched at their very heart. Paul was their faithful friend and they worked towards receiving his approval of their correct doctrine.

"*What zeal*" must certainly be referring to their desire to honor the Lord and bring Him the glory he is due. With the sin which had infected their congregation, they realized this wasn't possible. And so they zealously worked to get the matter corrected.

"*What vindication!*" The KJV has the most unfortunate rendering here of, "What revenge!" This is either an anachronism, or it is simply a mistranslation. Revenge is not the idea here but rather exoneration. They had worked to be exonerated of the offense which existed in their congregation. Paul's words show that they had, in fact, accomplished this.

He sums up with the thought with, "In all *things* you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter." The Corinthians had worked diligently to clear their names individually and collectively so that they would be a doctrinally sound congregation, living in accord with the admonishments and exhortations of their beloved brother Paul. They did this because they knew that he carried with him the authority of their beloved Lord and Savior.

Life application: Jesus speaks strong words of warning to the seven churches that He addresses in Revelation. In those words of warning are the corrections they need in order to be in a right relationship with Him. Take time to read those seven letters and to see if your own congregation falls short in any precept mentioned there. If so, be sure to bring it to the attention of the elders or pastor. He loves us enough to warn us in advance of what is necessary to be in a right standing with Him. Let us love Him enough to be obedient to His words.

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. 2 Corinthians 7:12

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians contains references to a situation of sexual immorality which was so distasteful that it is "not even named among the Gentiles." In other words, it was something that even Gentiles would consider perverse. From his words to them in that chapter, he makes it clear that his main intent was to cure the entire congregation of reveling in what occurred. In verse 6, he said, "Your glorying *is* not good."

It was an overall rebuke to the church. With that in mind, he begins with, "Therefore..." He is referring to the entire chapter so far as a basis for his words now. This is true even from verse 1 which said, "...let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

For the perfecting of such holiness, along with everything else he has spoken of here, he says, "...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." He is clear that the letter wasn't meant as a rant against the offender or a defense for the offended (although these issues would be handled properly if the congregation took the necessary action he gave). Rather, the overall intent of his words was "that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you."

His concern was for the overall congregation and His care of them in the sight of God. Going back and reading 1 Corinthians 5, this is wholly evident. For Him to say to them "that a little leaven leavens the whole lump" implies that he was concerned about the entire lump of dough, not just one piece of bread broken off from the lump. Paul's care for the entire body is what was evident, and so this is what he is explaining to them now.

Life application: Misunderstandings arise because people often don't take the time to thoroughly investigate a matter. When this happens, care needs to be taken in order to resolve the misunderstanding. Don't be over-excited when responding to others in matters of such difficulty. Instead, think through your response in the life of Christian fraternity.

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. 2 Corinthians 7:13

In the previous verse, Paul said that the intent of his first letter to the Corinthians was so that "care for you in the sight of God might appear to you." He had intended to demonstrate his care for them in order to give them soundness and comfort in their congregation. When Titus arrived, his words told them that the letter had its intended effect. Because of this, Paul was in turn comforted in the comfort they received.

Until hearing from Titus, he was certainly anxious about how the letter was received. The good news was that instead of a great battle of words beginning between the two parties, there was comfort. Further, Titus was so overjoyed at

how things turned out that Paul says, "...we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus."

The reason for this is that "his spirit has been refreshed by you all." The word for "has been refreshed" is in the perfect tense in the Greek. Thus some older translations miss the fullness of the effect it had on him when they translate it "was refreshed." Titus wasn't just comforted at the time of his visit, but he remained so even until his coming to Paul. There was a continuance in his state which then was transferred to Paul and his associates.

Paul and everyone with him were overjoyed because things had worked out in a positive light. His words to them now are given to show that he was convinced that there was peace on all sides and that no harm had come to their relationship.

Life application: Written letters and emails can often be misinterpreted because emotions do not carry through these mediums. When there is any chance of such misperceptions, either extra wording or even a follow-up telephone call may be needed to ensure that things are taken in the proper light. Words can truly hurt, so be attentive to sentence structure and the specific words that you use in your communications.

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.

2 Corinthians 7:14

From this verse, it is apparent that Paul had boasted in advance that the Corinthians would be receptive to his letter and that things would turn out well in the end. It gives the impression that Titus may have been reticent to be a messenger heading into the lion's den. But Paul reassured him that all would be fine, boasting of the Corinthian's ability to correct that which was faulty and to work together in a harmonious manner in the process.

And in his boastings to Titus, the result was that "I am not ashamed." However, this rendering does not give the correct sense of the tense. It should rather say "I was not shamed" (Ellicott). In other words, the NKJV makes it sound like Paul is currently not ashamed of his boasting. That makes no real sense because the event is past. Rather, Paul was proven to be correct in his boasting and was not put to shame by having things turn out in a manner differently than he had told Titus they would.

As a confirmation of this, he continues with, "But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true." Paul's letter of correction was based on that which was truthful. The things that needed to be addressed were correct and right. When the Corinthians read the letter, they took it in that light and worked to correct their deficiencies as appropriate. And so, just as Paul's letter was in truth, Titus found out that the boasting Paul made concerning the Corinthians was also true. Paul was vindicated in both ways by the words he spoke.

The words of this verse take us all the way back to his words in Chapter 1. In verses 15-18, Paul defended his actions of not coming back to visit the Corinthians as he had originally planned. Because of this, there was the impression that he took their situation lightly. However, his words to them here show that this was not the case. The fact that he boasted to Titus, in advance, of how things would turn out showed that those in Corinth were not only right at the center of Paul's attention, but that they were there in a positive, not a negative way.

Life application: Paul looked at the Corinthian church with the very best intentions and in the belief that they would do the right thing. In this, he was vindicated in his boasting of them. Although we shouldn't let ourselves get duped by others, it is right that we give the benefit of the doubt whenever possible. When we do, especially when it is done in the presence of others who can substantiate later what we have said, we will then have a firm base on which to work with when dealing with those we have trusted. This can only increase the harmony between the two parties in future dealings.

And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. 2 Corinthians 7:15

Because of his visit to the Corinthians and their response to that visit, Titus' affections towards them grew in the most tender and heartfelt way. There was a true bond forged which included a deep and stirring attachment to them. The word for "affections" here is the same one that he used in verse 6:12 concerning the affections of the Corinthians towards Paul and his associates. Paul is showing that Titus was truly stirred in his love for them during their encounter.

After saying this, he gives the reason for it. Titus, probably sitting there with Paul and explaining all that occurred, surely related how he remembered "the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him." The term "fear and trembling" is a phrase Paul uses several times to convey the deepest sort of feelings. The exact same term is used by him in 1 Corinthians 2:3, Ephesians 6:5, and in Philippians 2:12. Instead of a belligerent attitude, Titus had been welcomed with respect, reverence, and a desire to correct the deficiencies that were highlighted by Paul.

Life application: When reading the Bible, certain phrases are often repeated. Paul's words "fear and trembling" in this verse can be more fully understood and appreciated by comparing the same phrase elsewhere. Don't be in a hurry to rush through your Bible studies, but instead take time to refer to other passages or phrases which can help you understand the meaning and intent of what is being relayed.

Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.
2 Corinthians 7:16

Paul sums up the thoughts of this chapter with words of relief. Titus had been sent, good things had been relayed back to Paul, and harmony was reestablished between the two parties. Because of this, he says that "I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything." The Greek here is literally telling us that Paul

intends, "...that in everything I am of good courage concerning (literally, 'in the case of') you,' as contrasted with my former doubts concerning you." (Jamieson-Faucett-Brown).

Paul doubted if those in Corinth would return to the proper and sound path, but his doubts were ended and he was heartily encouraged once again through the events described in this chapter. Now that this matter is behind him, he will continue on with the epistle in another direction.

Life application: Reading the words of Paul helps us to solidify how we are to conduct our lives in a proper New Testament context. His words are prescriptive and authoritative. But even in his writings are descriptive passages which show us how his theology was expressed towards others. These actually help us to get a better grounding in his prescriptive words as well. Be sure to study Paul for proper doctrine.