

2 Corinthians – Section 3

A Study in 2 Corinthians 10 weeks

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This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

2 Corinthians - 23 - In-Compatible

There are some things - that simply DO NOT go together - and I'm referring to things that are much more serious than certain colors we don't think go together well. A recent survey - things people think - are In-Compatible - there was a rather long list - many of the things would only be incompatible for a few people, - while others would enjoy the combinations - but here are a few I found interesting in the list:

flip-flops and snow
honesty and politics
ice cream & sardines
aluminum foil and microwaves
pride and humility
water and electricity
vanilla ice cream and onions

Those were from adults - Here's a couple of "In-Compatibles" - I picked from children:
holding a cat - and a dust-buster at the same time
cats - and baptizing

The concept of things being In-Compatible - is very relevant to us today - and it has a clear application to our Christian Living. I checked several dictionaries for definitions of "incompatible" - here is what I found:

1. people who have such different characters, beliefs, etc - that they cannot have a friendly relationship
2. things that cannot exist or be accepted together
3. things that are of different types and so cannot be used together
4. so differing as to be incapable of harmonious combination or coexistence;
5. incapable of being together without mutual reaction - or decomposition
6. Incapable of associating or blending because of disharmony, incongruity, or antagonism
7. impossible to be held simultaneously by one person

These definitions do appear to fit with the things on the previously mentioned lists. And they clearly describe the situation of Christians and Worldly living.

In-Compatibility is sometimes so much more serious - than things that are not "pretty together" - or things that don't "taste good together." Sometimes, In-Compatibility has deadly consequences. Some blood types are incompatible - when giving someone a blood transfusion - giving them the wrong type can end their life - even when people have the same "A" or "B" type of blood – there is a thing called the "rh factor" - that can make their blood incompatible.

My mother lost 4 babies by miscarriage - because her blood was “rh negative” - and the babies were “rh positive.” She lost 4 more as small children who were born with serious defects - attributed to her having “rh negative” blood.

Today we have medicine to protect the child and the mother - when it is discovered the mother and the baby have different “rh” factors - but not so long ago, - many babies - and some mothers died - as a result of having -"In-Compatible" blood factors.

2 Corinthians - 23 - In-Compatible

The British - United Kingdom has been trying for number of years - to have the Muslim culture, religion, and Muslim law - co-exist peacefully with British law. In recent years - the British Prime Minister announced that he had come to the conclusion - it is evident "state multiculturalism is a failure" - he went on to say - they need to take measures to ensure that they have one set of legal codes - that applies to everyone in the nation - and everyone who lives in that nation - abides by the same legal code.

I am aware - some ministers have probably "over-reacted" to the Muslim religion - but the reality is that Muslim Sharia Law - IS In-compatible - with Judaeo-Christian Law - such as we have in the United States of America.

Please don't run out and start saying Pastor Bob hates Muslims - or that Pastor Bob is prejudiced against Muslims. It has nothing to do with prejudice - it is simple truth. Let me share with you just one example - and there are many more.

According to Christian law - "all people" - regardless of gender - are granted inalienable rights by God - our sovereign Creator - of which one of the most important rights - is that of being protected from violence.

According to Sharia law - Surah 4:32 for those who need references - the father - or the husband - is the "governor" - or the "administrator" of the family - he is a little - sovereign lord over his domestic realm - he has the legal and religious right to employ any violence he desires or sees fit to use - in controlling his wife - and children.

It is "In-Compatible" - for people abiding by the United States of America Law - to try to live with people who are abiding by Sharia Law. According to the Judaeo-Christian based law of our country - we could not live peacefully with a neighbor who is beating his wife - or his children - we would have to testify against them in Our Court of Law.

Those of us who are abiding by the Judaeo-Christian law of our country - cannot live peacefully with a neighbor who has performed an "honor killing" of his wife or daughter - as allowed under Sharia law. There are many more examples - the point of this lesson's message is not about Sharia law - the point is - there are some things in our world - which are In-Compatible.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:11 and make notes:

Paul is saying this - because of the freedom he enjoyed in a pure conscience. Paul means - that he talks to the Corinthians freely, as to people whom he loves. He holds nothing back and suppresses nothing.

2 Corinthians - 23 - In-Compatible

Paul softens the force of his accusations - by calling the Corinthians "his children." Paul wasn't accusing them of a lack of love - he merely points to their behavior and encourages them to consider - Do you not realize you are withholding your affection?

Many of us have experienced someone who loves us - withholding their affection from us. It is a painful thing. The return is not equal - their response to Paul's love is not as great as the love being offered.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 and make notes:

Paul sounds like the father speaking to a son - who acts as though he despises his parents - and prefers wicked companions. Paul appeals to the Corinthians, not mentioning himself or God - but appealing directly to their sense of who they are in themselves.

How can the darkness illuminate or how can iniquity justify? Darkness and iniquity are not from God - they are from the spirit of anti-christ. Can enemies of God carry on divine affairs? "What fellowship has light with darkness?"

There is a distinct and irreconcilable contradiction between light and darkness, - the person partaking of both winds up having neither. It is impossible and inconsistent - for light and darkness to exist in fellowship. The person holding to each of the opposites - becomes an enemy to himself, - being divided in two ways - between virtue and evil. This sets up an antagonistic battle line within a person.

I have observed this over the years - a person desiring to please all those around them - one moment trying to please one person - holds fast to Biblical principles - but then another moment trying to please another person - openly violates - or at least lays aside - Biblical principles - in favor of Worldly ways. This person - who wanted to please everyone - winds up dis-pleasing everyone.

It is not possible, when there are two enemies - for both to be victors over each other. As long as we keep grasping opposites with each of our hands, - it is impossible for there to be participation in both elements in the same being.

For, if we are holding evil, - we lose the power to take hold of virtue. There cannot be two contradictory loves in one person.

Just as there is no harmony between Christ and Satan - no harmony between justice and iniquity, - it is impossible for one soul to love both good and evil. If we love the Lord, - then we must hate evil, - in every deed, there is love of one and hatred of the other.

2 Corinthians - 23 - In-Compatible

If we love the things that are good, - then we must hate the things that are bad. We cannot love good unless we hate evil.

The world of Christ is not only vastly different from the world of Satan. They are In-Compatible with one another. They are as In-Compatible as certain blood types - when you try to mix them - it causes death!

Do we understand - the Eagle cannot live where the catfish lives? Do we understand - the catfish cannot live where the eagle lives? If the catfish swims to the surface of the water - the eagle can grasp the catfish and devour the catfish. If the eagle falls into the water - the catfish can grasp the eagle and devour the eagle. But they cannot live together.

If we understand how impossible it is for the eagle and the catfish to live together - then we do understand how impossible it is - for Christians and sinners to fellowship together.

Read 2 Corinthians 6:16 and make notes:

It is obvious that the things Paul lists are opposites - and we are to flee from the one and cling to the other. No one can serve two masters. Christ has proclaimed we should go away from the devil, - who wants to represent himself falsely as God.

God has promised us eternal life, - so we should be strangers to the treachery and wrong-headedness of unbelievers. God has forbidden the worship of idols - because they are incompatible with the temple of God. We are temples of the living God. There is nothing more damaging to us than idols, - because they tempt us to depart from our faith in the one true God.

Unclean things refer to more than just adultery and fornication in the flesh - not only "evil acts" but also to evil thoughts. We must be delivered from both - from unclean actions - as well as from unclean imaginations.

God is desiring to receive us to Himself. But no unclean thing can come into His presence. We have a promise from God - if we will not attach ourselves to unclean things - then He will receive us! God wants us - to be set apart from all contamination - so that he can receive us as his children.

Paul exhorts Christians to a pure life. Jesus Christ was already our Lord in ancient times - and He was predestined to receive us in the fondness of his love.

2 Corinthians - 23 - In-Compatible

Are we going to accept His offer? Do not bear the yoke with unbelievers. What has justice in common - with iniquity? What fellowship has light - with darkness? What part - has the believer with the unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols?"

Since we understand there are some things - that are In-Compatible - we understand the principle of In-Compatibility. We need to stop ignoring the In-Compatibility of evil and righteousness. We need to stop trying to mix evil life decisions - with righteous life decisions - for doing so only leads to death. No one can soar with the Eagles - and swim with the catfish at the same time.

Because every saved person has been given the Holy Spirit to guide us - and to lead us - because we have the mind of Christ - our minds are re-newed by the Word of God - WE CAN reject evil and choose to live in the righteous things of life - and when we do - God will receive us He will be with us He will protect us He will bless us

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 23 - In-Compatible

(this page for additional notes)

2 Corinthians - 24 - Proud and Confident

In the previous lesson - it was pointed out there are some things that are In-Compatible with the Christian Lifestyle. Having addressed the subject of some things - being "In-Compatible" with notable bluntness - Paul now softens the message.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:1 and make notes:

His words take on something of a tender tone - "dear friends" - and the words being spoken here are not in the vain of "you guys better start doing right." He says, "let us" - this is a way of saying the message is not something I'm spewing out - at you. The message is something that applies to me as much as it does you - we are in this thing together.

God's promises – motivated David of the O.T. We can see some of the promises to David in 2 Samuel 7: (I'll summarize); "tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says:' - "I will make your name great" - "I will provide a place for my people Israel" - "I will also give you rest from all your enemies." - "When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, - who will come from your own body, - and I will establish his kingdom." - "I will be his father, and he will be my son" - "When he does wrong, I will punish him" - "But my love will never be taken away from him."

When we read the Psalms of the O.T. - it is easy to see David - frequently - if not constantly - reflected on the promises of God - to him. Read Psalms 1:1-6; Psalms 23.

I can't help but think - Paul was likely reflecting on the promises of God to David - when he reminded the Corinthians that the Promises of God are a reality for us - and they should have an impact on how we live our lives.

The promises being referred to - are not vague or general promises - they are specific - and they are wonderful promises. They are promises of God's everlasting covenant - they are promises that are the sure heritage of every Saved person. These promises include the promise of having God's Holy Spirit reside - right here within us.

These promises included having the Holy Spirit - to be our guide and our interpreter of everything that Jesus taught. "Since" we have these promises - "therefore" - it is the most logical thing that we would want to break free of every unclean thing that contaminates. It is the most logical thing that we would make every effort to break free - from everything that is In-Compatible with God's kingdom. It is completely "il-logical" - to hold on to anything that jeopardizes these wonderful promises!

2 Corinthians - 24 - Proud and Confident

Some of the Corinthian Believers were being tempted to try to hold onto old traditions - that quite frankly are not compatible with where the Holy Spirit is leading Christians - some of the Corinthian Believers were being tempted to try to hold onto - some of the practices involved in idol worship - which clearly are not compatible with Christianity.

It simply does not make sense to try to hold onto anything - that interferes with receiving the Promises of the New Covenant of Grace in Jesus Christ.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:2 and make notes:

Paul wants the Corinthians to give thought to what he is saying, - so that when they have taken it to heart - they may conclude what he is saying is true. Paul expresses himself in this negative way in order to make his point more sharply. He doesn't mention all the good he has done - but merely challenges the Corinthians to come up with any way he has wronged them, - which of course they could not do.

Just another distinction between the Apostle Paul - and the false teachers - who had come into their midst. The false teachers had not only wronged Paul, - they had wronged some of the Believers in Corinth. The false teachers had in fact - corrupted a number of those in the church in Corinth - the false teachers had most definitely exploited many of the Believers there.

One of the false teachers had collected money for the "cause of the poor in Jerusalem" - and then they later discovered he had used the money for his own purposes - and not to help the poor.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:3 and make notes:

There have been arguments for centuries - about whether Paul was bitter because of what the false teachers did - in some of the Churches he started. The truth is that we don't know what was in Paul's heart - we can theorize - and we can argue over the theories - but when we read this passage - it should be clear to everyone - Paul was certainly not bitter toward the Corinthian Believers.

2 Corinthians - 24 - Proud and Confident

The false teachers will be there with you only as long as it was good for them - but Paul declares - "I am with you" - "you have a special place in my heart" - "not only will I live with you – but I will die with you if that is what is needed."

Paul wants them to realize in what frame of mind he is speaking to them. He is certainly not rejecting people, - but he is exhorting them to participate in the sharing. Paul mentions both dying and living, - in order to preserve the right balance.

There are a lot of people who will sympathize with others in their misfortunes - but when things turn out well for them - they become jealous and do not rejoice on their behalf. This is Not so with the faithful, - they are not wounded by envy.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:4 and make notes:

Anyone who has had just a little experience with people in general - has surely learned that we simply cannot depend upon people. It is easy to have "confidence in God" - but it is very difficult to have "confidence in people." Some of us know what it is like to love someone dearly - but have little, or no, confidence in this person we love.

This isn't simply saying that Paul loves the Corinthian Believers. He could love them and have no confidence in them. In order for Paul to be able to say, - "I have great confidence in you" - means he has watched them over a period time - he has observed them doing the right thing in the face of temptation - he has observed them - as a whole - not being led astray by false teachers and false teachings.

In some of the churches that I was blessed to serve as Pastor - oh sure - there have been a few who have chased after spiritual junk food - there have been a few who have chased after poison. But, as a whole – the congregation stood strong through some temptations - they stood faithful in the face of alluring deceptions – they Loved - even those who have openly tried to cause harm. That encouraged me and made it easy for me to brag on the congregation when I spoke to other ministers.

I know the Bible has some negative things to say about Pride - but the pride I have for those faithful congregations – was like the pride Paul had for the congregation at Corinth - it is a healthy kind of pride. The things I would brag about concerning them was the result of their allowing God to work in them - and through them - so my bragging about them - was in a manner - giving Glory to God.

2 Corinthians - 24 - Proud and Confident

I believe that was the situation with Paul - concerning his pride in the Corinthian Believers. Yes, from time to time - we have some troubles here - we experience some disappointment and some hurts - but the "Joys" here far exceed the troubles. All of our troubles are momentary - they are short lived - but our "Joy" abounds - week after week. That's the gist of what Paul was saying concerning the Corinthian church.

Some might think these expressions of praise by Paul - contradict the admonitions which have been given before. But this is not so. They help the rebukes to be more acceptable - by putting them in the wider context of Paul's great love for the Corinthians.

Consider for a moment – a man gives a ring to a woman with the promise to marry her. She has the promise of someone - to help her with all the things of life. He is a good man - he is stable in his lifestyle - he has given every indication that he will be good to her and good for her.

Is it logical - does it make any sense at all - for her to flirt with other men - while she is waiting for the wedding day? The average man - should he find out she is flirting with other men - is very likely to interpret those actions on her part - as a signal that she is not interested in a committed relationship with him alone. It is highly likely that he will declare that the wedding is off - and so is he.

So, how do Christians think it makes any sense at all - to flirt with sinful actions -sinful words - sinful relationships - when we have such wonderful promises from God?

When we make room for someone in our heart we live - and die with them. When they do wrong, we feel the weight of it in our own heart. Have you ever felt the weight of the problems of someone you love? Their problem - do become our problem.

The encouragement is for each one of us - who has accepted Jesus as our Savior - to make room in our hearts for one another. When we find one who is "doing wrong"- instead of ripping into them - and giving them a piece of our mind - let's reveal our love for them - regardless of how they behave.

Let us commit to reflect upon the Promises of God - to all who accept Jesus as their Savior.

Let us allow those Promises to impact how we live our daily lives - and how we respond to others - not only to those who are Lost - but also how we respond - to those who are missing the mark in the area of Christian Living.

2 Corinthians - 24 - Proud and Confident

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 24 - Proud and Confident

(this page for additional notes)

2 Corinthians - 25 - Godly Sorrow

Imagine for a moment that a child has been injured - maybe it is a deep cut - or tear in the flesh - or perhaps it is a badly broken bone. Imagine a parent taking their child for medical treatment - if the bleeding isn't stopped - the child could die - if the wound isn't cleaned - or if anti-biotics are not administered -the child could develop a serious infection that would lead to death. Try to imagine the parent refusing to allow the child to be treated - when they find out that the treatment is going to cause the child some pain.

How many of us would say "oh no, don't treat my child if what you are going to do will hurt them?" How many of us would refuse to allow the broken bone to be set back into position - if doing so would cause our child to experience pain?

This scenario is not all that far fetched - while we might not withhold medical treatment - a great number of people today - withhold spiritual healing from their children - because they do not want them to feel pain.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:5 and make notes:

It would appear - a great number of people have a distorted view of the Apostle Paul. They seem to think Paul just went along his way being happy all the time - even though many bad things came his way. Paul never even pretended to be this way - Paul never suggested this might be true. Here is one of several Scriptures where Paul lets us know - that he is just like all people.

At the very same time - "Fightings" were inflicted on his body, - "fears" were attacking his soul, - Paul had to do battle not only with external foes - but also with enemies within. And Paul experienced - the fear that some of the believers would be turned away to harmful things.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:6-7 and make notes:

It is always a great comfort, to have someone near us who can share our suffering with us. The thing that was foremost in Paul's thinking - was not the stench of the dungeon he had experienced - not of the pain of the lashes he had received - not the many people who had rejected him - not even the ropes with which his feet had been bound. The thing that was front and center in his thoughts - was that the Corinthians had amended their ways. He rejoiced, and forgetting his sufferings, - he thanked God for their salvation.

2 Corinthians - 25 - Godly Sorrow

Read 2 Corinthians 7:8 and make notes:

Paul behaves toward the Corinthians - as a parent does toward little children, - soothing them after they have been through a painful experience. He praises the Corinthians because they were sorrowful according to God. The sorrow that is according to God - produces repentance that leads to salvation, - the sorrow that is according to the world produces death.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:9 and make notes:

Like a father who watches his child having a deep wound - or a broken bone - being repaired - Paul rejoices not for the pain being inflicted - but for the healing that can now take place. Paul had no desire to cause harm - just for the sake of causing pain.

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10-16 and make notes:

Paul has been comforted by the fact - that those whom he rebuked - desired to mend their ways. They were experiencing pain on account of their error. He was consoled by their resolve - to live for God.

Paul is glad not only because of their good resolve - but also because of the good actions - by which they were correcting their former sinful practices.

2 Corinthians - 25 - Godly Sorrow

Let's recap the situation:

- A. Paul had written a letter to the church at Corinth.
- B. The letter was a response to a situation caused by some opponent who had pulled the allegiance of the church away from Paul.
- C. Somebody had done a wrong to someone - and had somehow dampened the zeal of the Corinthians for Paul.
- D. Perhaps his authority or his character had been maligned, and the church had fallen for this - and lost their affection - and longing and respect for Paul.
- E. Paul writes a stern letter to point out the wrong - and stir up their support once again.
- F. He sends the letter and promptly sinks into depression. Maybe he was thinking they might be alienated by his letter - and his ministry with them would be ruined for ever.

According to 2:13 he had hoped to meet Titus with news of their response in Troas. But Titus didn't show when Paul had hoped he would. Finally Titus comes with news from Corinth. The letter had worked. Their zeal for Paul was restored.

The sorrow - is over the way they had fallen for Paul's opponent. The sorrow here is called godly, or literally, "according to God." This text tells us there is a "godly sorrow" - and a "worldly sorrow." This is important - that we take notice: The opposite of godly remorse - is not the absence of remorse. The powers of darkness are much more subtle than that.

There is a sorrow which is "of the world" and not "according to God." We can feel sorry for something - in a worldly way which leads to death. We need to distinguish godly sorrow from worldly sorrow.

Worldly sorrow is when we feel sorry for something we did - because it starts to backfire on us - and leads to humiliation or punishment. It's the reflex of our pride or ego. Pride will always regret making a fool of itself. And fear will always regret - acts that jeopardize comfort and safety.

Feeling sorry for something we have done - is in itself - no sign of virtue. But godly sorrow is the reflex of a conscience - that has wounded God's ego, not our own. Godly sorrow grieves - because we have hurt God's name.

The focus of worldly sorrow - is me. The focus of godly sorrow - is God. Worldly sorrow comes when we don't want to lose the praise of other people. We can feel extremely sorry for something we have done - if we detect that the people around us think it is stupid, or silly, or reprehensible.

Godly sorrow is the regret of a God-saturated heart, - instead of a world-saturated heart. There are at least 3 things we need to take home with us from this text:

#1 - Godly Sorrow Is Good!

It is a good thing - but it's like saying pain is good. We don't really mean that pain all by itself is a good thing. We mean that in a world where we can bleed to death - it's good to feel pain when we are cut. It's good to feel pain before the tumor is inoperable. It's good to feel pain before the infection leads to gangrene.

2 Corinthians - 25 - Godly Sorrow

Godly sorrow - is to sin - what pain - is to disease. A sensitive conscience is a gift of God, - just like nerve endings that recoil from scalding water.

Yet it is amazing how many people today - are teaching that guilt feelings are unhealthy and harmful. Of course, there are some guilt feelings that are unhealthy - just like there is pain that is psychosomatic. There is such a thing - as false guilt. But guilt that helps save our life - is not bad!

There are those today whose opposition to guilt - is a rejection of sin. Real guilt - real sorrow – Godly sorrow - is good - and should NOT be avoided.

Physical pain and moral regret - always point to problems that need to be resolved. Pain and sorrow are only symptoms - and they are good for that purpose. Instead of running from them, we should face them head on - admit the disease - and seek a deeper cure in Christ.

#2 - Godly Sorrow Produces Repentance

Paul's joy was not based merely on the guilt the Corinthians had felt, - but on the repentance - it produced. Repentance is not identical with grief - or sorrow over sin. It is the result - of these emotions. To feel sorry, to feel grief - or guilt or regret over a past sin - is not the same as repenting. Repentance is the change of attitude and behavior - that results from the feeling of remorse over the sin.

Godly sorrow is the first step to repentance. When repentance follows - it completes the change of heart. When we try to keep our children from feeling the pain of sorrow - we are placing them in more danger - than if we were keeping them from medical treatment - trying to prevent them from feeling pain.

How do we know if the sorrow we are experiencing is godly - or worldly? The test of godly sorrow - is repentance. The test of whether our grief is of God or of the world - is whether it produces change. Repentance is turning away from - and renouncing one way - and going in another.

If the feeling of sorrow and guilt - holds us in its grip week after week - long after the sin is past - and long after we have turned from it, - then it is not the sorrow of God - but is of the world. It is an attack of Satan.

If Satan cannot keep us from regretting your sin, - then he will do his best to keep us from enjoying our forgiveness. If he fails in his attempt to keep us from grieving over sin, - he will do his best to turn our godly sorrow - into an ongoing bondage of unwarranted guilt.

And if there is any work of the devil - that the Son of God died to destroy - it is this one, - namely, robbing God's children of the enjoyment of their forgiveness. Godly sorrow brings us to the foot of the cross.

2 Corinthians - 25 - Godly Sorrow

#3 – Godly Sorrow Leads To Salvation.

Paul feared his work might have been in vain - and that some of the professing believers in Corinth - would be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin - and follow the way that leads to death - instead of salvation.

What is the test? What is the evidence that our faith is genuine? The answer - there is a path that leads to salvation and one that leads to death. The way to test our faith - is to look at the path we are on.

The path that leads to salvation is not the path of sinless perfection. It is the path of godly sorrow and genuine repentance. Let me say it again: "Godly sorrow produces repentance that leads to salvation."

Are we grieved by our sin with a godly sorrow - and do we turn from it? That, dear friends, is the test of our faith - and the evidence that Christ is in us.

#1 - Godly Sorrow Is Good!

#2 - Godly Sorrow Produces Repentance

#3 - Godly Sorrow Leads To Salvation

Let's Love others enough - to Be willing to cause godly sorrow. When I say, Cause godly sorrow, - I don't mean cause our brother or sister to sin. I mean, if necessary, - help them recognize their sin.

This is never easy – when we love. Paul didn't find it easy. When he wrote his letter - it caused him tremendous discomfort - until he knew the Corinthians had taken it well.

We risk being rejected - and criticized - when we care about someone enough to point out their sin. But we should follow Paul's example and do it anyway. It could be - their salvation is at stake - and we are God's way of bringing them back to the path of repentance that leads to life.

Let us love others enough - to be willing to accept godly sorrow. Let's put ourselves in the place of the Corinthians - we get a stern letter from someone.

It is a rebuke and an expression of love. How would we respond? Would we bristle in self-defense - and start to point out the other person's flaws - in an effort to conceal our own? Or would we be like the Corinthians - and let ourselves be moved to godly sorrow and repentance?

Let's be willing - if necessary to cause godly sorrow like Paul did - and let's be willing - to accept it like the Corinthians did. Because, the good end of godly sorrow - is salvation. And while we do not want to cause anyone pain - we do want those we love - to "be saved."

2 Corinthians - 25 - Godly Sorrow

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 26 - Generosity

Several church groups have certain people who are called upon - when offerings need to be increased. These are people who have a proven track record of stirring the people to give more - and there are a few people - who work across denominational lines. Their expertise is in getting a congregation to give a big offering. They make a living doing this - and while it has been very few - there have been those who have let me know that I am wrong by not bringing in one of these professionals.

In another area - while it has also been only a few - there have been some who have felt very strongly that I am wrong - by not begging people to take on certain ministry jobs within the church. The text in this lesson speaks to these two issues. I am sure many of those who have subscribed to the professional "offering takers" - and those who have subscribed to the "beg them until they give in" strategy - will not change their mind. However, this lesson's text will at least show you why - I have taken the position I have on these two issue.

This is another good place to remind ourselves - the Holy Spirit is speaking through Paul. So, it is while being Inspired and Prompted by the Holy Spirit - Paul sets in to share with the Corinthians - the magnificent things the Macedonians have done for the ministry - and it is important that we recognize - Paul does not brag about something the Macedonians have achieved in performance. Neither does he brag on them as if they have some superior quality of character - he brags on the Macedonians in the context of how they received God's Grace - and how they allowed the Grace of God to work in them.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1 and make notes:

Paul says the Macedonians had received the grace of God. Paul is not excluding the role of free will - but he is teaching that every good work is made possible by the help of God.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:2 and make notes:

This is a striking statement! Out of Severe Trial - Joy overflowed. Out of Extreme Poverty - rich Generosity welled up. The Macedonians were experiencing serious persecution. They were in a tough place regarding their physical lives. They did not allow their tribulation to impede their spirit of Joy - nor their physical poverty to impede their Generosity. Although the Macedonians were short of material resources, they were rich in the spirit .

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Some people are poor in material terms - but rich in their spirit. They would rather give - than receive. That's a good description of the Macedonians.

The affliction of the Macedonians did not lead to the kind of sorrow - that kept them from rejoicing or from being generous. The point isn't that the Macedonians were being afflicted - the point is - they using their afflictions as a means of growing in joy. In affliction - they remained joyous - and in the depths of poverty - they remained generous

Read 2 Corinthians 8:3-4 and make notes:

The Macedonians did not give out of their excess - or out of their surplus - for they had none! They gave far more than their meager provisions would appear to allow. The greatness of the Macedonians can be seen in two ways; first - they gave voluntarily; secondly - they gave in spite of their poverty.

The Macedonians were not the victims of some high pressure professional offering taker. They were not responding to the slick talk - or the guilt heaping tactics of someone. "Giving" was something they were doing on their own. It was the result of what was in their heart and spirit. They actually begged - to be allowed - the privilege to help in the ministry to others.

It appears Paul was a little reluctant to take finances from the Macedonians. Paul certainly knew how little they had for themselves - he knew they were all struggling in a really bad economic situation. Paul may have been resisting from a heart of concern for them - not wanting to take from them the little that they had. It says they "urgently pleaded" - if there was no resistance - there would have been no need to "urgently plead."

Because the Macedonians were offering more than they could afford, - Paul was inclined to refuse their contribution, - they showed themselves to be of such character that they stood firm, - with a pure mind - in confidence of faith, - they attached more importance to the promises for the future - than to immediate needs in the present.

In the end – Paul decided it seemed right to accept their contribution. The Macedonians desired spiritual gifts more than worldly gifts

Read 2 Corinthians 8:5 and make notes:

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Paul did not "expect much" from such needy people in the way of finances. They didn't just exceed what was expected in the area of finances - it says, they "did not give as expected."

First - they gave themselves to the Lord. Secondly - they gave themselves to the Lord's Servant - to help him in the acts of service he was dedicated to.

These Macedonians - who by any standard were poor people - gave beyond their apparent financial ability - which means they gave sacrificially. But they did not stop at giving finances - they gave themselves to physically - trying to help God's Servant accomplish the ministry he was trying to accomplish for the Lord.

Some believe Paul was only saying this in order to guilt the Corinthians into giving better offerings. I disagree. There are 2 basic reasons I do not accept this:

First – after reading the other letters of Paul in the New Testament -

I just don't see Paul doing that to anyone.

Secondly - believing the Holy Spirit was telling Paul what to write -

this would make the Holy Spirit sound "petty" -

and I am certain there is nothing petty about the Holy Spirit!

The secret of the Macedonians' zeal - was that first, - they gave themselves to the Lord. Everything else flowed from that. The giving of finances - the giving of ministry help - flowed out of giving themselves to the Lord.

In too many local churches today - the giving of finances - and ministry help - is the result of high pressure - or guilt - or manipulation. As a result of first giving themselves to the Lord - when they showed mercy - they were not filled with pride - but displayed great humility and heavenly wisdom.

What are we to take home with us from this text?

I feel certain there was more than one group of people - that could have been used as an example of those who allow God's Grace to work through them. I feel certain there were others who were generous - so I can't tell you why the Macedonians were selected to be used as an example. It could be that the Corinthians had heard the news of what things were like for the Macedonians - maybe their situation was currently -"what was in the news."

Whatever the reason - they were a great example to use and they still are today! When we consider the economic situation of the Macedonians - and then consider what they did in giving an offering - then when we consider the physical and political situation of the Macedonians - and their willingness to offer to help Paul to accomplish the ministry - it illustrates that "true generosity" - is a matter of the heart and spirit - rather than a matter of one's financial status.

It also illustrates the willingness to get behind and support God's minister - is matter of the heart and spirit - rather than a matter of having an easy life - with lots of spare time.

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I do hope that most of us do not know - and will never know - what it is like to go without enough food for several days. But I do - and I can tell you from personal experience - when you go without enough food for several days - getting something to eat is a part of every thought you have. When you find something - one of the first considerations is - can I use this to get something to eat? Can I trade it - or can I sell it?

When you find an opportunity to do even a temporary job of some kind - "I can buy some food." When you know that you do not have enough money to purchase enough food for your family - you become very careful not to lose what little you have - and you become very careful not to use it for anything but food.

Not having enough finances for the Macedonians - was a part of their everyday life - and yet, they were willing to give up some of the money - they truly did need to purchase food for the family- they were desiring to give - so that others could be ministered to.

That's not just giving - That's generosity!

In this next area – I suspect we might have a majority here who feel - we are experiencing something like the Macedonians- but not for the same reasons. Today in our culture - there are so few of us who feel like we have any spare time - and when someone asks us to consider helping with some ministry - the common response is - "oh, I would love to help with that, - but I just don't have time." For us - a large percentage of us are too busy - because of things we have chosen to do - while the Macedonians were busy - just trying to survive. Because of the political persecution - the Macedonians had to put in a lot of time and effort - just to acquire the basic necessities to live - and yet - the Macedonians were willing to take time away from their - "doing what's necessary to live" - in order to help the Minister with the Ministry.

When the Macedonians are taken into consideration - it becomes very clear - the willingness to help the Minister accomplish the Ministry - is a matter of the heart and spirit - and not a matter of available time. When we have needs - it is the most natural thing in the world - for us to concentrate on our needs. It is in fact - an unnatural thing - and yet - it is the Christian thing - to focus on the needs of others!

The Macedonians also illustrate - that when people are walking out the authentic Christian life - there is no need to bring in a professional "money beggar" - to milk the people for money. The Christian heart will desire to give - and if their giving is resisted - they will beg to give.

Just in case someone missed it - let me say this plainly, if not bluntly - it is the Christian heart that will "beg to give - to a need" - it is the Worldly heart that will "beg others to give - to their cause." The Christian begs to be allowed to give - the world begs others to give to them.

It was my practice while serving as Pastor – not to beg people to give. I simply shared opportunities and needs - and then leave it to God - and God's people - and yes, we have had offers from those who claim to be experts at getting people to give - and you know what - I believe they are experts. But I believe God's Way - I believe the Christian Way - is the best way!

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And there are those who are "experts" at getting people to feel guilty - for not helping in the ministry. There are those who will intimidate - or at least badger people - until they will agree to help in the ministry. I won't try to take away from their ability to accomplish these things. BUT - the Macedonian example - points out something important. The Christian heart will desire to help in the ministry - it is the worldly heart that has to be badgered, manipulated, enticed, bribed, etc.

Do we really want a Worldly Heart leading any part of the Ministry?

Sometimes a member of an athletic team gets hurt - the coach tries to allow time for them to recover - the coach has them to sit out of a game - and the team member keeps going to the coach saying, - "put me in coach, put me in." That is a fairly clear picture of the authentic Christian Heart - the Christian Heart begs to be allowed to help with the Ministry.

Because too many ministers have moved away from the Word of God - we have too many people who have decided to accept Jesus as their Savior - but have not allowed Jesus to have their heart. People believe in Jesus for Salvation - but we keep our worldly heart - instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to transform it into a Christian Heart!

What is the Focus of Our Heart? It is what God's Word says?

I have observed through the years - when people allow the Grace of God - not only to come into their lives - but allow the Grace of God to work through their lives - the Pastor does not have to beg Elders to help with the ministry - does not have to beg Deacons to help with the ministry - does not have to beg Leaders to help with the ministry - does not have to beg the people of the congregation - to help with various ministries of the local church.

Those with the Christian focus of heart - simply step up to help - and if they don't see the opportunity right away - they will beg for a place to help.

I am so grateful – that I have had a number of people in the church were I served as Pastor - that asks for ways to help with the ministry. I am grateful that we have so many who gave faithfully of their finances - and I am grateful for the many who requested to be able to give financially to the ministry needs - it shows where their heart was focused.

Those who are faithful in their service - and faithful in their giving - make a Pastor's job such much easier - and I appreciate them in a big way - but more importantly - it brings Glory to the name of Jesus.

Let's take our focus from ourselves - and from our personal needs - and place our focus on the needs of others. The first step is allowing Jesus to become your Savior. Just ask Him to forgive you - ask Him to save you - and He will. Then the next step is to allow the Holy Spirit - to transform your Heart into a Christian Heart.

2 Corinthians - 26 - Generosity

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 27 - Thankful Heart

It was such a delight for me as the Pastor – to share this message with the congregation I was serving at the time I first presented it. There were many in that congregation who were already living this message. The text in this lesson gave me reason to be thankful for that church family - for those who were already living out the message. It also gives Biblical support when we share the message with others – to those who are not yet living this message. The hope is that this lesson will encourage them to start.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:6 and make notes:

Paul was sending Titus to Corinth to encourage them to imitate the Macedonians. There are those who debate when this "earlier beginning" had occurred - and while that is an interesting thing to investigate. The time of this "earlier beginning" - does not affect the message.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:7 and make notes:

It is acknowledged that the Corinthians have done a good job in several areas . It says they "excel" - in faith - in speech - in knowledge - in complete earnestness - and even - in their love for the apostle. But for some reason they have fallen short in the area of "giving."

The Holy Spirit - speaking to them through Paul - is encouraging them to excel in giving as well.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:8 and make notes:

2 Corinthians - 27 - Thankful Heart

Here is another difference between a True Teacher of God's Word - and the False Teacher. The Corinthians are told they are free to make their own decision - they are not being commanded to give - they are only being encouraged to give. A false teacher usually does not allow their followers to decide. It is to do what the false teacher says - or you are condemned - and sometimes punished. And the True Teacher of God's Word - let's people know when they are being "tested" - so he tells them they are being tested - in their giving - but there is no compulsion - there is no intimidation - there is no threat of retaliation - if they do not give.

How are they being tested ? Earlier in this letter it was mentioned - the Macedonians gave generously - they gave more than it appeared possible. The Macedonians were experiencing tribulation on all sides - they were suffering financially - physically - and socially - and yet they wanted to give to help other Christians.

Now - you Corinthians - you are doing well financially - no one is persecuting you physically or emotionally - the government is not making things hard on you - in fact - life seems pretty good and pretty easy for you. So - you who are experiencing an easy time - will you give as generously as those who are struggling on every side?

What are we to take home with us from this text?

It is of importance that we notice - in verse 6 - "giving" is called an "act of grace." The word translated "grace" is the Greek word "*charis*." It is the same Greek word used in verse 1 - speaking of a "grace given by God" - in verse 4 speaking of a favor sought by Paul - and in verse 19 speaking of a charitable gift given by some to benefit others.

We know - God is the source of all "Grace". There are two major ways in which Christians provide evidence that we have God's Grace: the first is when we share with those in need; the second is when we not only give thanks - but have a thankful heart when others share with us in our time of need.

It may sound too simple for some - and they will let it fly right past them - but "giving thanks" - when our needs are met - is an indication that we not only have received Grace - but we ACKNOWLEDGE our receiving is a result of Grace.

Suppose we worked for someone - maybe we worked hard - when they pay us the agreed upon price - there is no big feeling of need to say "thank you" - we worked for this money - we earned this money - we don't need to say "thank-you" - after all, they were only doing what they were supposed to do - when they paid us.

What is it that we have "earned" in life - by our lifestyle? What is it that we deserve for the choices we have made? When we realize we have not earned anything good - when we realize - in all honesty - we do not deserve anything good - and then God lays it on the heart of someone or some group of someones - to meet our need - we recognize it as an act of Grace - and that is why we "give Thanks" - with a Thankful heart.

2 Corinthians - 27 - Thankful Heart

Sometimes it is Grace on God's Part - and then a further act of Grace on the part of the one who delivered the goods - for they certainly did not owe us anything good. Sometimes it is Grace on God's Part - and only an act of Obedience on the part of the one who delivered the goods - because they do not want to help us - but want to obey God. Sometimes it is Grace on God's Part - and a feeling of bewilderment on the part of the one who delivered the goods - because they can't figure out why in the world they helped. But in all cases - when we have our needs met - it is "Grace" coming down from the Father in Heaven - and this is so important for us to remember.

I know some will disagree with what I am about to say - but I will love them anyway! It brings more glory to God - and it does more good for the Kingdom of God on earth - to be generous and to give to those in need - in the Name of Jesus - than it does to raise the dead in the Name of Jesus! Or other miracles.

I am aware there are a number of people who are telling others to strive to do big and great miracles in the Name of Jesus. There are those who are teaching that we should have no "ordinary days" - once we are saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. They tell us that every day should be one of fantastic miracles - so people are frantically going around - trying to Make the dead raise back to life - trying to Make the sick get well - trying to Make everything that comes their way - turn into a big miraculous happening.

I am 100% in favor of miracles - in favor of healings - and even raising the dead when it is God's will for that person. The only work that is greater than leading a lost person to Jesus for Salvation - is to feed the Lord Jesus Christ - when He is hungry - is to clothe the Lord Jesus - when He is naked - is to give shelter to Jesus - when He is homeless - is to find work for Jesus - when He is unemployed. When we do it for the least of these - we have done it to Jesus!

When we find someone who claims to be a Christian - and yet they never find it convenient to give to meet the needs of others - we must question the reality of their Salvation. Even if it is us ourselves!

So here is the test we are to administer to ourselves:

First - Do I have a heart's desire - to give to meet the needs of others?

Secondly - when I receive something - do I respond with a Heart of Thankfulness?

If we only give when someone puts pressure on us - or if we only give because we have a guilty heart - these is cause for us to spend some time with Jesus - and get our Heart Fixed!

If we receive anything - and recognize that we do not have an attitude of Thankfulness - even if we say the words - "Thank You" - there is a need to spend some time with Jesus - and get our Heart Fixed!

2 Corinthians - 27 - Thankful Heart

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 28 - Keep Your Word

In this lesson's text, the Holy Spirit is speaking through Paul with a clear message to the Corinthians - and it has unquestionable relevance to Christians today. In this text - the subject is in regards to finances - but the principle applies to every area of our lives. So please, do not get so focused on the finances in this text - that you miss the bigger message.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:9 and make notes:

At this point in the letter - the Holy Spirit brings an interesting point to bear. He begins by saying "you know"! So what is it that they "know?"

Apparently they "know" - about the self-giving - and the self-impoverishment - on the part of the Son of God - all for the benefit of mankind. I'm sure this would make for some interesting discussion - as to how it is that they "know" - but for this lesson - let's just stay with the point that - "they know." Since the Holy Spirit says "they know" - then - "they know"!

Is there anyone among us that would say - God's sacrificial giving for man's sake is anything but an act of Grace? Sometimes we hear political figures saying things about all of us making sacrifices. I'm not so sure many - if any - of our politicians understand what sacrifice really is. When we take away from one person - so that we can give it to another - that is not sacrifice - there is another word for that.

But, when we decide for ourselves - that we will give up something that is ours - and we will give it up - for the benefit of another person - that is sacrifice. When we see someone who is self-sacrificing for the benefit of another - this is another evidence that this person has the Grace of God - as a reality in their heart and life. Let me say this again:
Self-sacrificing is evidence of having God's Grace.

No one in the universe was richer than God. No one can become poorer than the depth of poverty to which Jesus went. No worldly possessions - hanging on a cross in His underwear - in full view of the whole community - and then losing His physical life - that is the lowest depth of earthly poverty.

Why did Christ become poor? This verse tells us: "so that we - through his poverty might become rich." He became poor for our sake - and through His poverty - we can become spiritually rich.

Because Christ was willing to become poor - we are now able to take part in the eternal riches of God. Therefore Christ was made poor, - not for his sake - but for ours, - we, on the other hand, are made poor for our own benefit.

2 Corinthians - 28 - Keep Your Word

If you don't believe poverty is productive - consider the case of Jesus. If he had not become poor, - you and I would not have become rich. By riches, this text means - the knowledge of godliness, - the cleansing away of sins, - justification, - sanctification, - the countless good things - which God bestowed upon us and which he intends yet to bestow.

To make us worthy of his perfect gift, - he, being equal to the Father in the form of God, - became like us - in the form of a servant - so that He could refashion us into the likeness of God.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:10 and make notes:

If you will recall - earlier the Corinthians were told - they were not being commanded in what to do - and while they are not being "told what to do." They are being given some advice - as to what would be best for them to do. We touched on this in an earlier lesson - one of the differences between false teachers and true teachers of the Gospel: False teachers try to make people do what they say - they don't allow options of obedience. True teachers of the Gospel of Christ - advise - but allow people to choose.

Christ came and lived life in a manner to set the example - Christ advises people in the ways that will lead them to health and peace - Christ encourages people to choose right - but Christ always leaves it to each person to decide for themselves. So when you find a True Teacher of the Gospel of Christ - one of the qualities will be that they advise and encourage - but they do not demand or try to make people do a certain way.

He brings their attention to events of about a year before this letter was written - the Corinthians had shown excitement toward giving an offering. They had a "will" to give an offering - but somehow - and for some reason - they allowed themselves to become distracted - they turned from their commitment to give the offering.

The Corinthians started with excitement - but in a short time - the offering was forgotten. They didn't follow through with the offering - the offering just never materialized - the offering was never sent to help those in need.

While their willingness to help is respected - the time has now come for that willingness to be translated into action.

Most of us probably know someone - who expressed zeal and excitement toward a cause - and maybe even tried to get everyone around them to give also - and then - in a short amount of time their attention is turned to something else - and they didn't follow through with the offering.

2 Corinthians - 28 - Keep Your Word

There are a number of local churches in our nation - who ask people to sign pledge cards each year - as to how much they "pledge to give" in the offering for the coming year - and then the church sets a budget - based on the collective amount pledged.

It is a very common experience - people start out well - but in just a few months their giving starts dropping below their commitment amount - or they simply stop altogether - and unfortunately some of these local churches start contacting people - telling them they are behind and the need to catch up on their pledge.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:11 and make notes:

This is the advice - this is what is best for them - that they complete the commitment - "Finish The Work." You made a commitment to take up an offering - to send to those in need. It's a year later - and you have not sent the offering - in fact you haven't even collected it. Please – finish the work you set out to do.

What if Christ had not completed His commitment? What if Christ had started with great enthusiasm to come to earth - to be born in a physical body - to live a life that fulfilled the Law - and to die for the sins of all of us - but then - somewhere along the way - Jesus started stepping away from His role as Savior - and never completed the mission. How eternally hopeless - we all would be!

"According to your means" - Paul is saying the Corinthians should give as much as they are willing - AND able to give. That way their conscience would be clear - and not be clouded by pretense, - trying to please man but not God.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:12 and make notes:

Please don't allow this to slip by without notice - "if the willingness is there - the gift is acceptable." It isn't the dollar amount - it is the heart! If we give according to what we have - and it is our willingness to give - then the amount we give is acceptable - it is acceptable to God.

The Corinthians are being encouraged to give what they are able - but not to overdo it. He did not want them to feel that they were acting under compulsion - and then come to be resentful.

2 Corinthians - 28 - Keep Your Word

Look at how wise this advice is. After pointing out the need and showing them an example, - the Corinthians are left to do as much as they can, - letting the example of the Macedonians - do its own work of persuasion.

In so many cases - imitation is a more powerful incentive than exhortation. Quality, not quantity, is what counts.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:13 and make notes:

It is not that the Corinthians should be made to suffer - in order to give some relief to others. It is that there might be "equality" in the kingdom. Does "equality" in the kingdom mean that everyone has the same amount of everything - or the same level of hardship - or same level of ease in life? No, that is not what "equality" is at all.

It is true - that giving should not cause hardship to the givers. But at the same time, each person should do what they are able to do - or give what they are able to give. If we each gives our fair share - if we each do our fair share - then that is equality in the kingdom!

Read 2 Corinthians 8:14 and make notes:

Here is the explanation of "equality" - right now, while you have plenty - you give to those who do not have enough - later when they are doing better - and have enough - they will give to others who do not have enough- and it just might be you - while you are doing well now - there may come a time in the future when you don't have enough - then others will give to you.

It is pointed out that sharing is mutual. Indeed, the Corinthians would be reaping spiritual rewards in abundance. How can these be compared with what is merely carnal?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:15 and make notes:

2 Corinthians - 28 - Keep Your Word

When God's people grasps this simple concept - then things like covetousness and envy - will have a hard time taking root in our hearts. Not only will we all have an opportunity to give to someone else in need - but God will make sure that whatever amount we have - will be enough.

In God's kingdom - right here on earth - those who gather much in the Name of Jesus - will not have "too much" - and those who gather little in the Name of Jesus - will not have "too little."

The saints, with their hope in the world to come, - have more than those who appear to be rich in this world. But both will be made equal, - because those who give of their wealth to help the saints now - will be helped at some future time, when they are in need.

This happened in the O.T. in the case of the manna, - when those who gathered more and those who gathered less - were found to have the same quantity. This is recalled - both to alarm them by what happened - and to persuade them not to desire more than they already have - or to be anxious because they have less.

What is it we are to take home with us?

First: Self-Sacrificing Is An Evidence That We Have Received God's Grace.

It is a characteristic of God. The topic of today's text is about finances regarding the Corinthians - but the principle and concept being taught - is so much bigger - than just finances. This applies to any and every area of our life. We don't only sacrifice finances - do we? Whatever it is that we sacrifice - it applies to that - whatever it is.

Secondly: When We Make A Commitment - See It Through.

This is not a "new position" - or a new "teaching." Read Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21-23.

I know we are not under the O.T. Law - and I know that many will protest anything that is taught in reference to the O.T. Law. I have at least 3 responses to this concerning today's text:

First - the O.T. Law does help us to understand the lifestyle God expects from His people.

Secondly - some really wise people down through the ages have discovered that some things just make life go better.

Look at what the world's wisest man - outside of Jesus - had to say on keeping a vow in Ecclesiastes 5:4-6.

Ecclesiastes is not part of the Law - Ecclesiastes is the insight of the wisest person - and is a result of years of living - choices - and results.

Thirdly: If The Willingness Is There - The Gift Is Acceptable!

2 Corinthians - 28 - Keep Your Word

Whatever we are able to do - even if it is small - compared to what others give or do. Whatever we do - if it is from a willing heart - It Is Acceptable!

Whether it is dollars - or time - or accomplishments - are we fulfilling our ability and heart? If so, then it is acceptable to God!

Let's make sure we keep our word! Let's make sure we do what we say we will do!

That was the Advice of the Holy Spirit through Paul to the Corinthians - and it is still the Advice of the Holy Spirit today - to all Christians. And this is about all areas of our lives - not just a matter of money or offerings - not just the finances we vow to give - but the time we promise to give - the help we promise to give.

What did we give our word to do - what did we give our word to help with? Did we give our word to help in the ministry? Did we set out to give our life to the Lord Jesus - but never did?

Let's keep our Word - it's beneficial in this life - as well as the next.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 29 - Prove Your Love

This section of the letter to the Corinthians - is like a "letter of commendation" - but it gives one specific instruction that has tremendous application today. There are a number of business ventures that have come into being over the last 20 years or so - that specifically target churches.

A number of them have been successful from a business point of view - they have a large number of churches buying their products and services. And as a result they have pulled many of these churches away from the original purpose - away from the instructions and directions of the original church. The church which Jesus established - the church which ministers like the Apostle Paul helped to guide and encourage.

So how do we measure up - when we consider the early instructions to the local Church?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:16 and make notes:

After talking about offerings - and encouraging them to complete the ministry they set out to do a year ago - Paul thanks God for giving Titus the same intense, caring heart for the Corinthians as Paul has. He considers this as a gift from God.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:17 and make notes:

While Titus is coming to the Corinthians for the purpose of collecting the offering for the Christians who are in need - they are being assured that the money is not the driving force behind Titus' visit. Titus is being propelled by his zeal and his love for the Corinthians.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:18-19 and make notes:

2 Corinthians - 29 - Prove Your Love

"The brother who is praised by all the churches" - did you notice that he is praised for his "service to the gospel"? Who is this famous brother?

The text doesn't tell us the name - it only tells us that this "brother" is held in high regard by all the other churches. There have been so many different names suggested as to the identity of this brother - but no one knows - but even if we did know his name - it would not affect the message.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:20 and make notes:

Church history has shown that the way in which money is handled - has the ability to stop the ministry of a local church. Even when the money is not used improperly - when it is not handled in a manner that provides accountability - some sinister person will usually make it appear to be - and this has ruined and completely stopped a great many ministries.

The point for sharing this - is to show how wise Paul was to send a very reputable and respected person along to accompany the offering.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:21-22

This text indicates that a second - un-identified - brother was sent along. While his name is not given in the text - his reputation is a proven commodity. Paul was not one who sought the praise of men - but there is much evidence that points to the reality - that the gospel is hindered by the way ministers lead their lives. Paul doesn't want his teaching of the gospel - to incur reproach because of improper actions by immature assistants.

Paul set a really good example for all ministers in this. He did what was right - without ignoring those who might doubt his intentions. He took the necessary steps so as not to appear to be doing wrong - in other words - he tried to keep his good from being evil spoken of (Roman 14:16).

Read 2 Corinthians 8:23 and make notes:

2 Corinthians - 29 - Prove Your Love

The false teachers that have attacked Paul - and the Gospel of Grace - have proven they will object to just about everything Paul teaches. It is reasonable to expect someone to attack the character of - or question the reputation of - these "strangers."

So, if anyone should question or even suggest that these people coming to receive the offering are strangers - Titus is being commended and the other 2 brothers are being commended by Paul as well.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:24 and make notes:

It isn't only Paul that is watching to see how these men are received at Corinth - the other churches are watching as well. In short - the Corinthians are being asked to treat these 3 men with the same respect and hospitality - that they would give Paul - if he were to come in person.

Paul is urging the Corinthians to demonstrate their love - by the way they treat those he is sending to them. If they received these ministers with honor, - they would be demonstrating to all the other churches how far they had progressed - and that the good things which were said about them are true.

What are we to take home from this text today?

If we go to some church and ask them what is it - that they spend their time trying to prove - the answers we would get - would go something like this:

"we prove our holiness by the clothes we wear - or those we refuse to wear" - "we prove our salvation by the things we refrain from doing" -

"we prove our righteousness by the foods we eat - and the foods we refrain from eating."

A large number of local churches today are spending most of their efforts and emphasis upon proving their holiness - or proving their righteousness - or proving their salvation - or proving their commitment to the gospel.

Look at what the Holy Spirit said through Paul in verse 24: "Therefore show these men the proof of your love." By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

When we love one another - we prove we are truly Jesus' disciples. When we love one another - we prove that we truly Love God. For whatever we do - even unto the least of these - we do it do Jesus. It's not our Holiness or our Righteousness - that we should be proving - it is our Love For God!

2 Corinthians - 29 - Prove Your Love

The greatest need for local churches today:
IS NOT a better program
IS NOT better facilities
IS NOT a better website
IS NOT more finances.

The Greatest Need For Local Churches Today - is for the Christians -
To Show The Community The Proof Of Our Love!

Christians today - need to spend less time fighting and fussing over legal issues - and more time - Proving Our Love. Too many Christians today appear to be more interested - in Proving their adherence to their version of religious "dos and don'ts" - too many Christians today appear to be more interested - in Proving the ability to avoid sinning - and so few - appear interested - in Proving Their Love.

The community is watching us. They do take notice of how we respond to one another - how we respond to those who "mess up" - as well as those who "do good."

I most certainly do believe God wants us to live Holy Lives - BUT - We need to put forth less effort to "prove our holiness" - and more effort to "prove our love."

When our Love For God is Real - then our Holy Lifestyle will be a result. It is a part of our nature - when we love someone – we want to do the things that please them. They will know we are Christians by our Love - not by what we "don't do."

If you haven't noticed - there are some non-christian groups who eat very healthy diets - there are some non-christian groups that wear modest clothing - there are some non-christian groups that live morally good lives. If any of these would be sufficient proof of Christianity - then all these non-christian groups - would be Christians. And if you will think about it - those non- christian groups don't respond very lovingly when one of their own messes up.

Two invitations:

First - if you are not already one who proves your Christianity by responding in Love - then please come and meet Jesus – ask him to forgive you and to save you. Of course – we can't have that kind of love until we accept Jesus as our Savior. So, for those who haven't been saved - today is a great day to come to Jesus and ask Him to Save you.

Secondly - if you are already proving your Christianity by responding in Love - will you help share this message with others - for the Church community at large really needs to hear this message.

2 Corinthians - 29 - Prove Your Love

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 29 - Prove Your Love

(this page for additional notes)

2 Corinthians - 30 - Giving

The first few verses of this section of the letter to the Corinthians - are skipped over by most who teach or preach from 2 Corinthians. These few verses are skipped over because they don't have the "fire of salvation" - or they don't have the zeal of "being filled with the Holy Spirit." And it is true - all teachers want to teach the "exciting stuff" - but in real life, there are some foundational things that simply are not exciting - they can even hinge on "BORING."

Without these foundational principles - we will fail at the exciting things - even if they are taught to us. This is true with what is in these first few verses of chapter 9. So before you tune me out - please consider 2 things:

First - the Holy Spirit felt it was important enough to have Paul write it down -
and then have it delivered to the Corinthians for them to know.

Secondly – the Holy Spirit had this letter included in the Holy Scriptures for us to read today.

Wouldn't it be dis-respectful toward the Holy Spirit on our part - if we simply decide to dismiss this because we don't think it is exciting?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:1 and make notes:

"This service to the saints" - is the providing for the needs of distressed fellow Christians - and this "service" can be traced all the way back to the very beginning of the Church. The fulfilling of this service - was the purpose of appointing the first seven deacons. We can rightly call them ministers - who were seeing to the "daily ministrations" of the needs of the believers in distress. The assignment of these seven within the first church - DID NOT remove the responsibility from the shoulders of individual Believers. What it did - was to remove this ministry from the shoulders of the Apostles - so they could concentrate on the sharing of the Word of God.

Each of us as Christians - are personally responsible for helping those in need. True Christian Giving - flows from the "giving of God's Grace." Let me rephrase this: when a person recognizes they have "received Grace" from God - when a person recognizes the enormous gift that has been given to them - it results in a heart's desire to give to others who are in distress.

When a person claims to be a Christian and then continually finds all kinds of reasons - why they Will Not Help those who are in distress - there are 2 real possibilities:

The first is ugly - they simply have not received the Grace of God - in other words - they are not saved.

The second reason isn't ugly - it's just sad - they do not recognize the tremendous Grace that has been extended to them. Perhaps they have asked God to forgive them - perhaps they have asked Jesus to Save them - but they haven't yet recognized the enormity of the Gift they have received. Once we recognize the incredible giving on God's part - toward us - we cannot help but desire to give to help others.

2 Corinthians - 30 - Giving

Read 2 Corinthians 9:2 and make notes:

The Corinthians accepted the faith. Then a short time after that they began behaving badly, - and then - they began to have this desire to improve. When the other churches heard that a church in Corinth - which had previously been involved in many errors - had put them right, - that moved them to good works. Specifically - when they heard this church in error had changed and wanted to take up an offering to help other Christians who were in need. It moved these other churches to give sacrificially.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:3-4 and make notes:

If you remember from an earlier text - it was the willingness and the desire of the Corinthians to take an offering to send to those in need - that was the inspiration for the Macedonians to have such zeal and enthusiasm toward taking up an offering among their Believers. The Macedonians were in financial hard times themselves - but they were so inspired by the Corinthians - that the Macedonians gave sacrificially - raising much more than anyone thought possible for them. "If some of these Macedonian Believers came along with Paul" - and - it would be perfectly natural for that to happen when someone at another location has inspired us - and we get the opportunity to visit the one who has inspired us - most of us would not pass up the opportunity - so if some of the Macedonians came with Paul to Corinth - and discovered the Corinthian Believers - never got around to actually taking up an offering - it would be embarrassing to Paul - because he had bragged on the Corinthians - but it would do some permanent damage to the young Believers in Macedonia.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:5 and make notes:

2 Corinthians - 30 - Giving

"It will be a generous gift - not grudgingly given." Neither the Holy Spirit - nor Paul - wanted the Corinthians to feel that they were victims of extortion - instead of feeling as though they were being "made to hand this money over." The desire was that they would "willingly GIVE the money" - as a heart's desire. Today - we might call this a "freewill offering."

The original Greek word used in this text is "*eulogeia*" - literally means "a blessing." It is the desire for their giving to be "a blessing" rather than something distasteful. Generous giving is the result of a heart that has been touched by Grace. A person who is in love with their money - will begrudge giving any of it away. A person in love with God - will delight in giving to those in need. In order for a person's giving - to be a blessing to the giver - as well as the recipient - that person has to overcome "covetousness."

This section of the letter helps us better understand why Paul sent Titus and two other brothers ahead of him. It helps explain why Paul did not just show up to receive the offering.

In an earlier part of the letter - we were told they were being sent to make sure there was accountability - to make sure Paul wasn't accused of just taking the money for himself - and now in this part of the letter - we find that it was also to make sure the offering was organized - and completed before Paul arrived - in case others should come with him - they would witness a "completed" ministry - and not one that was in-complete - r one that was dis-organized.

There are a couple of important lessons today's Christians need to take away from this short text:

The First connects to an earlier message:

It is extremely important that we do what we say - and that we Complete what we start!

When we proclaim a ministry to the community - or when we start a ministry - it is very important that we actually see it through - and it is important that it is well organized. When young believers - and lost people - hear a church say they are going to provide a ministry - and then it just never happens - some of those young believers will go astray from the Gospel in discouragement - and many of the lost people will never be willing to listen to what the church has to say about the Gospel.

When a church starts a ministry - and then allows it to become dis-organized - it has a similar affect upon the young believers - and the lost. This was not just something important in Paul's day - it is important today - that we do what we say we are going to do - and that we do the ministry in an orderly manner - and that we stay with it until it is complete .

Here's the Second lesson:

Planned giving - should be carefully promoted - while last minute, panicky fund-raising - or emotional appeals -to solve financial crises should be avoided.

2 Corinthians - 30 - Giving

Failure to attend to the first - inevitably leads to the second. Request for help are everywhere these days. Local churches and individual Christians must make discerning decisions. It happens so often to local churches and to individuals - responding to an emotional plea of a spur of the moment request for money - unwise efforts to raise money spring forth.

Very often - we find fund raising being done without proper discretion, - without integrity. Fund raising has become something of a blight upon the Christian faith - and has caused many people to be unwilling to listen to the Gospel message.

Along with praying for discernment concerning where and what to give - we need to plan to give - we need to plan how we will give - and one of the best ways - is for the individuals to have a plan as to how they will give to the local church. When genuine needs arise - we can use that which is in the storehouse to meet the need.

Offering envelopes, - weekly offerings, - and financial updates - should not be techniques for wringing funds from the hands of reluctant givers - but they are to be aids in disciplines that generate gracious gifts. When used in the proper manner - these things are in fact "channels of grace."

Just like Paul was teaching the Corinthians - we must make decisions to plan - and to prepare our giving. And then we must stick to the plan. When we do, it is so much easier to give cheerfully . When the congregation is faithful in continuous giving of their tithes and their offerings - the church has funds available to help those who are in need.

Having a Plan for our giving - and sticking to that Plan - is as important - as having a plan on how to save money for emergencies - or having a plan on how to save money for retirement - or having a plan on how we will get out of the debt created by our "not so good of choices" - and then sticking to that plan. The tragic difference is when we don't stick to our plan for giving - we often have a negative affect upon the lost and the younger Christians. Our lack of integrity in giving can be a hindrance to the spreading of the gospel.

Do we need to get started on some ministry that we have been saying we are going to do?

Do we need to take actions - to complete some ministry we started, but never got around to completing?

Do we need some help in starting a regular and planned ministry of giving?

2 Corinthians - 30 - Giving

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 30 - Giving

(this page for additional notes)

2 Corinthians - 31 - Reason For Giving

I realize - part of the message in this lesson - will not be accepted in some Church circles today. And I realize some church groups - would openly rebuke that part of the message as soon as it is given - but I cannot shy away from unpopular messages. I desire to be obedient to God's leading - and I desire to be faithful to teach "All of God's Word."

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6 and make notes:

Even those individuals in Corinth who did not farm - understood the basic principles of sowing and reaping. The person who sows very few seeds, tends to reap a very small harvest - the one who sows a large number of seeds, tends to reap larger harvest. It is clear that the Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, - is making the point - "giving" - is like "sowing seeds."

What is given - is no more lost - than the seeds a farmer sows - are lost. When we give - the potential is so much like the seed that is sown. It disappears from our sight - but it has the potential to spring up - and to produce fruit. The seed we sow can spring up and provide food - it can meet the needs of a person - or the needs of a family - and that is a "good thing." The seed we sow can produce even more seed - and the multiplying of the seed - could mean meeting the need of many people - or many families - instead of just one person. And so it is with our giving when we give to those in need - what we have given has the potential to spring up - and simply provide the needs of someone or some family - and that - is a really good thing.

Sometimes it has the potential to spring up in the life and heart of the one to whom it is given - and spur them on to give - to the needs of others. In that case - our giving has become even more fruitful. Remember, the Corinthians had promised to send an offering - and they just never got around to sending the offering. They were verbally chastised about putting it off so long.

It was important for the Corinthians to realize - and it is important for us to realize - NOW is the time - to be givers - while we are still in this life, When our earthly life is over - it will be too late to give - to help others.

We have a small and distorted vision of giving - if we only see people in need of earthly goods - and see ourselves as being the benefactor who will help them. We have a much larger view - and might I say - a clear view that is properly focused - when we see ourselves as the spiritually poor - whom the Divine and Generous Benefactor - Jesus Christ - gave to us - while we were not deserving - while we were helpless on our own - without His help - we would still be doomed for eternity.

When our vision of giving begins with this view- then we are capable of seeing those in need in the proper light.

2 Corinthians - 31 - Reason For Giving

Please - Remember this:

Whoever sows sparingly - will also reap sparingly, Whoever sows generously - will also reap generously.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:7 and make notes:

The "tithe" is a tenth of our increase - that is not a debatable thing. The "giving" being spoken of in this text - is "offerings" beyond the tithe. True teachers of God's Word will emphasize the freedom of each person - to give according to what is in their heart. False teachers of God's Word - along with some True teachers - who have been deceived in this area - will emphasize the formula of how much to give in certain cases. The emphasis will be upon calculating to the exact penny - and the specific amount for certain "giving request."

All adults have heard it - there are several variations - but something to the effect of: for a specific giving opportunity - pressure is exerted upon the people - for each person to give a specific amount. For us to give toward some cause because of pressure being placed upon us - is not Christian giving - whether it is some authority over us - or just public opinion.

The Scriptures let us know - that kind of giving does not have "good results." Remember Ananias and Saphira - they felt the pressure of public opinion to sell property and to give the proceeds to the church. They sold their property - and said they gave all of the proceeds to the church - but in reality they only gave part of what they received from the sell of the property - and kept the rest for themselves. For those who might not remember the account - this is the husband and wife who dropped dead in the church - and had to be carried out and buried.

Suffice it to say - giving as a result of being pressured - does not bring God's Best into our lives. And it may help us to remember - The source of our giving is our heart - it is not our bank account.

"Giving with a Cheerful Heart!" - It's more than simply being able to give without "begrudging" the having to give. A person can give without begrudging - because they are hoping - the giving will bring blessings of more. Giving for the sake of gaining more - has ceased to be "goodness." When we give for the purpose of getting more - that is being "greedy" and selfish. When we give out of a simple and unselfish heart - that is "goodness." To give toward some cause - and then to grieve or mourn over the loss of what we have given - is not giving with a cheerful heart. It is what the giver - can give - and take pleasure in having given - it is what the giver can give - and feel that they have been true to their own heart - that is when we are a "cheerful giver."

2 Corinthians - 31 - Reason For Giving

People who give reluctantly - or under compulsion - present a blemished sacrifice. The purpose was not only for money to be contributed to the poor - but for it to be contributed with great eagerness - and joy.

I realize there are a number of groups who present Giving to the needy - from a position of legalism. Alms giving is built into their religious lifestyle requirements. If you don't give at least a certain amount - or if you don't give at least a certain number of times - then your religious piety is unacceptable.

When Jesus instructs Believers to give to the poor - to take care of the widows and orphans - it isn't so that we can earn our Merit Badges - and help us be righteous. God did not appoint the act of alms giving just to meet the needs of the poor. God appointed alms giving not only for the nourishment of the needy - but also for the benefit of the providers.

From my personal experience - I am convinced - it is much more so for the Giver - than for the Receiver.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:8 and make notes:

Please do not rush over this verse quickly. Make All Grace Abound To You - SO THAT - In All Things - AND At All Times - Having All That You Need - You Will Abound In Every Good Work.

The Corinthians are being told - the grace of God is present in them. Just as God's Grace has led their hearts to amend their faults - and to accept the truth of Christian teaching, - so it will assist them, once they have begun, - to abound - in every good work.

What is it that God wants us to take home with us from this text?

There are at least 2 things:

First – Christians Are Free To Give As Their Heart Leads!

When we speak of sowing sparingly - or generously - it can easily lead us to think in terms of quantity. We can see it as - those who give the greatest dollar amount - will get the greatest blessing. It is important for us to remember - God looks at the heart.

2 Corinthians - 31 - Reason For Giving

The measure of our giving is not the external amount - or the quantity we have given. The true measure of our giving - is the internal condition of our heart. When we do it unto the least of these - we are doing it unto Jesus. And let us remember - not only are we Free to Give according to the leading of our Heart - if we want to be more like Jesus - then we will allow others to be Free to Give according to the leading of their Heart - without condemning them or pressuring them.

As Christians - we are Free to give as our heart leads us to give - AND we are to allow others to have the freedom to give as their heart leads them to do. This applies to other Believers who may be our friends or even our relatives.

Secondly – Christians Are To Abound In Good Works!

God does not want us to simply "receive Grace." God doesn't want us to just receive "All Grace." God desires for us to experience "All Grace" in - an "Abounding" manner.

Receiving Grace is a Great Thing - and to receive All Grace is a really Great Thing - but to experience All Grace - and to have it Abound to us is beyond Great. God desires for us to experience All Grace - in an Abounding manner.

In All Things AND At All Times! And God desires for us to have All That We Need!

Those who are into the "Bless Me" theology - will stop before they get to this part of the message. But those of us who are into "All of the Word of God" theology - we include the rest of verse 8 as well.

The reason God wants us to experience All Grace in an Abounding manner - the reason God wants us to experience this in All Things AND at All Times - IS NOT just so we will experience personal blessings - it is So That We Will Abound In Every Good Work!

Those in the "Bless Me" Theology - just never quite go to this place - but those who are eager to Abound in Every Good Work for the Glory of God - they are much more likely to experience All Grace Abounding to them in All Things - AND at All Times - than are those who get stuck in the "bless me Lord - and then bless me some more."

Let us remember - the purpose of God Blessing us - is SO THAT we will be able to do "Good Works."

Maybe some of us need to ask God to help us forgive someone - someone that we hold some hurt or hard feelings toward - because they pressured us to give when it wasn't in our heart to give.

Maybe some us need to ask God to help us change our heart - so that we can give without begrudging our giving - every time we do give.

2 Corinthians - 31 - Reason For Giving

Maybe some of us need to ask God to forgive us - and maybe ask some person to forgive us - because we have not allowed them to have the freedom to give as they felt led.

Maybe some of us need to ask God to help us to grow in our Christian life - to the point that we will desire to do Good Works - and that we will be cheerful about our giving - and be cheerful about the Good Works.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

2 Corinthians - 31 - Reason For Giving

(this page for additional notes)

2 Corinthians - 32 - Seeds and Food

Previously in the message from 2 Corinthians - we were told that there is a relationship between how much we sow - and how much we reap. Generally speaking - with all other factors being equal - the more we sow - the more we are going to reap. The person who sows very little - tends to reap very little.

We were also told - this analogy from farming - applies directly to our generosity in giving to those in need - and our receiving blessings here on earth. The message in this lesson is like the second verse of a song. This message strengthens the previous message - while at the same time it has encouragement of it's own. And this message is more fully understand - and meaningful after having heard the previous message.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:9 and make notes:

In the previous lesson from this letter to the Corinthians - it was about giving from the heart rather than by formula or legalism. Here, reference is made to Psalm 112 - where the righteous man is compared to the wicked man. The gifts which the righteous man gives to the poor - is not what will last forever. It is the righteousness of the righteous person - that will last forever.

When we keep in mind that any righteousness we have - comes from the Lord - then it is easy to understand - how the righteousness will endure forever. For those who have any righteousness - the righteousness we have - is a part of God who lives forever - none of our righteousness is of our doing.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:10 and make notes:

This verse is of great importance! It is in fact the heart of the message. God is not only the "one who supplies the seed" - God is also the "one who supplies the bread." We will come back to this verse shortly.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:11 and make notes:

2 Corinthians - 32 - Seeds and Food

In the previous lesson from 2 Corinthians - we were told - the purpose of us receiving blessings from God - was so - we could abound in good deeds. Here in this verse - the Corinthians are told - if they will be generous in giving to those in need - they will be made rich in "every way."

Let's just cover this before we move on. There are those who use part of this verse to proclaim the message - that those who serve Jesus properly - will become financially rich. This verse does not say that!

This verse says they will be "rich in every way." Surely most of us will agree - that "finances" is not "every way." There are many "ways" concerning life - that have very little - and maybe nothing at all - to do with finances.

A person can have all they need - in the way of worldly goods - and have little finances. A person can have good health physically - and have little finances. A person can have great relationships - and have little finances. A person can have peace with God - and have little finances.

So, to be rich in every way - might include having plenty of finances - but a person who is rich in every other way concerning life - and yet has very little finances - will probably be much happier - than the person who has excess finances - and little riches in other areas of life.

Please don't misunderstand what I am about to say - I have had times of having plenty of finances - and I have had times of not having enough finances. Having plenty of finances seems better than not having enough. I would not dare speak for anyone else - but for me - if I had to choose between being rich with finances - or being rich in the other areas of life - I would choose being rich in the other areas of life for sure.

In this verse - the Corinthians are being encouraged - that not only will God reward their generosity- but because their offerings are being taken to those in need - their generosity will cause others to give Thanks To God! Their generosity will have a good result for them - AND it will have a good result IN others.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:12-13 and make notes:

It is not only those who have been delivered from being in need - who rejoice - but all those who witness the need being supplied. What is given to a few - resounds in praises given to God by many.

2 Corinthians - 32 - Seeds and Food

What is being pointed out here - is that giving to the saints is not just a matter of supplying immediate wants. It has many other ramifications as well - and it leads to blessings of different kinds.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:14 and make notes:

The Macedonians - who were in such need - prayed for the Corinthians - who had so much in the way of worldly things. It would be the most natural thing for those who are poor - to be envious of those who are rich. Isn't this a beautiful picture - beyond just giving thanks to God - for having their needs met - those who are poor in earthly things - praying blessings upon those who are rich in earthly things?

This is one of the ways in which God's Grace is expanded - and God's Praises are multiplied. And the Corinthians will reap the benefit of the prayers of the poor. For those prayers come out of great love.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:15 and make notes:

The word "gift" can refer to "giving" - which met the needs of the poor - but the bigger application is to see it - referring to the indescribable gift - Christ Jesus bestowed upon the world. It is because of the priceless gift of Grace Jesus gave - that such gifts of Grace can take place - that not only allows the Corinthians to give to the poor Macedonians - but allows the Macedonians - to rise above envy - and pray for the welfare of the Corinthians. The gift that Jesus gave is truly indescribable.

It is 2000 years later - and I feel quite certain - we don't yet - know all the ramifications of this marvelous gift Jesus gave.

What are we to take home with us from this text?

Please look again at verse 10. God is the One who supplies seed to sow - and God is the One who supplies food to eat. Why is this such an important statement?

2 Corinthians - 32 - Seeds and Food

Do you remember what was said about the one who sows much tends to reap much - and the one who sows very little tends to reap very little?

Every farmer - and most gardeners know something very important. You can sow the best seeds - you can cultivate just right - you can fertilize just right - you can do everything just right - that a farmer is supposed to do - but if the rains do not come - even though you have done all the right things - you do not reap much at all - if anything.

And if you do all the right things - and too much rain comes - your seeds can wash away - or the crop can be drowned out - and you do not get to reap much if anything. And there are other factors that can wipe out a harvest. So, it is not only God who provides the seed that we get to sow - it is also God who provides the food we get to eat.

God's Word tells us to be diligent in our work - God's Word makes it clear that we are created to work - we are created to be productive. But it is important for us to remember:

We do not get to eat because of the hard work we have done we do not get to eat because we have done all the right things we get to eat because God gives us food.

There are at least two applications of this message for us:

The FIRST - Do Not Take Credit For The Results!

This applies to taking credit for the spiritual results of the ministry we do - and to the results of the gifts we give. But this also applies to the physical or worldly part of our life. We are not to take credit for the results of our investing or saving. This should be readily evident in today's economic situation. There is a large number of people who did all the right things in regard to saving and investing for their retirement and their future. And as a result of the economic failures nationally and globally - they no longer have enough to live off of.

Many who were retired - have found it necessary to go back to work - many who were about to retire have had to put it off indefinitely. And this is not the result of their bad choices - or their lack of being diligent. This is not just the "older adults" - we have many young adults who are discouraged week after week - because they are unable to find work.

For those who do have enough to live - it is because of God - and not because of what we have done. The Credit Belongs To God!

The Second - Do Not Worry About The Future!

On the worldly side of this issue - God has already told us to store up for the future. So we need to be obedient to that and to be diligent to store up.

We should store up financially - and store up food and supplies - but we are not to worry about the future. Remember - the One who provides us with the resources to Store Up - is also the One who will provide us with food when we need it.

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We should indeed be obedient and diligent to store up - but when we have what we need in the future. It will Not Be because we have stored up - it will be because God has provided!

Please hear this - if you have missed everything else in this lesson's message - please listen to this: we are to be obedient to what God has given us to do - we are to be diligent and faithful to the work given to us - But we are not to worry about our future.

The future of every Born Again person is in God's hands. Our future is not in the hands of the Federal Government - our future is not in the hands of the State Government. I am fully aware that some very unwise decisions are being made today - by people who are in leadership - and these decisions can have great consequences for all of us. But every Christian's future is in God's hands.

It is not our Government that provides us with Food! It is not our abilities that provides us with Food! God is the One who provides us with Food!

At the risk of sounding like one who is trying to create fear or panic - I would be failing you terribly if I did not say this - if you do not know Jesus as your Savior - you do indeed have much to worry about. If you are not Saved - please, won't you accept Jesus today - ask him to forgive you of your sins and he will.

If you are Saved - if Jesus is your Savior - do not allow fear - worry - or anxiety to take root in your life.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

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(this page for additional notes)