



**Sunday School Lesson for August 6, 2006.
Released on August 2, 2006.**

"Giving Forgiveness"

Printed Text: **2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 7:2-15**

Background Scripture: **2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 7:2-15**

Devotional Reading: **Matthew 18:21-35**

2 Corinthians 2:5-11

5 But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

6 Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which *was inflicted* of many.

7 So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him.

9 For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

10 To whom ye forgive anything, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

2 Corinthians 7:2-15

2 Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

3 I speak not *this* to condemn *you*: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with *you*.

4 Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

5 For, when we were come into Mace-doni-a, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears.

6 Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

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

9 Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing.

10 For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death,

11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, *what* clearing of yourselves, yea, *what* indignation, yea, *what* fear, yea, *what* vehement desire, yea, *what* zeal, yea, *what* revenge In all *things* ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

12 Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, *I did it* not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

13 Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Ti'tus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

14 For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I *made* before Titus, is found a truth.

15 And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

Lesson Background

From an earlier lesson, we know that Paul founded the church at Corinth as noted in Acts 18:1-18. A few years later, Paul spent a significant amount of time in Ephesus. While there he received a letter from the Corinthians asking for guidance on several difficult issues (1 Corinthians 1:11; 7:1). He responded by sending the letter of 1 Corinthians and also by sending Timothy to assist the struggling church (4:17; 16:5-11).

But these remedies apparently were unsuccessful. After Timothy returned with the bad news, Paul paid them a visit "in heaviness" (2 Corinthians 2:1). This was an unpleasant experience, as Paul apparently had to confront a number of individuals. Paul also suffered slanderous accusations (2 Corinthians 10, 11, 12:11).

After he returned to Ephesus, Paul sent Titus to supervise the situation. Upon hearing no report, he began to worry and decided to return to Corinth. On the way, however, he met Titus coming back to Ephesus over land through Macedonia (Acts 20:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 7:5-7).

Paul was generally pleased with Titus' report, but some issues still needed to be addressed. He therefore sent the letter of 2 Corinthians to prepare the church for his impending return (2 Corinthians 13:1).

Today's Aim

Facts: to examine passages from 2 Corinthians that deal with forgiveness and restoration of damaged relationships.

Principle: to teach the importance of forgiving and restoring relationships between Christians.

Application: to encourage Christians to make the decision to forgive and to make the effort to restore relationships.

1. How many letters did Paul write to the church in Corinth?

It is noted, Paul may have written other letters to the Corinthians: one before 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9) and one between the first and second epistles, often called the sever letter (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:3,4) however, these letters did not survive.

Merciful Judgment (2 Corinthians 2:5-11)

Sufficient Suffering (vs. 5,6)

2a. What offense caused all the "grief" at the church in Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:5,6)?

While in Ephesus, Paul received word that a member of the church in Corinth was having an affair with his stepmother. Paul recognized that the sin involved demanded that this man be barred from the fellowship until he repented (1 Corinthians 5). The Corinthians were tolerating something that should not be tolerated.

In the text before us, we see the opposite extreme. Apparently the Corinthians refuse to forgive a certain man even after he confesses his sin. (This may or may not be the same man in 1 Corinthians 5.) "To some extent," Paul says, "what this individual said or did grieved all of us, not just me." This sets the tone for the remainder of Paul's remarks.

Confirming Love (v. 7, 8)

2b. What should be our guiding force in correcting a believer (vs. 7-10)?

There are two goals to the extreme action of disfellowshipping. One goal is to protect the church's doctrinal and moral purity. The other goal is to bring about the repentance of the wayward believer. The church is not empowered to punish those

who are outside the church; God himself will hand out their punishments in the next life.

The church, instead, is to discipline the backslider who is within the church (1 Corinthians 5:12, 13). A person may be overwhelmed with *sorrow* and grief as a consequence. But if the final result is the person's restoration to a relationship with Christ, then the best possible outcome has been achieved! Godly sorrow leads to repentance.

Even though this man has caused considerable grief, "*love*" must still be the guiding force, not anger and vindictiveness (v. 8). Paul had reminded the Corinthians in his first letter that love "suffereth long, and is kind" (1 Corinthians 13:4). He now urges them to put this principle into action. Church discipline should have a redemptive purpose (Luke 17:3, 4; 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15; James 5:19, 20).

3. Should the church hold anything against a believer if he or she repented (vs. 9,10)?

There is a subtle warning behind verse 9. Paul says that he has written as a test of their loyalty to his teaching. Obviously, if they fail to recognize his authority in such matters, then their obedience will again be called into question. As he says in 2 Corinthians 13:1-3, they need to be ready to answer for their actions when he comes on a third visit.

True repentance before *Christ* brings true forgiveness from Christ (1 John 1:9). The man in question probably has already received Christ's forgiveness based on what Paul has just said in verses 7, 8. Will the Corinthians have the mind of Christ by forgiving that man as well?

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4. How can Satan use an unwillingness to forgive to his advantage and our harm (v. 11)?

We (believers) must understand that an unwillingness to forgive is not a characteristic of God because God is love and He is a forgiving God. In the book of Matthew, Ch. 18, vs. 21-35, instructions on forgiving are given. It uses the illustration of a king who was owed debts from his servants. One particular servant could not pay his debt and asked for mercy, which the king granted. However, this same servant did not extend mercy to his fellow man who owed him and he threw the man in prison. When the king heard about this unkind act, he asked the servant, why he didn't show pity upon his debtor as the he (king) did for him? The king was angry and delivered the servant to the tortures. In the end verse, v. 35, it reads, "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." A lack of forgiveness is offensive not only to fellow believers but most of all to God. If we can't forgive our brother or sister of their trespasses, God will not forgive us of our trespasses which is what satan wants. If we are not forgiven, we do not have a fellowship with the Father and if there is no fellowship, we will not gain eternal life but eternal damnation.

Paul knew it was time for the Corinthians, the repentant offender and himself to restore their fellowship and not allow the incident to become an opportunity for satan to drive a wedge between him and the church. It was important to grant forgiveness so that the man's joy would be restored. Paul also knew there was and is no place in

the church for man-made limits on God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness toward repentant sinners. Such restrictions could only rob the fellowship of the joy of unity.

Paul's Comfort (2 Corinthians 7:2-7)

Self-Defense (vs. 2, 3)

When Paul returned to Corinth earlier, he apparently had been accused of misleading and exploiting the church (see 2 Corinthians 10:1-11). Paul thus sets an example of forgiveness by implying that he harbors no hard feelings in this regard. His motives and actions are always pure. Specifically, Paul never treated anyone disrespectfully, never said anything to encourage moral corruption, and never told the Corinthians what they wanted to hear just to get money (see 1 Corinthians 9:1-12). His actions were always honorable, thus the church is responsible for any hard feelings that ever passed between them.

Although Paul is not responsible for the conflict, he does not lord it over the Corinthians. Even when he uses strong words, Paul's goal is not to "*condemn*" (v. 3 of today's lesson). Instead, he always acts in their best interests. He models the type of loving forgiveness that he now asks them to demonstrate.

5. Why did Paul send Titus to Corinth (v. 5)?

Paul begins to review the recent situation. After his confrontational visit, Paul was forced to return quickly to Ephesus to attend to pressing concerns. He therefore sent his disciple Titus to manage the situation in Corinth. The volatility of the situation left Paul plagued with doubts.

6. How did the coming of Titus encourage the Apostle Paul? (vs. 6,7)

During this time, Paul was experiencing inner turmoil over the prospect of what lay ahead and God came to his rescue. It is the Lord who comforts us in our times of distress. Sometimes He does this through an inner peace that comes to us in the midst of a storm. At other times though, God uses people to bring us comfort. This He did for Paul through the arrival of his coworker Titus. It was not just the sight of Titus that encouraged Paul; it was also the news that he brought. Paul was encouraged by the manner in which the Corinthians comforted Titus, since he brought them such a confrontational letter. Paul was also encouraged by their response to himself, which was manifested in 3 ways: 1- "earnest desire" - they longed to see Paul again and resume their relationship with him; 2 - "mourning" - they were sorrowful over their sin and the breach it created between themselves and Paul; and 3 - "zeal" - they loved Paul to such a degree that they were willing to defend him against those who sought to harm him, specifically the false teachers.

8. Did Paul regret sending the severe letter to Corinth? (vs. 8-9)

Paul did not regret sending the letter, even though it caused them sorrow, because he knew that sorrow over their sin would affect in them repentance leading to obedience. Yet Paul did regret having sent it for a brief time while awaiting Titus'

return, fearing that his letter was too harsh, and that he might have driven them further away from him. In the end, however, he rejoiced because the letter accomplished what he had hoped. The letter produced a sorrow in the Corinthian believers that led them to repent of their sins.

9. What is godly sorrow? What is repentance? (v. 10)

"Godly" sorrow" refers to sorrow that is according to the will of God and produced by the Holy Spirit. True repentance cannot occur apart from such a genuine sorrow over one's sins. In verse 10, Paul was saying that repentance, (turning away from and restoring one's relationship to God), belongs to the realm or sphere of salvation. Repentance is at the very heart of and proves one's salvation: unbelievers repent of their sin initially when they are saved, and then as believers, repent of their sins continually to keep the joy and blessing of their relationship to God.

10. How did Titus feel about the Corinthians after his visit? (v. 15)

Not only was Paul rejoicing about what he had heard from Titus' visit to the Corinthians, but Titus was blessed as well. He was well received by the church which convinced Paul of their willing obedience to his directives and engendered in Titus an affection and appreciation for them. Titus' genuine love for the people no doubt assisted in the healing process for Paul and the Corinthians.

CONCLUSION

Paul had experienced a relationship meltdown in Corinth. An individual there had fallen out of fellowship with God and the Corinthian believers. The church had disciplined the offender. Paul wrote to advocate for this person and to urge the church to forgive and restore. Paul wanted reconciliation and was overjoyed when it happened.

We are all vulnerable in the area of relationships. We all need to be forgiven and to be forgiving. Paul was most gracious to those who had hurt him and the church. Are we willing to extend that same graciousness to those who have offended us?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for being so merciful and gracious. Thank you Lord, God for forgiving us of our trespasses. Teach us thy ways oh Lord, so that we may be forgiving of our brother or sister that they may reconcile themselves back into the inherited kingdom of God. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

If you can't forgive, how can you be forgiven? (see Matthew 6:14,15)

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

"Giving Generously" Study 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

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