

Introduction

1. Last week we noted that the apostle Paul is wrapping up his defense by making two broad appeals to the Corinthians—to be reconciled to God and to himself (and his companions)
2. Last week we look at his appeal to be reconciled to God and noticed three supporting appeals:
 - a. An appeal to not take the grace of God in vain (v. 6:1)
 - b. An appeal to not too closely associate themselves with unbelievers (v. 6:14)
 - c. An appeal to cleanse themselves from all defilement (v. 7:1)—both of these two final appeals get to the heart of the matter, the Corinthian's sin as the cause of the strain on their relationship with God
3. Today we will look at his appeal for the Corinthians to be reconciled to Paul and his companions:
 - a. He pleads with them to open their hearts to him
 - b. He then encourages them by sharing with them the comfort and joy he had received from them

A. Paul appeals to the Corinthians to open their hearts to him once again (7:2-3)

1. Paul's appeal actually begins in 6:11-13 and it is an overtly personal and emotional one (READ):
 - a. Paul had been open and honest with the Corinthians (11): **"Our mouth has spoken freely to you"**—Paul uses the perfect tense here (as he does in the next phrase) to stress the ongoing nature of his openness and affection for them
 - b. In spite of all they had done, Paul had not withheld his affection from them (11b-12a):
 - 1) The NASB reads, **"O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. You are not restrained by us..."**
 - 2) But, most other English translations render the second half differently (and these are preferable):
 - a) NET: **"Our affection for you is not restricted"**
 - b) CSB and NIV: **"We are not withholding our affection from you"**
 - 3) But, the Corinthians had withheld their affection from Paul (12b): **"but you are restrained in your own affections [toward us]"**
 - c. So Paul appeals to them to open their hearts back up to him (13): **"Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide to us also."**
 - 1) He is simply asking for them to reciprocate the affection he has shown them—**"a like exchange"**
 - 2) He is also appealing to them as a father would his own children--**"as to children"** reflects fatherly love and affection, rather than a rebuke of spiritual immaturity:
 - a) He refers to them as **"my beloved children"** in 1 Corinthians 4:14
 - b) He also refers to the Thessalonians (a letter written about the same time) in a similar fashion in 1 Thessalonians 2:11
2. He continues his appeal in 7:2-3: **"Make room for us in your hearts;"**
 - a. His appeal includes further defense of his actions (he makes three claims):

- 1) **"We wronged no one..."** (2)—possibly a defense against claims of the false teachers
 - 2) **"We corrupted no one..."**
 - a) The idea of ruining or destroying someone
 - b) Paul links this word to false teaching and teachers in 2 Corinthians 11:3, does Peter (2 Peter 2:12) and Jude (Jude 1:10)
 - c) While Paul had not, the false teachers at Corinth **had** corrupted the Corinthians
 - 3) **"We took advantage of no one."**
 - a) To take advantage of someone as a result of greed; to exploit
 - b) This is probably a defense against the false teachers claims that Paul was taking advantage of them secretly by publicly declining payment or financial help, but then secretly using the collection made by Titus for himself
- b. It even includes a defense of his motives (3-4): **"I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together."**
- a. Paul intent was not to **"condemn"** them because (Greek gar) they were in his heart—so much so that was willing to live or die with them
 - b. Further evidence of his motives not to condemn them is found in the optimism that Paul had regarding the Corinthians (4): **"Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction."**
3. Practical Application:
- a. Paul's response to the Corinthians is remarkable—how often do we see someone who has been so wounded, so mistreated, respond with such love and affection, and then intently desire to have that affection reciprocated?
 - b. How often do we cut someone off, withhold our affection, when they offend us?
 - c. Paul has already encouraged us to not only forgive others when they repent, but to go beyond forgiveness to encouragement
 - d. Here he shows us by his own example what is expected of us when we are mistreated by our brothers and sisters in Christ

B. Paul encourages the Corinthians by sharing the comfort and joy he had received on their behalf (7:5-16)

1. Paul was comforted by Titus and the news he brought regarding the Corinthians' repentance (5-7a):
 - a. When Paul and his companions were at Macedonia they not only faced tremendous persecution but emotional turmoil:
 - 1) There was the regular, ongoing persecution they faced everywhere (5): **"For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within."**
 - 2) But there was also the emotional anguish of waiting for news from Titus after he delivered the severe letter (2 Corinthians 2:13): **"I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia."**
 - b. But, God comforted him when Titus finally arrived:

- 1) He was comforted by Titus's physical presence (6): **"But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;"**
- 2) Even more so, he was comforted by what he learned from Titus (7):
 - a) Titus had been comforted by them: **"and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you":**
 - b) Titus reported their **"longing"**—refers to a deep desire but there is no object so it's unclear to what Paul is referring; it's possible that "for me" applies to all three words—longing, mourning and zeal (e.g. longing for me, grieving for me, zeal on behalf of me)
 - c) He reported their **"mourning"**—grief or sorry, possibly on behalf of Paul
 - d) He reported their **"zeal"** for Paul—deep concern for or devotion to someone
2. Paul also rejoiced over the Corinthians (three things; 7b-16): **"so that I rejoiced even more"**
 - a. The FIRST: He rejoiced that the sorrow caused by his severe letter resulted in their repentance (8-9a): **"For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it [present tense]; though I did regret it [past tense]-- for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while--I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance."**
 - 1) That is the nature of Godly sorrow (9b-10):
 - a) Godly sorrow leads to genuine repentance (9b-10): **"for you were made sorrowful according to God [lit.], so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to God [lit.] produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation"**
 - b) Worldly sorrow leads to death (10b): **"but the sorrow of the world produces death."**
 - 2) To Paul's joy, this godly sorrow produced more than simply repentance in the Corinthians, it produced an eagerness to do the right thing on Paul's behalf (11): **"For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter."**
 - a) In essence, what Paul is saying here is that the Godly sorrow they experienced produced an earnestness (eagerness) within them to vindicate themselves by doing the right thing and correcting the wrong that had been done to Paul
 - b) By doing so, they had **"proven themselves to be innocent in the matter"** (11b)--This implies that the real issue—the Corinthians sin—may have been one of omission rather than commission:
 - Sin of Commission—sin committed by doing something (e.g. the false teachers' accusations against Paul)
 - Sin of Omission—sin committed by not doing something, and in this case the Corinthians not standing up for Paul or defending him against the accusations made by the false teachers
 - This is further supported by v. 12: **"So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf (e.g. to defend Paul) might be made known to you in the sight of God."**

- b. The SECOND: He rejoiced because of the joy they brought Titus by refreshing his spirit (13): **“For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.”**
 - 1) Paul had boasted to Titus about the Corinthians and his boasting proved true (14): **“For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth.”**
 - 2) Titus’s affection grew as a result of their obedience and how they received him (15): **“His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.”**
- c. The THIRD: He rejoiced because of his confidence in them (16): **“I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.”**
- 3. Practical Application:
 - a. When someone sins against us, or simply fails to do right by us, and then repents or does what’s right, what’s our response?
 - b. Do we find ourselves comforted by their repentance, or do we continue to stew over what happened, dwell on it, let it eat away at us and continue to cause misery?
 - c. Do we rejoice over our brother’s or sister’s repentance as Paul did, and allow it to bring us joy as Titus did?
 - d. We saw in Paul throughout this passage an earnest desire to re-capture (if you will) the Corinthians love and affection for him and he did that by encouraging them after their repentance and reminding them of the comfort and joy their response brought to his life
 - e. I am more convinced than ever that while sin against one another can destroy relationships, just as dangerous is how we respond to repentance
 - f. When we are sinned against or offended it can be hard to forgive, even when the offender repents or asks for forgiveness
 - g. Sometime it’s even harder to find comfort or joy as Paul and Titus did
 - h. But, this is what we are called to...and something Jesus does when we repent