

## 2 Cor 7:1-16 – Real repentance leads to joy

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Main point – repenting of sin leads to salvation and joy

This was a big week in the media, because after an 11 week trial, **Erin Patterson (SLIDE)** was found guilty of murdering 3 relatives and of attempted murder of another, with deadly mushrooms.

Her tears of sadness & regret have been played over and over.

And it led me to ask, Was she grieved over their accidental deaths, or that she was caught and imprisoned?-----

So many people when they are caught-out for doing wrong, only feel sad for the consequences they suffer, not the wrong they did.

[9 & 11 - Just like the Mum noticed about her son in the kids talk]

But even as adults, if we've done wrong, we can be so quick to grieve the consequences, or make excuses, blame others, and not take responsibility.

But if we're not sad about our sin, we won't repent of it, we won't change, and we'll miss out on the salvation and joy that God offers.-----

If you've just joined us today, we've been going through a series in this letter 2 Corinthians, written by the apostle Paul, a follower of Jesus, to the church in Corinth.

Paul has had a strained relationship with the church.

He'd shared the good news of Jesus with them, planted the church, taught them for some time, then moved on. **(SLIDE)**

You can see from this slide that he made a painful return visit, then wrote a tearful letter, that we heard about in ch 2.---

And remember that in Paul's absence, other false teachers, have come to the church and led people away from the apostolic Gospel.

People have been tempted to focus on showy success, materialism & power.

Whereas Paul has been speaking about his weakness, and how the power of God and glory of Christ gets to shine-out through our weakness, as we serve Jesus.

The Corinthian Christians are being lured away from Paul's message about Jesus.

And last week in ch 6 we heard Paul urge them to Not receive God's grace in vain.

He called them to act now.

To stick with the Gospel – the good news about Jesus – and live differently.

### Let's consider Paul's Real Honesty **(SLIDE)**

Real honesty in vv1-4.

Make room in your hearts for us.

There's many in the church who are listening to and siding with the false teachers.

Paul's honest about he and Timothy and his team's integrity: We have wronged no one, corrupted no one, taken advantage of no one.

500 years ago **John Calvin** wrote about this and said Paul's highlighting 3 dangers anyone in Gospel ministry faces:

1, being too harsh.

2, leading people astray through teaching wrong ideas.

And 3, being greedy.

And Paul is saying, I've done everything I can to not slip into any of those things, but pursued integrity.

Like when he said back in ch1v12, we have a clear conscience.-----

However, while Paul's honest, he's not condemning of the Corinthians, he really loves them & has them in his heart.

And **v4**, I am very frank with you – so it's truth and love.-----

In his letters to the Corinthians Paul has been real with them, speaking honestly, openly and for their good.[cf. Matt 18.15-20]

Even when he said hard things, it was for their good.

Look at **v8**, even if I grieved you with my letter I don't regret it.

Remember that's the tearful letter referred to in **ch2 v3(SLIDE)**

If you were here back in May, when we considered ch2 you may recall that someone in the church had probably sinned against Paul publicly.(as in ch7 v12)

Paul's likely been falsely accused, yet he shows Christlike love in the way he responds.-----  
(SLIDE)

And the apostle had rebuked the sin, and asked the church to discipline this man & call him to repentance.

And in ch2 we learn the man who'd sinned had repented, and so was to be forgiven & welcomed back.-----

It's not easy to love those who don't love you. I find it hard.

And when someone does wrong or treats us or others badly, for many of us it can be hard to raise it with them, and speak honestly.

Some of us find it hard to raise criticisms that can cause conflict.

But we also need to be prepared to gently and lovingly call sin 'sin'.

For real love seeks the good of people, and it'll sometimes be seen in direct words spoken in love.-----

Sometimes we need to say what needs to be said, and ask people to stop, and repent.

Maybe it's the way your family member, or a student at school, is treating you.

Maybe it's the sin you experience from a friend, or fellow believer.

Maybe it's someone you see walking away from Jesus, and you need to snatch them from the fire (Jude 23).

We Christians are called to speak truth in love, even seeking the repentance of others – for their good, and for our unity and fellowship.

Is there someone you should have a conversation with?-----

In ch7 **v5**, Paul says we had no rest when we came to Macedonia.

That's because he didn't want to go to Corinth until he'd given the Corinthians time to respond to his tearful letter.

So he went to Macedonia first, and experienced many troubles & pressures, conflicts on the outside, and fears within.

Likely fears about how the Corinthians were going.-----

He's being really open.-----

While also urging the church to stick with the Gospel, and stick with his teaching, remembering what life in Christ involves.

He has been fighting desperately to win the hearts and minds of the church family in Corinth.

We haven't had any confidence so far that his efforts would be successful.-----

But now suddenly his mood changes.

This tells us that life is complex.

In chapters 1-6 Paul's been speaking to those who were wavering – people influenced by their culture and favourite preachers.

But there's more to the story, and others in the church, who encourage him with their response.

Let's come to **Point 2, Repentance(SLIDE)**

**v9**, your grief led to repentance.-----

You were grieved/ saddened/ sorrowful, and that godly grief produced repentance, that led to salvation.-----

**Little Kenny** was asked by his mother to not eat the chocolate muffins on the bench, for they were for dessert tonight when the guests came.

But Kenny couldn't resist.

When his Mum had gone out of the room he scoffed down not one, but two muffins, and then ran off to hide behind the curtain.-----

5 mins later when his Mum came back to the kitchen and found two muffins gone.

When she found Kenny, he burst into tears.(SLIDE)

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry Mummy", he cried.-----

Kenny was feeling 'worldly sorrow', he was very sorry for the consequences his choice brought.

He was definitely sorry and sad for what he'd done, but only cos he got caught and knew he'd suffer the consequences.-----

And adults might be better at hiding their sin, but so often our hearts haven't changed.

Maybe you know you've been doing wrong; hurting someone, or continuing in that sin without seeking help or change, even if sometimes feeling bad about it.

Maybe deep down you know you've been ignoring God lately, or all your life, and now you're convicted.

[As we learnt in kids talk/ from Kenny] worldly grief is sadness that you're suffering the consequences of your choices and sins.

A selfish sadness that leads you to lash out at others, blame others, or wallow in self-pity.

**Godly grief** is a grief over your sin, a sadness that you've wronged God, and which leads you to want to stop.

Stop, turn back to God, trust in Jesus and ask for forgiveness.

Godly grief comes as you remember that sin has consequences.

And the consequence and punishment for our sin, came down on Jesus, as he died on the cross in our place, for our forgiveness.-----

And many in the Corinthian church experienced this and did repent.

**Repentance** is a change of mind and direction.(SLIDE)

Repentance towards God, is a turning back to God by trusting Jesus and committing to do what he says.-----

[The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) ch15 has a helpful and comprehensive definition]

So when you have godly grief that produces repentance - the tears are real, the words are humble, the determination to turn to God is obvious, the change is real; and resulting joy is real.

Look at what their godly sorrow produced in the Corinthians, **v11** -

desire to live differently, to hate their sin, and be committed to doing right.

They renewed their devotion to Paul and the truth about Christ he spoke (v12).

They welcome Titus, loved Titus, and welcomed Paul's message through him.

They obeyed, **v15**.-----

This is all the fruit of repentance, the change and transformation that showed the repentance was real.-----

Maybe there something you need to repent of today?

If so, what are you doing to do about it?-----

Are you actually sorry for your sin, sad that you've wronged the God who made you, sad that it took Jesus going to the cross to forgive you?

And will you commit to trust in Jesus and to change with God's help.

That's repentance.

Have you done that?-----

Don't settle for shallow fake apologies to people, or to God?

Crocodile tears, n' insincere apologies won't cut it.

God sees through it.

And worldly grief will only end in regret and **death**.

That is eternal death, eternal separation from God and all that is good.

It's the eternal punishment, Jesus speaks of in **Matt 25.46**.(SLIDE & Mt 22.13; Rev 20.14)

So don't just say sorry for your sin then think it doesn't matter if you keep on sinning.

Godly sorrow, leads to change, a turning away from sin, and from leaving God out of your life, out of your choices.

Turning to God means desiring not to do it again.-----

True repentance includes a heart-felt, honest commitment to live God's way.

So pray for that.-----

And wonderfully, repentance leads to salvation.

It leads to forgiveness, restored relationship with God, and life forever; no regrets.

It's the best.-----

I love **Pharrell William's hit song, Happy.(SLIDE)**

It has such a catchy beat, and makes you feel happy.

But I don't think I agree that I can just feel Happy in the face of 'bad news, so 'can't nothing bring me down.

And I'm not sure sure what it feels like 'a room without a roof'.

But you can't deny that he is happy – at least he was when signing it.

The remarkable thing is when you come to this passage in 2 Cor 7, Paul does actually sound happy.

**My 3<sup>rd</sup> point is, Rejoicing.**

Did you notice that repeated theme as we went through.

Come with me – **v4** – I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy in all our afflictions.

Titus had been sent to find out how the Corinthians responded to the tearful letter.

And he'd finally returned to Paul in Macedonia, and brought back good news.

**V7**, Titus told us of your deep longing, your sorrow, grief over their sin or treatment of Paul presumably, and of their zeal and concern for Paul.

And how did Paul feel about that?

Paul was **comforted**, encouraged, by it.

Remember **ch1** started with Paul speaking about,(**SLIDE**) 'the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our affliction'.-----

In this case, God comforted Paul by the coming of Titus.

The good news of the positive state of the church, and positive response to Paul's letter gave him comfort.-----

There are many opportunities for us to comfort others in the body of Christ.-----

There's the person feeling down or depressed,

the person with a difficult job or no job,

the person who has cancer, or who's caring for someone ill,

there's people with relationship struggles, special needs children, loneliness, all sorts of hardships.

We're actually all people in need of care, and we minister to others in need of care.

And we can care for & comfort one another with our visit, our time, our listening; our text, our presence at growth group, or the assurance of our prayers.

On top of comfort Paul says at the end of **v7**, 'I **rejoiced** even more.'

And in **v9**, I **rejoice** that your grief led to repentance.

Same in **v13**, Paul experiences, he feels, joy.-----

I've never lived through a world war.

I've never lived through having a loved-one serve in the military overseas, especially when written letters was the only means of communicating.

**My wife Kirsti's grandfather William**, served in the Pacific in WW2,(**SLIDE**) and he was gone for years.

And that meant no news for many months, for his wife and family.

In this age of email, texts, video & zoom calls from across the globe, we struggle to comprehend that.

But when you've heard no news from the one you love, and you've feared for the worst; to finally hear good news brings great great joy.

That's what Paul felt now.-----

To hear that the ones we love are going on-in the Lord, following God's word, brings joy.

If we really love others in Christ, we will be comforted to hear good news of their walk with Christ.-----

And maybe, like Paul, we should tell them how encouraged we are, encouraged, thankful, joyful, that they are sticking with Jesus, or serving faithfully.

Or maybe we should tell those we serve with or lead, or walk beside that we have 'confidence in them', as Paul does in **v16**.

A confidence that comes as we trust in God's power and grace to work.

So let's build each other up with our words.-----

Maybe there's someone you could encourage this week?-----

The apostle rejoices at the response of others to the truth of Jesus, rejoices at their repentance.

His rejoicing is mentioned again in **v16** – I trust you sense his joy & happiness through the chapter. **(SLIDE)**

Like a father who's watched his child being operated on, Paul rejoices not for the pain being inflicted, but for the cure which is the ultimate result

Paul said what he had to, they were grieved into repenting, and the result was joy, for Paul, and I'm sure, for them.-----

**In the 7 years I've been at Bundy I've honestly rejoiced, at seeing** people turn away from only praying for their own felt needs, to pray Big prayers for others to come to know Jesus. I've rejoiced when people said 'No' to the easy option of avoiding someone who hurt them, and choose to talk with them, and seek reconciliation.

I've rejoiced to see people repent of their selfishness and anger, to love their spouse.

I've rejoiced in knowing that people have turned from sexually immorality and pornography, to find real joy and fulfilment in Jesus.

I've rejoiced seeing people in affliction & under great pressures, not abandon trusting God, but day after day turn again to Christ in faith.

I've rejoiced seeing people move from a focus on self, and my comfort or my nuclear family, to focus on serving others sacrificially in God's family here.

I've rejoiced in seeing young people say No to the fleeting priorities and pleasures of this world, to find a greater joy in Jesus, as they professed faith in him.

I've rejoiced in seeing people move from death to life, from despair to hope, from being separated from God to salvation, as they committed to trust and follow Jesus, and were baptized.

And I pray, that we will experience much more joy in 5 weeks time when our 'Meet Jesus Sundays' begin. And by God's grace, more people will hear the Good News of Jesus, repent and believe, and be saved.

Please pray with me that we will invite many to hear the life changing news of Jesus and experience salvation and eternal life.

### **As I conclude I ask, Is repentance part of your life?(SLIDE)**

And please be really honest, with yourself, and with God.

Is repentance part of your life?-----

And not just the once-for-all life change of repentance and choosing to trust n' follow Jesus, but also the daily and constantly repenting of our sins.

What needs to change for you?-----

And don't forget, really repenting of sin leads to salvation, and joy.

Let's pray.