

The Fruit of Godly Sorrow

2 Corinthians 7:8-13

Introduction

1. In 2 Tim. 3:16-17 we learn that the scriptures are useful for several things, among which are correction and instruction.
2. When faced with the correction that God offers through His word many people respond differently.
 - a. Some people become angry (Gen. 4:4-8, Cain).
 - b. Some people know what they need to do, but never put forth the effort to make the necessary changes (Acts 24:25).
 - c. Some people, reluctant to admit their wrongs or the wrongs of others, strive to justify their actions (Mal. 1:6-7; 2 Pet. 3:16).
 - d. Then there are those few who accept correction as if it were a glass of fresh water (Psalm 119:57-64).
3. Have you ever stopped to consider how you respond to correction?
4. Though most people feel justified in the way they respond to the scriptures, let us consider Paul's second letter to the Corinthians to see how God would like us to respond 2 Corinthians 7:8-12.

Discussion

I. Paul's Rebuke to the Corinthians

- A. In his first letter Paul gave many rebukes concerning the character and works of the church at Corinth.
 1. 1 Cor. 1:11, 3:1-4 – There were divisions and therefore carnality among them.
 2. 1 Cor. 5:1-2 – Immoral behavior among them.
 3. 1 Cor. 5:6 – Glorifying of greatness when sin was present.
 4. 1 Cor. 11:17 – Improper use of the Lord's Supper.
 5. If they were to become sorrowful, either in anger or sadness, then they would have much to be sorry for.
- B. Paul's concerns about his rebuke.
 1. Paul feared that Titus, who delivered the first letter to the Corinthians, may have been injured, either by them or by some other force (2 Cor. 7:6).
 - a. As we interact with our brethren, we need to take note of Paul's concern.
 - b. It takes great care and strength to correct a person or group of people whom we love.
 - c. When we are corrected we should consider the Lord's servant who loves us enough to pull us out of the fire (Jude 23).

- d. We should consider the source of their correction. After all, this is one of the reasons God gave us His word. If we truly love the Lord then we will love correction and change our ways accordingly.
 - e. When a person corrects us, we need to remember that most of the time, they are doing so with great fear and trembling.
2. If we are the ones giving the rebuke, we must notice that Paul did not withhold his correction just because he was afraid.
 - a. As Jesus said, “*But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth*” (John 16:6-7a).
 - b. Correction is needed from time to time. If we are on the giving end, we cannot withhold it, for the truth must be spoken.
 - c. If we are on the receiving end we need to respect the authority of God’s word as well as those who have love enough to give us such correction.
- C. Paul’s comfort in the Corinthians’ response.
1. When we respond to instruction in a godly manner we bring joy to our brethren as well as to God.
 2. When Paul heard of the Corinthians’ response it filled his heart with relief and gladness according to 2 Cor. 7:7-9.
 3. This shows the love that he put into his instruction. His desire was for the betterment of those whom he instructed.
 4. This is a good application for all of God’s people.
 - a. Those who are in the world see correction as a negative thing. But when we put on a heart of love and of righteousness, we are able to see the joy and peace that can come through godly instruction.
 - b. Paul told the Corinthians to “*...be of the same mind, speak the same things, that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (1 Cor. 1:10).
 - c. We too can have this unity among ourselves when we are willing to give and to receive godly instruction.
 - d. This is a source of great joy to the Lord (Luke 15:7).

II. The Corinthian’s Response to Paul’s Rebuke (vs. 9-11).

- A. Let us now look at how the Corinthian’s responded, so that we may know how to bring God such joy in our lives.
1. They were made sorry in a godly manner (vs. 9, 11).
 2. Paul did not strive to make people sorry; rather his purpose was to make them right with God.
- B. Their sorrow led them to repentance.
1. They did not become angry, nor did they try to justify their actions.
 2. Rather, their sorrow was such that it caused them to repent of what they had done.

3. They were **sorry** that they had sinned and determined to **discontinue** that sin (2 Cor. 7:11 – clearing).
- C. Their sorrow produced...
1. **Diligence.**
 - a. They didn't mope around in self-pity.
 - b. They didn't become bitter and gossip about Paul.
 - c. Their desire to do right sparked an attitude of diligence to get the job done.
 2. **Clearing of themselves:** They worked ever harder to correct the wrong that they had done.
 3. **Indignation:** Anger or wrath, not directed toward Paul, but at the sin that existed among them (Ps. 119:104, 128).
 4. **Fear:** Without their fear of God they would not have changed. But notice, Paul's rebuke was such that it made them fear for their souls. Do you tremble in fear when you sin?
 5. **Vehement Desire:** An earnest desire, a great longing. For what? For truth, for righteousness in our lives.
 6. **Zeal:** Fervent in our efforts, a fierceness toward learning and applying God's word and for putting away sinfulness.
 7. **Vindication:** Also revenge or punishment toward the sin that had been taking place. **Note: Godly sorrow will not allow us to tolerate sin, rather it causes us to zealously overcome it and cast it from our midst.**
 8. This is the type of reaction is God's desires of us when we are corrected. This is what all of us must strive to be like when we are told how we can do better!
 9. Some people hate the thought of being sorry. But remember, "*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, **not to be regretted.***"

III. Making the Application

- A. Consider the many things that the Corinthians were rebuked for.
 1. Too often Christians today fail to listen even to the smallest correction or suggestion that is meant to help them grow in their spiritual life.
 2. There is an ever-growing doctrine that says "God's grace will cover me, even though I continue in sin."
 3. Do not be deceived by such lies. God has said, "*Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity*" (2 Tim. 2:19).
 4. Do not be like Cain, the rich young ruler and the Jews of Jesus day who saw correction as more of an insult than as an opportunity for growth? Do not be like the men of the world who think they can twist God's word to justify themselves.
- B. Think of the growth we can experience when we set aside our foolish pride and put on a hunger for God's righteousness.
 1. Do you desire change for the better in your life?
 2. Do you desire to be a faithful and productive servant for God?

3. If we put on the character Paul speaks of in this passage God can cause all of this to happen in our lives, as it is written, “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (Rom. 12:2).

Conclusion

1. If you are not a Christian, God is inviting you to make some changes in your life.
2. “*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands **all men everywhere to repent**, because He has appointed a day on which **He will judge the world in righteousness** by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*”
3. Before Paul became an apostle he too was living in sin and was without Christ. But as he sat in sorrow over his sins he was told by Ananias, “*And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord*” (Acts 22:16).
4. If you are a Christian and you find that your attitude toward correction and instruction is contrary God’s will, put off your stubborn heart and make it right with God today.

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