

Lesson Eight

(7:2-16)

SECTION XI 7:2-16

2 Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. 3 I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. 4 I have great confidence in you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. With all our affliction, I am overjoyed.

5 For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. 6 But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 7 and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. 8 For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it), for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. 9 As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were

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grieved into repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. 10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. 11 For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. 12 So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your zeal for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. 13 Therefore we are comforted.

And besides your own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all. 14 For if I have expressed to him some pride in you, I was not put to shame; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting before Titus has proved true. 15 And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, and the fear and trembling with which you received him, 16 I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you.

V. 2 — Repeating the thought of 6:11-13, the point being that Paul had been quite open and candid with the people, attempting to “do honestly.” Because he had done no evil (= wronged, corrupted, taken advantage), but rather was making every effort to do good, they should respond likewise. Some consider that accusations had been made that required the specific denials—perhaps so, but it may just have been Paul’s way of clearly denying any wrong done, as he seemed to say in an earlier text, 1 Corinthians 4:4. He had appealed to his example of consecration as a reason for their consecration, and also as a reason for continual fellowship.

V. 3 — With such a wealth of love as Paul had for them, no thought should have been given that he was condemning them. He had given to them without reserving anything for himself, showing how much faith he had in them.

V. 4 — He had nothing but good will for them, confidence and joy in them, and all that in the midst of various types of afflictions. (You might want to reread 4:7-12 in light of this text.) If these things be so, only their good was in mind.

V. 5 — Picking up where ch. 2:13 left off, the visit and results of the visit to them of Titus is spelled out (though some of the evident results of that visit can be “felt” in 2:13—7:1). Somewhat of interest is the fact that Paul uses *σάρξ* (= flesh) here in about the same way as

πνεῦμα (= spirit) in 2:13, showing that sometimes these overlap in meaning, while at other times not (cf. I Cor. 3:1ff.). Notice both the external problems ("fighting without") and the internal state of mind ("fear within"), the last mostly because of concern for them.

V. 6 — A passage very parallel to our text is I Thessalonians 3:1-10. We should also recall ch. 1:3-11 in our thinking about this section.

downcast — the same Greek word as in Matthew 11:29 ("lowly"); Romans 12:16 ("lowly"); II Corinthians 10:1 ("humble"), 11:7 ("abasing"); Philippians 3:21 ("lowly"). Paul could counsel others to be "of good cheer" but he himself needed such encouragement as he gave to others. In Acts 27, he could give encouragement, but read Acts 28:15.

Titus — He had evidently been sent with a letter and/or to check on the results of a previous letter (such as I Corinthians), and this seemingly in place of Paul, 2:1. His good news was that which we read in vs. 7-12.

V. 7 — **longing** — Apparently their desire to see Paul, which would have been the response he wanted, and had asked for in such texts as 6:11-13; 7:2.

mourning — Lamentation, evidently about their problems, etc. The only other place where this word occurs is in Matthew 2:18, in conjunction with "wailing," which is the normal context for this word.

zeal — Since this was in behalf of Paul rather than his opponents, he rejoiced greatly.

V. 8 — The letter Paul sent (either I Corinthians or some other letter) had several different effects: it made Paul feel remorse about having to write it though he wrote it anyway (showing how emotions and will may be at variance); and it caused sorrow (not remorse) to the people, which produced the transformation of mind among them that was needed (and for which no remorse or sorrow need be felt). One cannot always know how an admonition will be taken, regardless of in what good manner and nature it be given.

V. 9 — **repenting** — It is somewhat of a pity that the Greek term got "stuck" with the English word "repentance" which often has been colored with the Roman Catholic idea of penitence (i.e., "doing penance" as in works, etc.). It is not being sorry and attempting to "undo" what has been done, or even being sorry (i.e., grieving, mourning, etc.). It is, in fact, simply and only a change of mind, which may/may not be produced by sorrow. Moreover, it has to do with changing one's future (ref. Luke 3:8-14) rather than the past (the past is history and can't be retraced), and therefore looks forward much more than back. The future may well be, and should be, in contrast to the past; but it is the future with which repentance is

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concerned — all the future. The “repentant mind” is to be a constant for the Christian. It will be noted that (godly) sorrow is not repentance, however good said sorrow might otherwise be. The command in the New Testament is not “be sorrowful” but rather “change your mind.” As is evident in our text, such a mind transformation will produce various effects, as in v. 11. Consider the same idea in Romans 12:1-2.

Repentance is the means by which we receive the grace of God for our sins, and by which we maintain that relationship. We must see that it is necessary to do more than just get earthly relationships right — we must get right with God.

godly grief — Perhaps best understood as a grief that effects the change of mind that God desires, and then brings “life” with no regret. Any other grief does not do so, and is ultimately regretted, since death results.

V. 11 — This verse states the varied results of their repentance; all of them together being what Paul desired in their lives. Notice that it is Christians who are having the “mind change” and the resultant changes in life.

V. 12 — This verse is probably best understood to say that the primary purpose of the letter was not to deal with the person doing wrong or the person being wronged, though each was important; but rather in the interest of the total congregation, which seemingly did not perceive the state of affairs in which they were. They evidently did not understand how many parties were involved in the matter, nor how they should have acted. In such a situation, God, the offender, the church and society in general, were all involved.

V. 13 — Repeating the idea in v. 6 and v. 7. Paul evidently was concerned about Titus as well as how the Corinthians would react to Titus, and these things in addition to the reactions to his letter.

V. 14 — It may well be that Titus took our letter back to Corinth. It is certain that he was sent there to help take up the special offering for the Judean saints. Hence, what is said here will be helpful to those ends. We surely ought to see how Paul built up the Corinthians in the mind of Titus, and what state of mind Titus had when he arrived in Corinth. People often do what is expected when they would not have done so on their own accord.

V. 15 — The affections (= “heart”) of Titus for the Corinthians were increased as a result of the good responses he had seen among them.

fear and trembling — As we are treated to the various ways people felt in Corinth, and the feelings of Paul’s company, it is quite clear that the situation was critical, with much at stake. Compare Ephesians 6:5 and Philippians 2:12.

V. 16 — Note how much the ideas of courage/fear have been

mentioned: 3:12; 4:1, 16; 5:6, 8. With such good reactions, the proposed special offering can proceed as planned.

QUESTIONS:

54. How much interest did Paul have in the Corinthians?
55. Could one's life have affliction and joy at the same time?
56. How did God comfort Paul?
57. Did Paul regret having to write a letter to Corinth?
58. What is the difference between "godly fear" and "repentance"?
59. Is repentance a poor term to use (i.e., do you actually know what repentance is from Scripture)?
60. Why must a Christian be characterized by a constant "change of mind"?