

Chapter Seven

THE PROBLEM OF REPENTANCE

7:2-16

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why would an apostle have to urge christians to “open” their hearts to him?
2. How could Paul say he did not regret making the Corinthians sorry by his letter?
3. Is there actually a danger that christians might have only “worldly” grief?
4. Can there be grief without regret, even if it is “godly grief”?
5. Why is Paul so concerned about the experience Titus had with the Corinthians?

SECTION 1

Augmentation (7:2-9)

2 Open your hearts to us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. ³I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. ⁴I 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. ⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷and 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. ⁸For 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. ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into

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repenting; for you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

7:2-4 Passion: Repentance has been defined by William Chamberlain as “a pilgrimage from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ.” In other words, repentance is an ongoing, constant battle to bring the believer’s *mind* and *body* into captivity unto Christ (see II Cor. 10:3-5). Repentance is not a one-time event in the life of a believer. Repentance and spiritual growth are synonymous. It is an ever recurring problem for preachers — in their own lives, certainly — but also in their struggle to produce it in the lives of those to whom they minister. Repentance is the primary goal of all preaching (see Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 11:18; 17:30-31, etc.). When Christ evaluated the seven churches of Asia Minor in order to prepare them for the “great tribulation” at the hands of beastly Rome, he admonished them to “repent.”

The fundamental problem preachers have with repentance is its augmentation. Even apostles struggled in their ministries to produce repentance in people. Paul had been dealing for a long time with the need of the Corinthian christians to repent of their arrogance toward the sinful man and woman in the congregation (see comments I Cor. 5:1ff). Paul had been severe in his communications with the Corinthians, both face to face, and in writing. This had caused some believers at Corinth to react with hostility toward Paul, slandering his character. This posed another sin from which he admonished them to repent. Paul wrote a “severe” third letter and sent it to Titus. While Titus was away in Corinth, Paul grieved that it had been necessary to be severe with people so dear to his heart. Titus returned with the good news that the Corinthians had repented. Paul was elated! And in this “fourth” letter (better known as II Corinthians) he bared his soul as he related the problem he had bringing them to repentance. The Corinthians had repented, but evidently they were still “stand-offish” toward Paul. Perhaps they were afraid the apostle was still angry with them. They were still smarting from his rebukes and were determined they would not involve themselves emotionally with him so as to be hurt again. They would be christian “brothers” again, but not friends! But true repentance must result in reconciliation!

So Paul shows that *passion* (earnest love) is part and parcel with

the severity that produces repentance. Paul has already plead with them (see II Cor. 6:11-13) to "widen their hearts" to make room for him. He has already stated (6:11-13) that full reconciliation between them awaits only the restoration of their affections — not his. Now, after a brief parenthetical warning against an attitude of paganism, he repeats his fervent plea for a restored friendship. He says, "Open your hearts to us . . ." (Gr. *Chroesate hemas*, "contain us, or, make room for us"). The word "heart" is not in the text, but may be understood from the previous discussion (II Cor. 6:11-13). Had Paul never felt *passionately* attached to these Corinthians, he would never have rebuked them for their sins. He would not have cared whether they would repent or not. He would have justified himself expressing no interest in their reformation, and washed his hands of the entire matter. But Paul did not do that. He persisted. He kept on admonishing them until they changed their minds and their actions. And it was his love for them that made him persist!

He begs them to make room for him in their hearts by considering that he (and his co-workers) had *wronged* (Gr. *edikesamen*, "treated unjustly or unfairly") no one; he had *corrupted* (Gr. *ephtheiramen*, "ruined") no one. The word *ephtheiramen* is a word signifying *corrupting* by means of false doctrine. Paul uses the same word in I Corinthians 15:33 to warn that evil homiletics (sermons teaching that there is no resurrection) *corrupts* good morals. No doubt there had been some in the church at Corinth accusing Paul of "corrupting" the church by his teaching *in favor of* christian liberty. The Judaizers would have been such accusers. At the same time, there would have been accusations by the Gnostic element that his teaching *against* sexual freedom would have a "corrupting" influence. Paul also reminds the Corinthians that he had not *taken advantage* of (Gr. *epleonektesamen*, lit. "seek to get more," or "defrauded") anyone. This Greek word is a compound of *pleonexia* which is translated "covetousness." He writes later in this same epistle that he had not "burdened" the Corinthian church by taking financial support from them (see II Cor. 12:13, 16, 17; and I Cor. 9:15-18). The Corinthians have been given no reason by Paul to "restrict their affections" toward him.

Paul had no recrimination to make, although he might have been justified in doing so, He longed for repentance and reconciliation. He

had already stated that the Corinthians were “in his heart” (6:11-13). And his affection for them was deep. He (and his co-workers) were ready to lay down their lives for the Corinthians. Paul’s passion for these brethren leads him to have *great confidence* (Gr. *polle parresia*, “much boldness”) on their behalf. He is able to be *proud* (Gr. *polle kauchesis*, “much boasting”) of them to others. His only motive in producing repentance and reconciliation in them is to be able to “boast” of *their* spirituality — not his. He will take no credit for what they become. He will give credit to the Lord and to them. He is content to be simply the unheralded instrument for the glory of God and their edification. As a matter of fact, he gave the Corinthians credit for *having filled* (Gr. *pepleromai*, perfect tense verb, past action with a continuing result) his life with *strength* (Gr. *parakleseis*, “paraclete, one called along side to strengthen”), and “overflowing” joy. It was Paul’s passion for the good of his Corinthian brethren that gave augmentation to solving the problem of repentance.

Preachers are plagued with the problems of repentance in those whom they serve because, unlike the apostle Paul, they frequently approach the problem from a selfish perspective thinking only about their own image and not about building up their brethren. Preachers will simply have to “enlarge their hearts” (6:11-13) and make themselves vulnerable and be willing to suffer some “afflictions” if they are going to find the way to produce repentance in believer’s lives. Preachers are going to have to faithfully and fairly preach uncorrupted doctrine with a passion for people’s souls before repentance will ever come to fruition. Preachers must be willing to share their own life and death with their congregations if they wish to witness spiritual growth through repentance. Such passion, such love, will inevitably produce repentance and reconciliation.

7:5-7 Pathos: Any preacher who expects to call his congregation to repentance must have pathos. He must be able to *empathize* (enter into feelings of another) in the chastening, sorrow and spiritual trauma that accompanies personal repentance. Paul had pathos. His pathos or empathy did not come easily. He knew the stresses and pressures of inner spiritual struggle (see Rom. 7:13-25). He knew the “afflictions” of the body (I Cor. 9:24-27) necessary to maintain a life of repentance. He could “feel” with the Corinthians. When he was in Macedonia he, and his co-workers, experienced no physical rest and no spiritual or

psychological rest, (see comments II Cor. 2:12-17). He was *afflicted* (Gr. *thlibomenoi*, "pressured") at every turn. Just what the "fighting without" was, we do not know. We would be safe in speculating that it had to do with the harassment of the Judaizers which was constant and vicious wherever Paul preached. The "fear within" is already described in 2:12-17.

This pathos so necessary to augment a program of repentance in others does not come overnight. There is no such thing as "instant" empathy. Before we can really understand what others must endure to repent, we must have "walked a mile in their moccasins." Paul had walked more than his "mile" in the shoes of repentance (see II Cor. 12:7ff).

The apostle tells the Corinthians that the coming of Titus with the good news from Corinth had comforted (strengthened) him (7:6). But he also states that before Titus came he had been "downcast" (Gr. *tapeinous*, "laid low, humiliated"). Paul had walked the penitent's path of humiliation and *lowly-mindedness*. He knew what the Corinthians suffered (humiliation) in their choice to repent. He also knew that God would strengthen those who were lowliminded enough to repent. Biblical history is replete with examples of penitent men whom God lifted up and strengthened — Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Nehemiah, Mordecai. It also provides a long list of impenitent men who went from bad to worse — Cain, Nimrod, King Saul, Absalom, Ahab, Belshazzar, Haman and a host of others.

And what was the "good news" by which God strengthened the "downcast" apostle? First, it was the strengthening experience the penitent response of the Corinthians had upon Titus. Paul was so very glad to see the spiritual growth that had taken place in Titus as Titus had seen God's word work in the lives of the Corinthians. This is one of the most important ways by which a preacher finds the courage to go on striving to produce repentance — to see how manifested repentance brings about spiritual growth even in those merely observing it. Sincere, visible repentance elicits sober thinking and holy inclinations in everyone who is fortunate enough to be present when it happens! Paul saw its effects in Titus. That had an effect on Paul!

When Titus told Paul that the Corinthians "vehemently desired" to see Paul (Gr. *epipotesin*); that they "lamented and wailed" (Gr.

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odurmon) for him; that they were “zealous” (Gr. *zelon*) for him, then Paul rejoiced even *more*. How could a preacher rejoice more than “overflowing” (Gr. *huperperisseuomai*) (7:4)? But that is the extent to which a preacher must be willing to relate to or *empathize* with people in order to produce repentance in their lives and in his.

7:8-9 Pain: Finally, preachers must understand that there is no repentance without some pain! Paul had written severe rebukes. He had called the Corinthians “childish” for their divisions; “arrogant” for their indifference to immorality; “shameful” and “incompetent” because they could not judge wrong-doers; “disgraceful” in their corporate worship about the Lord’s table; “immature” in their use of spiritual gifts. All this in “First” Corinthians. We do not know how severe he was in the “unpreserved” letters he wrote, or in the personal confrontation he made with them. One thing we do know — while Paul was, at first, sorry he had to be so harsh, in the long run he did not *regret* (Gr. *metamelomai*) it. This shows the depth of Paul’s love for the Corinthians. Paul knew what he had written and said would hurt, but he knew that the grief and the hurt were necessary.

True love causes pain when it has to. God made the “Valley of Achor (Trouble)” a “door of hope” for Israel (Hosea 2:15). The prophets of the Old Testament are clear that God chastens by hurting the rebellious in order to bring about repentance. We do not show love to someone by withholding the truth. Paul said to the Galatians, “Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). We often let people go on and on in sin, saying we love them too much to hurt them, but nothing is more self-deceptive. What we usually mean by such a statement is that we do not want to hurt *ourselves*! When a sinner is told the truth about his sins, he gets angry with the one who told him — no matter how sincere and loving the attempt to produce repentance. That hurts! No one likes rejection! Paul did not like it! But he was willing to endure it for the sake of the Corinthians. When we say, “Well, I just love him too much to hurt him,” we are really kidding ourselves and saying we do not want to hurt ourselves.

It is appropriate here to make some extended quotations from, *The Problem of Pain*, by C.S. Lewis, pub. Macmillan Co.

. . . the older type of nurse or parent was quite right in thinking that the first step in education is ‘to break the child’s will.’ Their methods were

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often wrong: but not to see the necessity is, I think, to cut oneself off from all understanding of spiritual laws.

The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well with it.

. . . pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. A bad man, happy, is a man without the least inkling that his actions do not 'answer,' that they are not in accord with the laws of the universe.

Until the evil man finds evil unmistakably present in his existence, in the form of pain, he is enclosed in illusion. Once pain has roused him, he knows that he is in some way or other 'up against' the real universe: he either rebels . . . or else makes some attempt at an adjustment, which, if pursued, will lead him to religion.

No doubt Pain as God's megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final and unrepented rebellion. But it gives the only opportunity the bad man can have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul.

Everyone has noticed how hard it is to turn our thoughts to God when everything is going well with us.

When I think of pain — If I knew any way of escape I would crawl through sewers to find it . . . I am not arguing that pain is not painful. Pain hurts. That is what the word means. I am only trying to show that the old Christian doctrine of being made 'perfect through suffering' is not incredible.

We have commented on what Paul learned (see II Cor. 1:3-11) through affliction. That God "perfects" (brings to the goal, fulfills) man through affliction, pain, suffering and tribulation is a *primary* doctrine of both Old and New Testaments. It began when God "cursed the earth for man's sake" (Gen. 3:17-18) and subjected the whole creation to futility (Rom. 8:18-25). It is the *primary method* God uses to bring this wicked world to repentance (Rom. 1:18ff). Preachers must face the stark reality that there is no repentance without pain. Jesus clearly indicated that the way which leads to life is

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“narrow and *difficult*.” He said it was “hard” for a rich man to enter the kingdom. Paul said we enter the kingdom through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). Peter and John in their epistles have much to say about suffering and tribulation necessary for a life of holiness. For more discussion of this see, *Isaiah, Vol. II*, Special Study entitled, The Three Dimensions of Discipline, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press.

When you love a person you tell him the truth. But when you do you are risking his friendship for his first reaction will be one of hurt and defensiveness. If you are willing to make yourself vulnerable — to risk his friendship to tell him the truth, you demonstrate that you really love him. Usually, over the long-haul, the fact that you love him will come through.

Paul faithfully confronts the Corinthians with the truth. It hurt him to have to do it. It hurt them to hear it. But it was the beginning of their repentance and salvation. “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11). Even the sinless Lord Jesus was brought to the goal (“perfected”) for which God sent him into the world “through the things he suffered” (see Heb. 2:10; 5:7-9). The grief Paul’s severity engendered is clearly stated to be the *cause* of their repentance (7:9). The apostle goes so far as to say he *rejoiced* that he brought them to grief *because* (Gr. *hoti*, causal conjunction “that”) they were grieved *unto* (Gr. *eis*, preposition “unto,” sometimes used in a causal relation e.g. Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32; Rom. 4:20; Acts 2:38) repentance. In other words the “pain” of Paul’s severe words *caused* the Corinthians to move toward the change of mind and life called repentance. The Greek phrase, *elupethete gar kata theon hina en medeni zemiothete ex hemon*, reads literally, “for you were grieved according to God in order that in nothing you suffered loss from us.” J.B. Phillips translates it, “In other words, the result was to make you sorry as God would have had you sorry, and not merely to make you offended by what we said.” RSV translates *kata theon* as “godly grief.” They were grieved in God’s way — not in the way of the world or the devil. Apparently God has a *way* he wants man to be grieved *in order that* he may be brought to repentance. It is the preacher’s job to find “God’s way” to grieve people so they will repent! And God’s way is not without pain!

SECTION 2

Action (7:10-11)

¹⁰For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. ¹¹For 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.

7:10 Repentance: It sounds pedantic to say the problem with repentance is to get people to repent. But that is precisely the problem. Too many people have either been misled about or do not want to know what Biblical repentance is. William Chamberlain writes that the popular concept of repentance "has been tragically shallow: it has been perverted into emotionalism or sacramentarianism . . . repentance has been almost exclusively associated with an emotional crisis of sorrow for sin and fear of punishment." Chamberlain goes on to say that a proper definition of the Greek word *metanoeo* "calls for a renovation of mind . . . a complete change in mental outlook and of life design. . . ." But mere reformation of behavior is not the crucial matter in *repentance*. To lay stress on change of conduct or reformation of behavior is to lead the minds of people away from the fact that *metanoeo* (repentance) deals primarily with the "springs of action," rather than with the actions themselves. *Metanoeo* deals with the *source* of our motives, not with conduct, or even with the motives themselves. The real meaning of the Greek word *metanoeo* began to be misunderstood when the New Testament was first translated into Latin (about 1500 A.D.) when the Greek word was translated into the Latin words, *Poenitentiam agite*, "Do penance." The Church began to think of so many acts of penitence to cancel a given amount of sin. The emphasis was put on feelings (remorse) and deeds (penance). The emphasis should have been, as the Greek word clearly shows, on "having the mind of Christ." i.e., a transformation of the mind (see Rom. 12:1-2; II Cor. 5:14-17). People may be sorry for their past and they may even reform certain outward ways of living, and still refuse to allow every thought (II Cor. 10:3-5) to be brought into captivity un-

to obedience to Christ. *Metanoeo* means to allow Christ, through his expressed will in the New Testament, to take over our thinking. It means we think everything through the divine perspective. Our minds are no longer ours to think with as we please. Our thinking must please Christ. Tertullian said, “. . . the principle of voluntary obedience consists in similarity of minds.” This is the crucial issue in the christian way of life: similarity of mind between God and his people. Before man can enter God’s kingdom (the church) the thoughts of man must be aimed at becoming the thoughts of God. The principle of voluntary obedience in the Kingdom rests on similarity of mind between God and his people. True *metanoeo* (repentance) has little to do with the emotions. It is a mental metamorphosis. It is conforming one’s thinking to God’s revealed mind (the Bible) *in spite of* how one “feels” about it.

The Greek words *ergazetai* and *katergazetai* in verse 10 are both translated “produces.” The words literally mean, “works out” thus indicating that the “grief” Paul caused by his severe words to the Corinthians “worked” repentance instead of having “worked” death. The difference is simply that the Corinthians were “grieved according to the way of God” (“godly grief”). Here it is plain that repentance involves *more* than merely being *sorry* for sin. Being sorry produces *metanoian* (repentance). Grief according to God’s way “works” repentance which brings *no regret* (Gr. *ametameleton*, remorse). That is because repentance (conformity to the revealed mind of God) brings the experience of reconciliation, forgiveness, sonship, spiritual growth and freedom. Repentance starts with grief (within the limits of God’s will) but blossoms into joyful salvation.

Worldly (Gr. *kosmou* cosmic) grief works out of death because it becomes a substitute for true repentance or *metanoeo* (change of thinking). Worldly grief is being sorry for sin but unwilling to think about things as God thinks about them. Worldly grief wants to make reconciliation happen on the basis of emotion and not a changed mentality. Worldly grief regrets being caught in sin and having to suffer the consequences, vowing not to change the mind about sin, but vowing to be smarter, more self-sufficient, and not to be caught again. Worldly grief is the grief of the criminal mind. Worldly grief starts with hurt, but it is a mixture of anger and self-pity. It causes a person to either retreat into morbid self-judgment and eventually into suicide

(both physical and spiritual) or to rise up in self-justification, fight and strike back to get revenge.

Repentance is clearly an action. It is not something that happens to you. You make it happen. It is an exercise of the human will that brings the human thinking processes into conformity to the will of Christ. Once that is accomplished, human actions are altered to conform to the revealed will of Christ. God offers his help through his Holy Spirit (the "Comforter") to every human being willing to make such a change. But Christ will not overpower any human's will and force him to think God's thoughts (see Rev. 3:19-22; John 7:17; Psa. 25:14). Repentance is *not* an irresistible work of the Spirit. All through the Bible God's messengers lay the responsibility for repentance squarely upon man himself (see Acts 17:30-31).

7:11 Righteousness: How does one make his grief over sin produce repentance unto salvation instead of death? In this verse Paul gives clear-cut indications of whether one's hurt is a godly or worldly grief. The indicator is one's reaction to being hurt. When these Corinthians received the severe rebuke of the apostle Paul they reacted with *earnestness* (Gr. *spoude*, diligence, carefulness). This *earnestness* is a manifestation of *metanoeo* (change of mentality). They did not react emotionally, superficially, but with deliberation. This is the righteous (right) way to react — God's way. Next, they reacted with *eagerness to clear themselves* (Gr. *apologian*, from which we get the English words apology, apologetic, meaning "to make defense"). In this context it is clear Paul does not mean the Corinthians were arrogantly defending themselves against any need to change — they were not self-righteously justifying themselves. Godly grief had worked in them an eagerness to get all differences between themselves and God, between themselves and Paul, out in the open (*apologia*) and sincerely work toward the repentance that brings reconciliation. Next, their godly grief produced in them *indignation* (Gr. *aganaktesin*, vexation, anger, much grief). They were not indignant toward Paul — but toward themselves. They manifested shame for their past which moved them beyond self-pity to self-abnegation. And, even beyond self-abnegation, *indignation* usually produces a corrective attitude and action. Along with indignation, their hurt worked in them *alarm* (Gr. *phobon*, "fear"). This was, of course, *godly fear*. Godly fear is the very beginning of wisdom. It is a state of mind synonymous with

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repentance. It is the beginning of thinking God's way. Paul's hurting words, which caused them to rearrange their thinking to God's way of thinking, produced in them *longing* (Gr. *epipotesin*, great yearning) for the one who had "hurt" them! That is evidence of redirected thinking! He mentions again the impression their "zeal" for him had made on him.

Finally, the righteous reaction of the Corinthians termed "punishment" is listed by Paul as proof of their *metanoeo* (change of mind). The Greek word *ekdikesis* is translated "revenge" in the KJV and "avenging of wrong" in the NASV. For other N.T. usages see Luke 18:7, 8; Acts 7:24; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30; II Thess. 1:8; Luke 21:22; I Pet. 2:14, etc. The *punishment* the Corinthians had finally administered to the immoral man (see I Cor. 5:1ff) and to the one who was causing division and slandering Paul (see II Cor. 2:5-11) was visible evidence of their change of mind. Earlier they had been arrogantly indifferent to the need for such *punishment*. But they have changed their mind and disciplined the wrong doers. They have conformed their thinking (and, consequently, their actions) to the will of God as revealed by the apostle. Christ told the church at Thyatira that it must change its mind about "tolerating" the "woman Jezebel" (Rev. 3:19-29) or he would give to each of them as their works deserved. The apostle Paul instructed several churches they needed to change their minds about disciplining the factious, lazy and immoral members. Repentance within the church remains a crucial problem that continues to plague preachers and elders and church members. There is only one divine solution; *know* the Bible and *practice* the Bible. Paul the preacher, and one of his congregations, Corinth, did so and solved the problem of repentance! They proved themselves mentally changed (penitent) in every point of the *matter* (Gr. *pragmati*, practice) being discussed by the apostle. This blessed Paul's ministry with joy overflowing!

SECTION 3

Aftermath (7:12-16)

¹²So 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. ¹³Therefore we are comforted.

And besides our own comfort we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by you all. ¹⁴For 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 had proved true. ¹⁵And 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. ¹⁶I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you.

7:12-13a Revelation: Repentance (orientation of the mind toward God's way of thinking) produces spiritual discoveries! Paul says, "The real reason I wrote those severe things which caused you grief was to bring you to a revelation of just how much you love me as we are in God." Paul had the ultimate benefit of the Corinthians in mind when he had to be harsh with them. When they repented, it proved who they were! The reason they had been arrogant and indifferent toward the wickedness going on amongst them was they had forgotten who and whose they were. Going through the experience of repentance inevitably produces an awareness that one is a child of God. "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. 8:1-17).

The chastening and discipline which leads to repentance and "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" is the experience that confirms we are sons of God (see Heb. 12:5-11; I Cor. 11:32; I Pet. 4:12-19; Rev. 3:19). The classic illustration of repentance revealing sonship is the Parable of The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11ff). It was the moment the prodigal "came to himself" and changed his mind about the value of the "far country" and set his mind on his father's house that he became aware of who he really was!

When the Corinthians were brought up short by Paul's severe rebuking they began to grieve God's way and rediscovered their strong affection for Paul in the Lord. There are three factors working together to produce a repentance which confirms that a person is a child of God: (1) The Holy Spirit working his will through his Word (the Scriptures); (2) the surrender of the human will to the

authoritative leading of the Holy Spirit; (3) the preachers or messengers through whom the Holy Spirit ministers his Word. William Chamberlain puts it, "Somehow, a creative activity of God works through the message of a crucified Saviour, preached by sinning men to a world in sin and revolt, and so God changes the minds of men from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ. This is too wonderful to understand, but we see it operate wherever a crucified Saviour is presented by men who have experienced his grace. God provides the initiative, the dynamic, and the means; man responds; and repentance is the result." Repentance (change of mind to conform to God's way) gives divine perspective to everything! It is as if a dark veil were lifted — as if blind eyes were suddenly given sight. History, life, origins, destinies, relationships, and things are "seen" in the light of the future glory for the sons of God. Repentance is more than sorrow for sin — it is more than reformed behavior. It is a renewed mind.

7:13b-14 Relief: The godly change in the Corinthians was a great blessing to Titus. Paul rejoiced at the joy of Titus because "his mind has been set at rest by you all." The Greek word *anapepautai* is a combined word in the perfect tense and might be translated, "being completely put at rest in the past and continues to be at rest." And it was Titus' *spirit* (Gr. *pneuma*) which the RSV equates with "mind." His spirit was put completely at rest.

It was a great relief to Titus when the Corinthians manifested they were thinking according to God again. Titus was going to be sent back to Corinth to complete the arrangements for the collection for the poor brethren in Judea. Besides, when Paul's character was being maligned, Titus' mind and heart would be troubled. Titus was Paul's "true child in a common faith" (Titus 1:4). Paul's affection for Titus and trust in him are unquestionable. The same would be true of Titus toward Paul.

Their repentance was a great relief to Paul. It is probable that Titus had undertaken the mission to Corinth with Paul's "severe" letter with some misgivings but had been encouraged by the boasts of Paul that the Corinthians would repent and be reconciled. Paul was relieved that Titus had seen that come true. He would not want this young evangelist to experience failure by witnessing impenitence. There are enough disillusionments and discouragements for young preachers in the world without having to suffer the disillusionment of

seeing impenitence in the lives of the children or God!

A repenting church will be a church at rest! What the church of Christ needs in this day more than anything else — more than cathedrals, causes, and collections — is repentance. Congregations institute programs for every aspect of ministry except repentance. Have you ever heard of a congregation implementing “a program for repentance”? Yet repentance is the thrust of every epistle written by an apostle to a congregation. Repentance is the exclusive theme of Christ’s program for the seven churches of Asia Minor to prepare them for facing their confrontation with “the beast, the false prophet, and the harlot.” When John the Baptist and Jesus preached the *gospel* it was “repent for the kingdom of God is at hand.”

As William Chamberlain concludes, “The Church must redefine its task. We have had too much preaching that dealt out mild homeopathic doses of ethical exhortation or sought to establish a social utopia by ignoring the fundamental need for a complete change in the mind and heart of mankind. Jesus and John . . . began with this need. The Kingdom was at hand, they proclaimed, and that called for a complete metamorphosis of the mind of man. . . . The Apostle Paul reminds us that our task is to capture the mind of man. This includes the subconscious mind. . . . The Church must be told that becoming a Christian requires a new set of values, a new pattern for life, a new mind. If one’s thoughts begin and end with one’s personal convenience and desires, one is disqualified for Christian living. The preacher must keep reminding the Church that it must become Christian in its ideals, its desires, and its aspirations before it can become Christian in its practice, for the conduct of man hinges on his thought life. A pagan bent in one’s thoughts gives a pagan tilt to one’s life.”

7:15-16 Reconciliation: Titus’ troubled spirit was not only put at rest, but “his heart went out to” the Corinthians all the more. The Greek word translated “heart” is *splagchna* often translated “bowels” in KJV. It means “gut feelings” or “deep, innermost affections.” Titus was “moved” emotionally by this experience. Today, while the Church is “moved” by musical performances, or humorous speakers, it is often indifferent and sometimes chagrined at any accomplishment of true repentance — not merely a show of sorrow — a manifested change of thinking.

What moved Titus emotionally was the *obedience* (Gr. *hupakoē*,

hearing, obeying) of the Corinthians. The Corinthians were grieved with a godly grief. But it was not their sorrow which impressed Titus — it was their obedience! In most cases today, people get emotional over seeing the emotions of others on display. But the impact the Corinthians had on Titus and Paul was due to their display of obedience. Obedience is what impresses the Lord, too! (see I Sam. 15:22-23; Heb. 11:7, 8; Gen. 22:10-12; Rom. 1:5; 16:19, 26; Heb. 5:8-9, etc.). The fruition of repentance is obedience.

Another thing that impressed Titus about the Corinthians was the “fear and trembling” with which they received him. The Greek words used are *phobou* from which we get the English word *phobia* (fear), and *tromou*, which is the noun form of the Greek verb *tremo* (English, tremor, tremble). Does it seem unchristian for Paul to be rejoicing that the Corinthians responded to Titus’ message with phobia and timidity? How many christians do you know who respond to exhortations to repent with fear and trembling? Usually the reaction to scriptural rebuke, especially if it is “severe,” is first anger, then defensiveness or self-justification, and finally retaliation. But what Titus saw in the Corinthians was godly grief, obedience, fear and trembling. What a difference! It is the difference between repentance and rebellion, between righteousness and ungodliness; it is the difference between christian and hypocrite. We have discussed the imperative part the “fear of God” plays in the perfection of holiness in christian character (see notes on 7:1). Paul adds here the part “fear” plays in repentance. Fear plays a very significant part in holy conduct (see I Pet. 1:15-17). What Titus reported made Paul write, “I am rejoicing because I am having *confidence* (Gr. *tharro*, boldness, courage) in you in everything.” Reconciliation has taken place. Full restoration of affection and brotherly love is made because the Corinthians decided to think God’s way, and Paul’s heart is overflowing.

So, Paul the preacher found himself with a problem about repentance. He faced it squarely, honestly and faithfully. His passion for the Corinthians, his pathos for their need, and his willingness to risk their friendship when he knew only pain would augment repentance helped him provide the solution to the problem. What resulted was true repentance (change from the mind of the flesh to the mind of Christ) and righteous behavior from the Corinthians. And the blessings which came (self-revelation, relief, and rejoicing) gave Paul,

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Titus and the congregation at Corinth a “taste of the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come . . .” (Heb. 6:4-5). The kingdom of God was theirs (Matt. 5:3-13).

APPREHENSION:

1. What is repentance?
2. Why did Paul have to remind the Corinthians that he had not taken advantage of them?
3. What affliction did Paul have in Macedonia? Why was he in Macedonia?
4. What is the meaning of “downcast”?
5. How did the “comfort” Titus had help Paul?
6. How did Paul make the Corinthians “sorry” with his letter?
7. Why was he not sorry he had made them sorry?
8. What is “godly grief”?
9. What is “worldly grief”?
10. How did the Corinthians prove they had repented?
11. What did Paul plan would be revealed to the Corinthians by his severe letter?
12. What did the repentance of the Corinthians do for Titus?
13. What did the Corinthians do that made Titus “deeply emotional” toward them?
14. Why did the Corinthians react to Paul’s message with “fear and trembling”?

APPLICATION:

1. If repentance is essentially a change of thinking so as to think God’s thoughts, what should preaching and Sunday School teaching focus on?
2. Do you see your preacher as seeking you to “open your heart” to him?
3. Have you opened your heart to him? Has he opened his heart to you?
4. Do you think of your minister as one who has “walked in your

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shoes”?

5. Would it help you to repent if he reassured you that he has or is walking there?
6. When you find you have had to repent (change your mind) about something from God's word, does it draw you closer to your preacher? How?
7. How do you react to your preacher, your Sunday School teacher, or your spouse when they “make you sorry” about your favorite sin?
8. Have you ever had the courage to “hurt” someone with truth in order to bring them to repentance? Are you willing to be “hurt” in return for “hurt” if it produces repentance? Why?
9. Have you ever been sorry about a mistake without changing your thinking about it being a mistake?
10. Do you think the church needs to change its thinking today about church discipline? Why? How?
11. How would you suggest the church could institute a program for repentance today? What areas in congregational life need repentance?
12. Are there places in your church that could be put at rest by repentance? People?
13. Have you ever been emotionally touched by someone's obedience to Christ's word? What was it? How did you feel?
14. Do you think a congregation obeying would have more impact on others than a church entertaining?
15. Do you react with “fear and trembling” when God's messenger delivers a message of God about repentance to you?