

## The Joy of Christ-Centered Repentance

2 Corinthians 7:1-16

### What is Repentance?

Repentance is perhaps one of the most misunderstood, and often avoided words in the church today. We think of it as a harsh command, or a simple “I’m sorry.” But in 2 Corinthians 7:1-16, the Apostle Paul shows us that repentance is a beautiful, necessary process for healing and Christlike growth. It is turning from sin to Christ!

What was happening in these verses? Paul is writing to a church that was deeply flawed, yet dearly loved. He had sent them a "painful letter" as we see in 2 Cor 2:4. It was a severe rebuke—and he was anxious about how they would receive it. In this chapter, we see the amazing result of that rebuke. Paul rejoices not in their sorrow, but in their *repentance*.

When you receive the Holy Spirit, according to John 16:13: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.” The Holy Spirit guides you away from sin and towards repentance. Think of it this way, your nerve endings in your fingers let you know that a hot stove is dangerous and it will burn you if place your hand on it. Pain lets you know something is wrong! The Holy Spirit lets the Christian know that sin is bad. If you are sensitive to sin, rejoice. If you are not sensitive to sin, run to Christ. Does this mean you aren’t saved? If you feel no remorse, regret, or need to repent, then run to Christ! It could mean that you do not know Him! We see this unpacked in 2 Cor. 7:1-16.

**I. The Goal of Repentance (v. 1)** The goal of repentance is holiness, godliness, and restoration.

*“Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.”*

Paul begins with a "Therefore." Because God has promised to be our Father and to dwell among us (6:16-18), we have a motivation for holiness. 1 Peter 1:15-16 “But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy.” God is more concerned about your holiness than your happiness!

- a. **It’s an intentional action.** Note that Paul says "let *us* cleanse ourselves." This is not passive. God sanctifies us, but we are called to cooperate, turning away from things that defile our bodies (flesh) and our thoughts (spirit). Paul told Timothy, “train yourself for the purpose of godliness...” We must be intentional! What we feed grows, what we starve dies! Feed yourselves with the Word of God and starve the desires of the world!
- b. **It’s an inspirational goal.** Perfecting holiness is not a sinless perfection, but a dedicated lifestyle of pursuing God's standards.
- c. **We have an irresistible motivation.** "In the fear of God." Not a terrifying dread, but an awe and desire to please our Father. Listen to Romans 2:4 “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?”

## II. The Godly Type of Repentance (vv. 8-10)

Paul distinguishes between two types of sorrow in these verses.

- a. **What is godly grief?** Heartfelt conviction focusing on how sin offends God, driving us toward Him. This type of conviction is brought by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God! Do you weep over your sin? Godly grief is Christ-centered, driving us toward Him for mercy rather than away from Him in shame. Christ-centered repentance says "I've gotten into some trouble, I need to run to Dad!" Worldly repentance says, "I've gotten into trouble, I need to run from Dad!"
- b. **What is worldly grief?** Remorse over consequences or being caught, leading to despair. This is not lasting, transformational grief. Worldly grief is self-centered and leads to despair.

Turning from sin to follow Jesus, as the Corinthians did, results in lasting transformation, not regret.

## III. The Goodness of Repentance (v. 11) The goodness of repentance is earnest action, transformation!

True repentance is visible, as shown by the "earnestness" the Corinthians displayed, including an eagerness to make things right, a holy indignation against sin, and a renewed zeal for God's righteousness. Their actions demonstrated that they no longer tolerated the sin that once divided them.

## IV. The Joyous Growth in Repentance (vv. 12-16) The great growth and reward of repentance is comfort and joy!

Repentance leads to restoration and joy, as seen in the renewed relationship between Paul, Titus, and the Corinthian church. This reconciliation brings comfort to believers and joy to those walking alongside us in faith. C.H. Spurgeon said, "those who dive into the depths of affliction come back to the surface with rear special pearls."

God invites you to experience "godly grief," which leads to life.

1. **Bring sin into the light:** Rely on God's promises to confront sin.
2. **Focus on God's love:** Let the assurance of His love drive your desire for change.
3. **Take action:** Follow the example of the Corinthians, actively clearing your life of what dishonors God.