

## True Repentance: When Grief is not to be Grieved Over (2 Corinthians 7:2–16)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (4/2/2023)

### Introduction

The first verse of chapter 7 should be the last verse of chapter 6 because it closes Paul's argument that the people of God should be different from the world. They are not to have unbiblical connections to the wicked because believers are the temple of God—His dwelling place. Thus, quoting from Leviticus and Isaiah, Paul presses that the sons and daughters of God must separate themselves unto the Lord, cleansing themselves from all defilement and completing holiness in the fear of God (6:12–7:1).

Verse 2 of chapter 7 completes his thought from 6:11–13. Note, in verse 13, Paul tells the Corinthians to “*widen your hearts.*” In chapter 7 verse 2, Paul tells them to “*make room in your hearts.*” Paul has presented his argument to defend his apostolic authority. “Stop shutting us out and receive us. We are God's servants for your good.”

They received his letter in the right spirit and repented their errors. Paul used this response to discuss the doctrine of true repentance.

### I. The Need for Repentance (vv. 8–11)

Repentance is a necessary companion of the Christian life. It is not a once and for all act, but a daily necessity. We are to be constantly repenting, just as we are always believing. Both faith and repentance are required of saved people. That is why they are called *believers*. Both faith and repentance are a gift of God's grace (Acts 11:18). Both are required for salvation (Acts 20:21; 2 Timothy 2:24–26).

#### 1. First things first (vv. 8, 9)

- a. The friendship of rebuke (2 Timothy 4:2). Preaching must contain *rebuke*, which is to produce *repentance*.
- b. When grieving does its proper work.

Two words are used in the passage that are translated *repentance*. One word is emotionally centered, translated *grieve* in the ESV translation of the passage. The other word is used of true biblical repentance. The first is never used of biblical repentance and the second is never used of mere emotional response.

#### 2. What Is Repentance (vv. 10, 11)?

- a. This second word translated *repentance* comes from a compound of two words meaning *after* and *to think*—after thought. The second word is used of the *doctrine* of repentance. Here is where one must be careful because the doctrine is not based solely on the dictionary definition of the word.

- b. *Decisional salvation* often regards repentance as a simple *change of mind*. “Once I rejected Christ, but I heard the gospel and changed my mind about Him and now believe and receive Him.” What is wrong with this? Salvation is like a coin with two sides, repentance and faith. Unless the Spirit brings one to repentance, there is no true repentance.
- c. Paul speaks of the *heart*, not the organ that pumps blood, but the whole of human spiritual existence. The heart consists of the mind (how we think), emotion (how we feel), and will (how we respond). True biblical repentance involves the heart—mind, emotion, and will.

Feelings of shame, guilt and regret are not repentance, but must definitely accompany it. David felt guilt and shame in his sin with Bathsheba:). David understood his sin offended His God, thus, he confessed, “*Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight*” (v. 4a). Thus, his confession of guilt justified God (“*So that you may be justified in your words*”—v. 4b).

Unbiblical confession is usually associated with self-justification. Confessing sin to God does not mean automatic cleansing. Understanding how one offends God and agreeing with Him does bring forgiveness and pardon.

Genuine sorrow over offending God is a gift of God, and only that gift leads to true repentance.

## **II. The Fruit of True Repentance (vv. 12–16)**

1. Will the real Christian please stand up (vv. 12, 13)
  - a. The purpose of the letter.
  - b. The joy of the truth.
2. Now you see why I said what I said (vv. 14–16).

*“Yet even now,” declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.’ Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster”* (Joel 2:12, 13).