**Be Encouraged – 2 Corinthians 7:9-11**

Caring Enough to Care-front (Part Two)

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 7, we will be looking specifically at verses 9-11. We are in our min-series entitled “Caring enough to ‘Care-front’.” The Apostle Paul wrote a strong letter to this church in Corinth because it had a lot of issues that weren’t being addressed or confronted. In fact, quite the opposite was true in that this church was behaving as if Jesus made no difference in their lives; they were wallowing in the sin and they were even flaunting it and their acceptance of it. So Paul writes this letter of 1 Corinthians in which he asks them in chapter 3:4 (**1 Corinthians 3:4**):

*“… Aren’t you acting just like the people of the world?”*

So Paul, one who invested a year and a half of his life to this church, is so moved with love and concern for this church, he is unwilling to be silent and so he writes the letter of 1 Corinthians. We learned last week that love doesn’t remain silent; it tells the truth, and it does it in a loving manner. It doesn’t mean that sometimes what is said doesn’t hurt, but it is brought up to build the other person up in hopes that there is change.

* **The way in which we confront others needs to come from a place of love, commitment, compassion, and it must be biblical.**

We saw that what we are to be about is not just confrontation (which at times can have an attacking sense to it), but we to be about “care-frontation” which is birthed out of love and concern. Paul said what he said, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order that his words would generate change for the benefit of the church. Ultimately, church, that is our goal when we ‘care-front” someone. We love them too much to remain silent; we will speak the truth in love. **How many of us here see the difference**? **Amen.**

The ultimate goal of any confrontation is not to get stuff off of our chest, it’s not just tell someone our opinion, and it’s not to unload on them. The ultimate goal of confrontation is change for the benefit of the other individual. That is what Paul desired to see happen in the church in Corinth, and that is what happened. He spoke up, he reached out, and God used his words to provoke change. Now, let’s look at our text this morning (**2 Corinthians 7:9-11**):

*9Now I am glad I sent it, not because it hurt you, but because the pain caused you to repent and change your ways. It was the kind of sorrow God wants his people to have, so you were not harmed by us in any way. 10For the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation. There’s no regret for that kind of sorrow. But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death. 11Just see what this godly sorrow produced in you! Such earnestness, such concern to clear yourselves, such indignation, such alarm, such longing, such zeal, and such a readiness to punish wrong. You showed that you have done everything necessary to make things right.*

Paul confronted the sin that was taking place in the church in Corinth. He knew what sin was and what it was doing. He saw it differently than those in the church which is clear in **1 Corinthians 5:6-7** where their attitude towards a man sleeping with his stepmother is seen:

*6 Your boasting about this is terrible. Don’t you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old “yeast” by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.*

They were boasting about their gracious attitude towards this sin. They did not see sin as it truly is. Sin is a problem to seek help for, not a condition to live with. **Romans 3:23** tells us:

*3 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.*

We all have within us this offensive part of us that keeps us separated from God; this chasm between our humanity and God divinity and holiness. Paul saw it in himself and states in **1 Timothy 1:15:**

*15 This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—and I am the worst of them all.*

Every one of us is a sinner, the worst of them all, who are in need of a Savior. We all have a problem called sin that keeps us disconnected from God, and leads us into a life contrary to his purposes and plans for our lives. Therefore…

* **It is in our best interest, and in the interest of others, that we not play with sin and follow its leading because it will lead us away from who and what we are here for.**

Sin means “separation.” It is not good for mankind to be separated from God. We look around and we can see what it does. Paul knew what sin was doing to this church, he spoke up about it, he caringly confronted it, and it tells us in **verse 9** *“it caused them to repent and change their ways.”* To repent means “to change your mind, to reconsider.” But this change of mind led to a change of life.

Paul calls it a ‘godly sorrow.” This is a repentance that goes way beyond just saying you’re sorry (*like a child*). It is a repentance that admits guilt, that takes it and owns it by asking for forgiveness, and then make adjustments to make sure that it doesn’t happen again.

* **The goal in any confrontation, whether it be us confronting someone else, or someone confronting us, should always be the godly transformation of heart, mind and action.**

Contrast godly sorrow to worldly sorrow; worldly sorrow doesn’t see sin as a problem, worldly sorrow doesn’t look for change, worldly sorrow isn’t sorry for what was done, but sorry that they got caught and things didn’t turn out the way they wanted. We see a good example of this between Judas and Peter. First we read of Judas who betrayed Jesus in **Matthew 27:3-4**:

*3 When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. 4 “I have sinned,” he declared, “for I have betrayed an innocent man.”*

The word “remorse” here in the Greek means “to have regret.” In other words, Judas was upset at the consequences of his act, not about what he had done (things didn’t pan out the way he wanted).

***There are many in this world who are upset about the consequences they experience today because of their actions done in the past; instead of being upset about their actions of the past that have brought on the consequences of today.***

Worldly sorrow doesn’t see sin as a problem. That is why Paul states in **verse 10** *“But worldly sorrow, which lacks repentance, results in spiritual death.”* Worldly sorrow isn’t looking to change; it’s looking for everything else around them to change. It remains in its state of separation and spiritual deadness. But when we come to Peter, the one denied Jesus with oaths and curses, we read of his response to his realization of sin in **Matthew 14:72**:

*72And immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Suddenly, Jesus’ words flashed through Peter’s mind: “Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me.” And he broke down and wept.*

Peter’s heart felt the weight of his sin; it broke him. How redeeming it must have been when Jesus ask him to take care of his sheep. Peter was never the same; his mind and heart were changed, he experienced true godly sorrow and repentance. Paul tells us in **verse 10** *“for the kind of sorrow God wants us to experience leads us away from sin and results in salvation.”*

The term “salvation” isn’t talking about salvation from sin, but a sense of deliverance, or freedom. **How many of us desire to have a liberty and freedom back in our relationships with others and with God?** For some of us there remains issues and challenges that have gone unspoken or undealt with, and that will require godly sorrow and repentance on our part to bring freedom and liberty to them once again. And then there are those relationship in which we can own our part, yet the opposing party will still hang onto their pride and ego.

* **Let godly sorrow be your attitude; be moved by the heart and Spirit of God and don’t let sin control you and keep you stuck.**

Amen. God interested in the element of sorrow, he is interested in the element of change. The church in Corinth demonstrated godly sorrow and repentance through actions of change. I like what **Isaiah 55:7** tells us:

*7Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.*

In **verse 11**, Paul lists seven changes of the Corinthian church. First he speaks of their *“earnestness”;* other translations state “diligence”. In other words, they took what Paul had to say seriously and took immediate and decisive action. They were quick to respond. **Isn’t that the way we should be in our relationship with God?** When God speaks we respond not just with word, but we let it resonate in us and make a difference.

Second, Paul tells us that they have a concern to *“clear themselves.”* In other words, they didn’t want to make any excuses for what they did, but faced it head on, acknowledged it, owned it, and sought forgiveness. Some find great difficulty in admitting that they are wrong. Church, let us be people who will swallow our pride and humbly admit the truth. **Amen.**

Third, Paul tells us that they felt *‘indignation.”* They felt a pain, a grief, a disgust for what they allowed to happen. **Do we feel an internal grieving when we have wronged someone or God?** Is there an inner turmoil and unsettledness when we have stepped over the line? Sin should still bother us.

Fourth, Paul tells us that they had such an *“alarm.”* The Greek uses the word “fear”; a terror of returning to the offense knowing that it would drive a wedge in our intimacy with God. **Do you view sin as a problem that affects the most important relationship you can have?**

Fifth, such a *“vehement desire”;* a passion, a love that desires to pursue God. That is why Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship that is based on love affair with God.

Sixth, such *“zeal”;* such excitement, such fervor to make things right and redirect their attention back to God.

Finally, seventh, such *“vindication”;* such willingness to accept the correction and consequences for what they had done.

This should be the believers attitude towards God; God, I take seriously what you have to say, I am willing to own what I have done, I feel the gut-wrench of my actions, I want nothing to stand in the way between me and you, I want to love wholeheartedly, I want there to be an excitement to set things right and I am willing to accept the consequences of my actions. That is where God is leading us to;

* **God is leading us to be people who are aren’t just “sorry” in word for what we have done, but those who prove it by letting him makes changes in us**.

You may say, “Pastor Mark, what does this have to do with ‘Caring enough to Confront”?” My challenge to us is

* **“Do we care enough for our relationship with God, and with others, to be willing to change?”**
* **To turn from our flesh and pride, to turn from our sin and arrogance, and be moved by the Spirit of God to be made different so that we can experience a new depth and intimacy with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and, most importantly, with God?**

Because it is only in our humility, in our honesty, and our hatred of sin that we will find true restoration and recovery.

* **Do we care enough to confront ourselves for the sake of others?**

Because sometimes the greatest hindrance in restoration is us. **Amen.** We all know it. Don’t let sin run rampant, don’t let worldly sorrow and regret hold you hostage, give it up, let it go and change your mind about your life is to be about. Turn back to Jesus and experience change. **Amen.** Let’s pray!