

Title: Gifts of Repentance
Text: 2 Cor 7: 4-11
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2 Corinthians 7: 4: Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. 5: For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without *were* fightings, within *were* fears. 6: Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; 7: And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more. 8: For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though *it were* but for a season. 9: Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. 10: For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. 11: For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

The apostle Paul was forced to rebuke the saints at Corinth strongly. Through that rebuke, God granted them repentance.

Proposition: In our text we see in verse 11 that repentance involves seven things: carefulness, clearing, indignation, fear, desire, zeal and revenge.

Where God grants these seven fruits, God has granted repentance not to be repented of. The sorrow of the world stops short of this. Worldly sorrow never brings the sinner to repentance from sin. Therefore, "*the sorrow of the world worketh death.*"

Our focus are these descriptions of true godly repentance which God worked in their hearts.

CAREFULNESS

While dead in our sins we are totally unaware how awful our sins are before God.

Isaiah 44:20: He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Likewise, as believers, we sometimes fall into a stupor, where we fail to see how unbecoming our behavior is to the doctrine of Christ. When God rebukes through his word, God wakes us up and causes us to sorrow over our sins. This true godly sorrow works "*carefulness in us*", meaning, speedy, diligent, and earnest turning away from our sin.

Isaiah 30: 21: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. 22: Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.

When God grants true repentance he wakes us up and makes us careful to speedily, diligently, earnestly turn from our sin. But it does not stop there.

CLEARING OF YOURSELVES

The Greek word for “clearing” is where we get our word “apology. The Corinthian brethren did not deny their offenses or attempt to lessen or defend it or attempt to justify themselves for their sin.

The haughty, arrogant, self-righteous man hears the gospel declare all men dead in trespasses and in sins and he defends himself. So will a believer when overcome by his flesh when personally rebuked for a particular offense until God grants true repentance. But when God grants a believer repentance they are made to acknowledge the sinfulness of their sin, first and foremost as against God. So they go to God seeking to be cleared of this offense.

We have an illustration in David after he was rebuked by Nathan. He cried to God for God to clear him in mercy,

Psalm 51: 1:...Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2: Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3: For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Seeking to be cleared before God is to seek God’s mercy!—“*God be merciful to me a sinner!*” It is to seek God’s cleansing!—“*Wash me thoroughly.*” Seeking to be cleared is to confess our sin against God—“*against thee and thee only have I sinned.*” It is to clear God—“*that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*” Only those in whom God is working can take sides with God against ourselves.

Also, God makes us seek to be “clear” with our brethren. God makes a believer acknowledge their sin to be against their brethren. Paul said, “[*Titus*] was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.” (2 Cor 7: 7)

We have an illustration of clearing of oneself in Zacchaeus. After Christ called him effectually, Zacchaeus was willing to restore the men he had robbed.

Luke 19: 8: And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. 9: And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

God makes the sinner seek forgiveness from his brethren as well as from God. He makes a man a restorer for his sins because God by his grace has put the love of Christ into his heart

INDIGNATION

God-given repentance is a radical change of mind that only God can produce. While dead in sins we have no indignation against sin. We call bitter sweet and sweet bitter. While unregenerate, we found fault in everyone else. But when God grants true repentance there will be righteous anger against sin and everything contrary to God first, toward ourselves! Paul said that when the commandment came, sin revived, and his old self-righteous man died! True God-given repentance gives us indignation against sin in ourselves. Paul hated his sin with righteous indignation. He said,

Romans 7: 15: For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I...24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Likewise, in the new man, we can no longer stand to hear lies spoken against God our Father. When Paul spoke of anger, it was that the believer truly should be angry against lies spoken about our triune God.

Ephesians 4: 26: Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27: Neither give place to the devil.

Having grown up in a church hearing the gospel preached I knew true doctrine before as yet God had saved me. I would argue doctrine with my friends. But I had no indignation against their lies when they said Christ died for all men. Yet, after God saved me, to hear someone call Christ a failure filled me with indignation against the lie. Now, the love of God was in my heart; now you are talking about my Father, my Redeemer. True God-given repentance includes righteous indignation against sin and all falsehood. We truly hate what God hates.

FEAR

This is not a fear of hell and condemnation. God-given repentance includes a fear which is reverence for God. It comes from his abundant forgiveness of our sins in Christ.

Psalm 130: 3: If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? 4: But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

This is reverence for Christ and for the gospel of Christ. It includes a respect for his ministers and his people. God's free forgiveness of sin by the precious blood of Christ makes the believer us fear offending God. It makes us want to serve him "*acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*" (Heb 12: 28)

VEHEMENT DESIRE

In the new birth, God gives a new heart to his child that was not there before. In that new heart, the Spirit of God gives a new earnest desire for Christ himself. Before this, a man may be religious and have a desire for a system of doctrine. But when the Spirit of God creates him anew, God gives a true earnest desire for the person of Christ himself.

With this also comes a desire to hear the preaching of the gospel of Christ. We desire to hear Christ exalted receiving all the glory for every aspect of our salvation. There is only a real desire for Christ when we have been saved by the Truth! Then Christ becomes the power and wisdom of God unto us and his gospel becomes the way we are fed spiritually.

1 Corinthians 1: 23: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24: But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

Also there is an earnest desire for God's continual abiding presence to keep us separated unto him.

Exodus 33: 15: And [Moses] said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. 16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

Along with a desire for Christ, a desire for his gospel, a desire for God's continual presence, there is an earnest desire to walk in a new way, a way honoring to God.

Titus 2:7: In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity.

Christ uses his faithful saints to set a pattern for new believers in the faith. So he gives his child a desire to show himself a pattern of good works.

Titus 2: 8: Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

Our new desire is that our doctrine never gives our enemies cause to speak evil. We want them to be ashamed to speak evil of our God. We want to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

Titus 2: 10...that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. 11: For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, 12: Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; 14: Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

ZEAL

It means "jealousy"—as a bride for her husband. God said in the first commandment, "*ye shall have no other gods because I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.*" (Ex 20: 5) When he saves us from our sins, he puts his everlasting covenant in our hearts, making us jealous for God and his glory.

We have an illustration in the picture of Hosea and Gomer. When Christ makes us behold ourselves naked and sold into sin then makes us behold that he paid the price and redeemed us. He says to us what Hosea said to Gomer, "*And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.*" (Hosea 3: 3) So we are given a zeal, a jealousy for Christ. We say, "*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.*" (SOS 6: 3)

This is not zeal without knowledge but zeal for Christ our Righteousness. We want God in Christ to have all the glory for God's electing grace in Christ, for his redeeming grace by Christ, for his effectual regenerating grace through Christ, for his sovereign preserving grace by Christ.

1 Corinthians 1: 31: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

REVENGE

It means to do justice to all parties, disciplining the guilty and acquitting the innocent.

Micah 6:8: He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

The Corinthians took revenge on themselves by doing justly with God by repenting and confessing their sins to God. They took revenge on themselves by no longer trying to justify themselves but by seeking mercy with God. They took revenge on themselves by walking humbly with God. They took revenge by doing that

which God says is just and right. This they did toward one another by disciplining the guilty and acquitting the innocent. God had restored to them a heart to love righteousness.

When God grants repentance he makes us behold the glory of God's righteousness in Christ in satisfying his own justice on our behalf.

Romans 3: 20: Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21: But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22: Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24: Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26: To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

When God reveals the gospel in our hearts then we love righteousness. We follow after righteousness in Christ and in our lives!

So these seven gifts are included in true God-given repentance: carefulness, clearing, indignation, fear, desire, zeal and revenge. At last, when God has brought us to repent and cast all our care on Christ, resting in his righteousness alone, then God speaks peace to the heart saying what Paul said to the Corinthians, "*Ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.*"

1 John 1: 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10: If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Amen!