



DEVOTIONAL FOR 2 CORINTHIANS 5-13

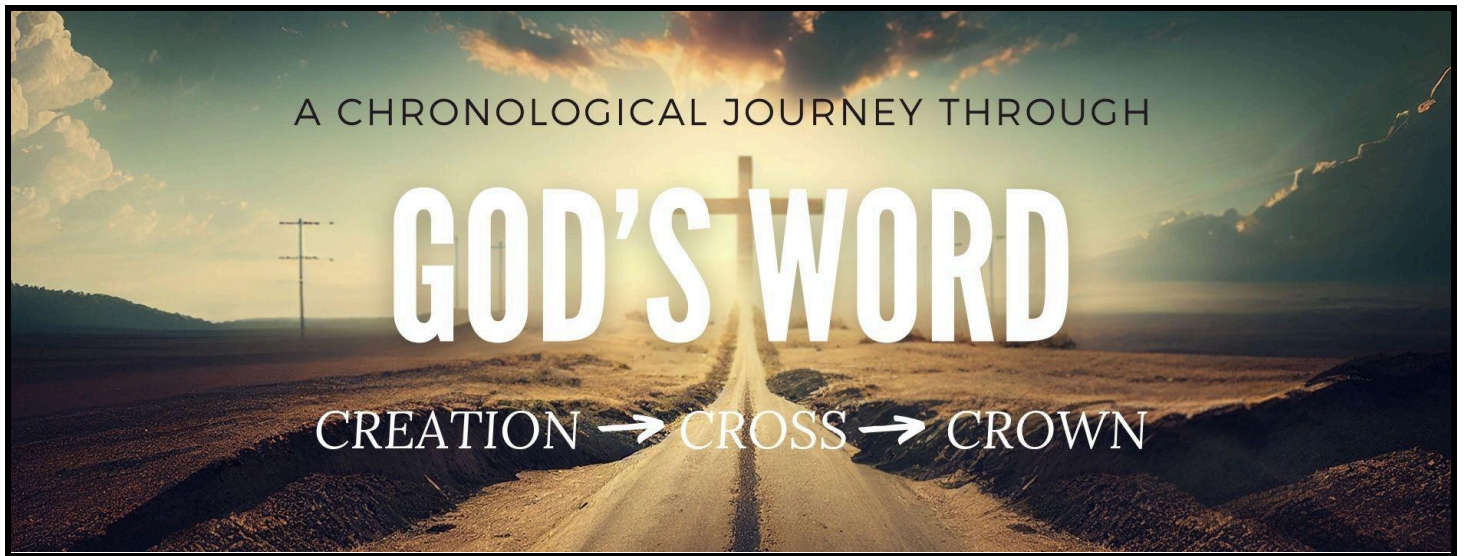
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We went on vacation with some friends last spring. My six year old daughter was being silly, swinging her arms around and punching the air. We told her to be careful or she might hit someone. She was too busy having fun and was not listening at all. Less than a minute later she threw a wild punch and hit me in the nose. My nose started bleeding and she started crying, big ugly crying. She was so upset that she had hurt me. The next day one of our friends made a joke about punching mom in the face and she was in tears again. She truly grieved that she had hurt me. The rest of the trip, she was much more aware of her surroundings and careful not to hurt anyone.

If you have children or have been around them much, you can tell the difference between when they truly grieve their sin, or if they are just sorry that they got caught and had to endure the consequences. It's a pretty huge difference, and in 2 Corinthians 7:10 Paul says godly grief leads to repentance and worldly grief leads to death. Throughout chapter 7, Paul shares his joy in the repentance of the Corinthian church and their godly grief when they acknowledge their sin.

The Corinthian church struggled with division, immorality, false teachers, and bad theology. Paul established the church there, then continued on his missionary journey. He wrote 1 Corinthians to address some of these issues in the church and had Timothy deliver it. That did not go over so well. Though he wanted to visit them himself, he saw that they might receive corrections better through Titus, and sent him to Corinth with another letter instead. Second Corinthians is his follow up letter to the one he sent with Titus (that's a lot of letters) after he heard word that the people were repenting.

I love that Paul had the wisdom to send Titus with the message. Sometimes hard hearts need to hear the same thing from another person. I can tell my girls the same thing 100 times and they won't listen, but then if I ask their aunt Angela or Gigi to tell them it's like magic. They can see the error of their ways and make a change. I had never thought about this before but it's such a great reminder that we don't always have to be the messenger. Sometimes God has someone else for the job. We do, however, have to be obedient to God's calling to share the hard message when He calls us to do so.



Godly grief leads to repentance, which then leads to eagerness to clear yourself, indignation, fear, longing, zeal, and punishment. All of that is showing a shift, a change from before. We can't just feel grief, we have to do something about it.

I love verse 12 in chapter 7. Paul basically says "I'm not here to take sides or seek justice, I'm here to talk about your heart." Whenever we encounter conflict or a "wrong" done by someone, the natural response is to seek justice, restitution for the wrong done. But Paul doesn't care about that. That is God's to deal with (Romans 12:19). He cares about their relationship and about making their hearts right with the Lord.

Questions:

1. Do you respond with godly grief when a brother or sister in Christ admonishes you, or do you respond with worldly grief? Do you get defensive or do you examine your heart?
2. Are you sensitive to the messages God has for you to share with others? Are you obedient to share, even if it's hard? On the other hand, are you discerning when the same message might need to come from someone else?
3. When you see a wrong or are personally wronged by someone, do you seek justice in the situation or do you soften your heart and seek to restore relationships with God and others, and leave the justice up to God?.