

## Confession: Living Without Regret

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. <sup>3</sup> I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. <sup>4</sup> I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy. <sup>5</sup> For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. <sup>6</sup> But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, <sup>7</sup> and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. <sup>8</sup> For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. <sup>9</sup> As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. <sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. <sup>11</sup> For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. <sup>12</sup> So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. <sup>13</sup> Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

II Corinthians 7:1-13

## Discussion

After Paul's first letter to the Christians in Corinth, things were going badly in the church, and in an attempt to get them on track, Paul made an unplanned visit which only seemed to make things worse (we don't know what the issues were for sure). After the failure of this visit, Paul decided to not visit them again in person, but he sent Titus to them, with a strong letter of rebuke. Although Paul was very worried about how the Corinthians would receive the letter, this passage confirms that they repented from their ways and chose to be reconciled with Paul.

**1. It seems from the passage that Paul's earlier confrontation was strong enough to cause them serious grief. No one likes to be confronted or accused of being wrong (even when we are wrong). Why do you think that is? Why do such confrontations cause us so much grief?**

*There are many reasons for it, but ultimately we might grieve because we finally see that we are wrong, and we feel sad, ashamed for our attitudes, for the damage that we caused others.*

*Also, we might feel that we are not as wrong as the other person says, or that we may have had good reasons to be wrong. In that case, we might become upset, offended by what the other person says. We might feel wronged ourselves, we might see the confrontation as a personal attack and we might feel unjustly humiliated.*

## 2. Paul talks about two types of grief. What is the grief that leads to death? (v10)

*Grief that produces death looks a lot more like a mix of anger and self-pity. We know that we are wrong, but we keep finding excuses to justify our behavior, and the feeling that we've been wronged by the accuser might take over our own recognition of guilt. This type of grief pushes us to look inward, to focus only on ourselves, to find excuses, to relieve our actions, and to drown in a mixture of sorrow and anger with no hope of real change. Without looking to Jesus, all we can see is our own shortcomings, and this eventually will lead us to desperation and death.*

## 3. What about the good grief? How is it different? How can it save us?

*Good grief starts with the recognition that we've failed. Independently of the intentions that the person confronting us might have had, we start by taking responsibility for our own actions in the process, and by acknowledging our shortcomings. However, the good grief is the one that points us to Jesus. It is the one that reminds us that in the cross he carried more grief than anyone could bear, he was separated from God so that we wouldn't have to be, he experienced death (the ultimate death) so we would not have to.*

*If Jesus was able to come back from death, he can also offer us a way out of our own grief. Good grief replaces guilt with hope, and generates repentance (a genuine change of behavior). Remember, grief is usually necessary for repentance, but they are not the same thing. Ultimately, repentance is what saves us from one of our worst enemies, ourselves.*

## 4. Paul chose to reproach the Christians in Corinth at the risk of damaging their relationship, even though he really valued their friendship. What can we learn in this passage about the true nature of friendship?

*There is a time for everything, even tough love. There is a time for speaking hard truths if you think your friend is in a self-destructive path. But we also learn a few more things from Paul here. First, he cared more about the church's relationship with Jesus than being in good terms with them (v12). He was willing to risk being abandoned by his friends if there was even the remote chance that his letter would lead them to repentance.*

*Second, speaking the truth can never be used as an excuse to hurt other people, or to humiliate them. Although we many times act like it is, Paul clearly agonized over his reproach letter. He really, really wanted to tell them the truth without hurting them.*

Repentance is being sorry enough to quit your sin.

Albert Martin

Legalistic remorse says, "I broke God's rules," while real repentance says, "I broke God's heart."

Tim Keller