

## II CORINTHIANS 7

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to II Corinthians chapter 7 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As you remember from our last study, Paul concluded chapter 6 by speaking of being holy, to separate ourselves from the world, not to be yoked together with unbelievers that will bring you down, you will not lift them up.

Thus, as we move into II Corinthians chapter 7, Paul's thought continues on regarding holiness and what it should do in our lives in verse 1.

It is a bad chapter division, but as I have said before, they are not inspired but were placed there at a much later date for our convenience.

So we will look at what Paul said in the conclusion of II Corinthians chapter 6 and get the flow then into II Corinthians chapter 7 in a few minutes.

But first let me say this. As you read these letters to the Corinthian church, I think you can clearly see that Paul was discouraged at times, maybe even depressed. He tried so hard to work with them, he loved them, but they were coming against him.

And when we here that word, "*depression*" we tend to think that Christians can never be depressed. I don't believe that is true. I think we all have had to deal with that from time-to-time and maybe some of you are in that frame of mind right now. Please understand that you are not alone!

Let me share this with you and hopefully you will see the battles that we face can be overwhelming at times. We are told,

On a notable Sunday morning in 1866, the famous Victorian preacher C. H. Spurgeon shocked his five thousand listeners when from the pulpit of London's Metropolitan Tabernacle he announced, "I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever gets to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to." For some of his audience it was incomprehensible that the world's greatest preacher could know the valley of despair. Yet it was a regular part of his life because twenty-one years later, in 1887 he said from the same pulpit, "Personally I have often passed through this dark valley."

John Henry Jowett, the renowned pastor of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian in New York City, and later Westminster Chapel in London, wrote to a friend in 1920, "You seem to imagine I have no ups and downs but just a level and lofty stretch of spiritual attainment with unbroken joy and equanimity [mental calmness, composure, and evenness of temper, especially in a difficult situation]. By no means! I am perfectly wretched and everything appears most murky."

Writing of Alexander Whyte, perhaps Scotland's greatest preacher since John Knox, G. F. Barbour said, "Resolute as was Dr. Whyte's character, he had seasons of deep depression regarding the results of his work in the pulpit or among his people." . . .

The reality is that godly believers sometimes get depressed. Those who have set their minds on "the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1) have not been exempted from down times.

Those who have gone for it all, who have scaled heights we may never attain, sometimes were subject to depression and despair – the “damp of hell” as John Donne called it. Depression has been called the common cold of the soul, for sooner or later most people catch it. And God’s servants are not immune. . . .

The reason Paul was sorrowing and downcast was his other-directed love, here to Titus and to the church in Corinth. All his present fears and all his present fightings were grounded in his concern for others. This other directedness was the basis of his depression and also, as we shall see, the springboard for his comfort and joy.

This text is about how God brings comfort and joy to a ministering heart.

- R. Kent Hughes, 2 Corinthians – Power in Weakness, pp. 147, 148, 149

So if you are struggling with depression tonight, discouragement, I pray that God would bring His comfort to your heart as we go through these lessons.

If you are not struggling with depression and discouragement this evening, I pray that you would take these lessons to heart and remember them, because you will go through these dark valleys!

Now, keep in mind that II Corinthians 7:1 flow's right out of what Paul just spoke of back in II Corinthians 6:14-18, where Paul said, **“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”**

Remember what we said of these verses.

Look at what the Corinthian Christians were doing.

I guess they too were loving and too affectionate in that they accepted lawlessness and righteousness into the church. They accepted darkness along with light. They welcomed Belial and Christ in!

And keep in mind that Belial is a word that was borrowed from the Hebrew and it means “worthlessness or wickedness.” In this context it speaks of Satan! Poole put it like this, “The term is used only in this place in the New Testament, but very often in the Old Testament, to express men notoriously wicked and scandalous.”

And when Paul says, **“And what communion has light with darkness?”** the idea is that of influence. Hodge put it like this, “Parties are said to be in communion when they are so united that what belongs to the one belongs to the other, or when what is true of the one is true of the other.”

They had compromised their faith so much that the world, the darkness of the world was influencing their lives, in how they lived.

And, like I have said, that is what has happened to the church today, the world has influenced it so much that the church has become like the world. We get our ideas from the world.

We accept the sin of the world as being good and, in the end, we are bringing death and destruction to so many lives!

Now let me ask you this. Does that mean we are not to associate ourselves with non-Christians?

Not at all but they are not to be our best friends, our mate, we are not to embrace and welcome into our church false teachers, because I will tell you this, and I have seen it over and over again, you will not bring them up to where you are at but they will drag you down to where they are!

Make no mistake about it, they will influence your life and not for the good! Your behavior, your language, the things you do will begin to deteriorate because you are dwelling in darkness, they are influencing you.

Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:33, **“Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’”**

The Amplified Bible tells us, **“Do not be so deceived and misled! Evil companionships (communion, associations) corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character.”**

The Living Bible puts it this way, **“Don’t be fooled by those who say such things. If you listen to them you will start acting like them.”**

I think you get the point!

And do you see what God calls us to do here? God calls for us to come out of that darkness, we are His, He dwells in us.

Of this Redpath tells us, “It is not a question simply of trying to empty your heart and life of every worldly desire – what an awful impossibility! It is rather opening your heart wide to all the love of God in Christ and letting that love just sweep through you and exercise its expulsive power till your heart is filled with love.”

Our Father God is telling us the same, don’t fill your life with evil, don’t surround yourself with evil, because it will affect your life. I don’t care how strong you think you are, Father God knows best!

Fill yourself up with the things of God as Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8-9, **“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”**

Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 3:16-17 Paul said, **“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”**

Thus, **“Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty.”** II Corinthians 6:17-18. May we do that!

With that as our background, let’s begin reading in II Corinthians chapter 7 beginning in verse 1 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study through His Word.

**II CORINTHIANS 7****VERSE 1**

Keep in mind that when we see the word “**Therefore**” we need to ask ourselves what it is there for?

And this word makes us look back at what the writer just said, these promises He made to His people.

What promises?

Remember what we just read, “**... God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.’ I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.**” II Corinthians 6:16b-18.

You see, Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote about the need to separate from worldly influences so that we can live a close life with God.

In other words, because of God’s presence, because of His fellowship with us, don’t be unclean but be holy!

You need to separate yourself from worldly influences that will affect your life and will affect your relationship with God, things that will move you away from Him.

Of this Clarke tells us, “How can those expect God to purify their hearts who are continually indulging their eyes, ears, and hands in what is forbidden, and in what tends to increase and bring into action all the evil propensities of the soul?”

That just makes sense!

And folks, this goes far beyond the obvious sins – the filthiness of the flesh. It speaks of our pride, our selfishness, our self-righteousness, our legalism, our hatred, our bitterness, and I could go on – I guess you can say that it is the filthiness of the spirit!

May our prayer be like the prayer of McCheyne who said, “Lord, make me as holy as it is possible for a man to be on this side of heaven.”

The more you yield to the Spirit of God the sooner you will be more like Christ.

The more you resist the work of the Spirit in your life, you fight against Him, the longer it will take.

And folks, let’s face it, it is a life-long process but don’t become stagnant or go backwards, into your second, third, fourth and-so-on spiritual childhood!

We need to mature in the faith, grow in the Lord as you submit your life to Him!

### VERSES 2-3

You can see the heart of Paul for these believers. He loved them, even though they did not love him back.

And yes, this should be the heart of every Christian, but, even more so, it should be the heart of every pastor. A pastor should have a shepherd’s heart and not the heart of a hireling or someone who is in it to make money and has no concern for the sheep that God has entrusted to them!

In II Corinthians 7:3, let me paraphrase it like this. Paul was telling them, “***Look guys, I am totally committed to you and it doesn’t matter if I live or die, I am not going to abandon you!***” That is the heart of a shepherd! Nothing was going to move Paul from serving them!



Listen to what Paul said to them back in II Corinthians 6:11-12, **“O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.”**

You see, this was a heart issue on their part as the Corinthians looked down upon Paul, they refused to see Paul as a man of God being used by God because they let worldly influence harden their heart toward Paul.

David Guzik put it like this, “The Corinthian Christians believed many bad things about Paul – that God wasn’t using him, that he didn’t have the kind of image, authority, or power an apostle should have – but their problem was not an information problem. Their problem was with their hearts. Their hearts had been open to the world but not to Paul. In the “unequally yoked” passage, Paul told them to close their hearts to the world. Now it is time to open their hearts to him.”

What Paul wants from them is to be open, to look at the evidence. You see, he has not wronged them in any way. Thus, just receive him in love.

His letter to them was a letter written in love, even I Corinthians, which was a letter of rebuke and correction, but it was done in love, not anger, with the idea of restoration and not destruction.

It was obviously needed but some of them had a hard time with it and hardened their hearts to Paul and we have seen that today as we have to correct someone and they harden their heart to you and may even distance themselves from you just as the Corinthians had done.

It was truly a heart issue on their part!

VERSES 4-7

Yes, Paul was bold in correcting their sin, but he also saw the good in them and boasted about them to other believers.

Yes, correction is needed in the body of Christ but also look for good, encourage people in their walk with the Lord.

Paul is basically saying to the Corinthian church, *“You better believe I had to speak frankly to you about some of the things that needed to be corrected. The reason I did that was because I love you! But I did not just correct you but I also wanted to tell you how you have blessed me and of how proud I am of you for how you took the things I wrote to you to heart and the changes you have made. And I boast about you to everyone!”*

Again, the heart of a shepherd and not a hireling!

Paul talks about his travels and some of the things that he encountered on his travels.

Paul traveled to Troas as a door of opportunity was opened for him, but he did not find Titus there.

And in II Corinthians 2:13 Paul tells us, **“I had no rest in my spirit, because I did not find Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia.”**

Paul now picks up with his thought and he finds Titus in Macedonia and even though there was much tribulation, much conflict there, God comforted Paul by bringing Titus to Him. And as Titus told Paul of the good things that were happening in Corinth, it brought Paul great joy.

It is as Morgan said, “No circumstances of personal affliction can dim the gladness of seeing souls grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus.”

How true that is, things can be a mess but when you see people come to the Lord, grow in the Lord, it dispels all that trouble and you rejoice!

Not only that but I truly believe that God brings into our lives great comfort through the people He brings into our lives, our brothers and sisters in the Lord!

So many people miss out on this comfort because they don't take the time to be around people. I am amazed how much God has comforted me over the years with the words that you have spoken to me.

Remember what we read back in II Corinthians chapter 1, where Paul tells us **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.”** II Corinthians 1:3-7.

And make no mistake about it, our God brings great comfort into our lives.

We are also comforted by the Word of God, the Bible!

But, like I have said, we are also comforted by those who come to our side to bring to us the comfort of God into our lives.

Folks, like Paul, God has given to us our Titus to bring to you comfort, to encourage you, don't miss out on that or resist it.

Also, are you a Titus to people or a porcupine?

Do you bring the comfort of God when you get close to people or do you poke them with your quills?

You know what God desires you to do, bring people God's comfort!

#### VERSES 8-10

If Paul is speaking of his first letter to the Corinthians, full of correction, it was difficult for him to send it, and yet, Paul knew it had to be sent.

And as they read it, they were hurt, they felt sorry but that sorrow then lead them to repent of their sin and get right with God.

It is as Trapp tells us, "In sin, the pleasure passeth, the sorrow remaineth; but in repentance, the sorrow passeth, the pleasure abideth forever. God soon poureth the oil of gladness into broken hearts."

It is as David said in Psalm 30:5, "**For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.**"

May we not forget that, and may we give Him those things in our life that only brings hurt and pain so that we can have that joy that is fresh every morning!

I like the way that one writer summed it up for us regarding the pain of correction and what it does in our life. He wrote,

“The whole process which the apostle is describing here may be likened to the work of a surgeon. In order for him to remove a dangerously infected part from the human body, it is necessary for him to cut deep into the flesh. He does not rejoice in thus causing pain to the patient, though he knows it must be done if the patient is to regain his health. Especially if the patient is a close friend, the surgeon is keenly aware of the suffering that will be necessary. But he realizes that this suffering is only temporary, and he is willing that it should be so in order that the final outcome might be favorable.” (William MacDonald)

Paul is rejoicing over the good that came from that letter, how they responded to it, at least some of them. You see, for the Corinthians, their sorrow led to repentance; it led to a change in the direction that they were going.

You see, repentance is more than a feeling, it is an action word and it speaks of turning around.

They were moving away from God by their actions, they repented and came back to God that led to salvation or SOTERIA, (so-tay-ree'-ah) in the Greek, and it speaks of more than just being born again, it encompasses all that God has for us, that our walk is not hindering God from pouring out His blessings upon us!

Now here's the big question. How can you tell if a person is truly repenting or if it is just a worldly regret, a sorry that they got caught?

We talked a little about this already, but I think this is very important.

Let me show you what true repentance is not. We are told,

“Katherine Power was a fugitive for more than twenty-three years. In 1970, during the heyday of student radicalism, she participated in a Boston bank robbery in which a city policeman, the father of nine children, was shot in the back and killed. Pursued by federal authorities for murder, Ms. Power went into hiding. For fourteen years she was one of the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted Fugitives. Finally, in late 1993, she surrendered to authorities.

In a statement she read to the press, Katherine Power characterized her actions in the bank robbery as *“naive and unthinking.”* What motivated her to surrender? *“I know that I must answer this accusation from the past, in order to live with full authenticity in the present.”*

Power’s husband explained further: *“She did not return out of guilt. She wanted her life back. She wants to be whole.”*

Is that true repentance? No, it is not. She wanted to ease her conscience, to get her life back, but no true repentance!

In a perceptive piece about Katherine Power’s surrender, commentator Charles Krauthammer wrote, “Her surrender - for the sake of “full authenticity”- was a form of therapy, indeed the final therapeutic step toward regaining her sense of self.”

Let me put this into perspective for you and show you where we are at today and what we have done.

Allan Bloom once described a man who had just gotten out of prison, where he had undergone “therapy.” “He said that he had found his identity and learned to like himself,” writes Bloom. “A generation ago he would have found God and learned to despise himself as a sinner.”

That is the problem. We are trying to ease our conscience and make ourselves feel good without repenting and turning to God and in the end, we will lose everything if that is what our repentance is all about.

One author said, “In an age where the word sin has become quaint, surrendering to the authorities for armed robbery and manslaughter is not an act of repentance but of personal growth.”

And listen to this perspective on this issue. We are told,

That kind of thinking has all but driven words like sin, repentance, contrition, atonement, restitution, and redemption out of public discourse. If no one is supposed to feel guilty, how could anyone be a sinner?

Modern culture has the answer: people are victims. Victims are not responsible for what they do; they are casualties of what happens to them.

So every human failing must be described in terms of how the perpetrator has been victimized. We are all supposed to be “sensitive” and “compassionate” enough to see that the very behaviors we used to label “sin” are actually evidence of victimization.

Victimism has gained so much influence that as far as society is concerned, there is practically no such thing as sin anymore. Anyone can escape responsibility for his or her wrongdoing simply by claiming the status of a victim. It has radically changed the way our society looks at human behavior.

- John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*

Then what is true repentance?

First of all, it involves an awareness and understanding of our *SIN!*

Secondly, our emotions are involved. In other words, we need to feel bad for what we have done. We need to realize that it was wrong! Not make excuses for what we have done but admit we were wrong!

And the third point is simple. We must do the right thing, make a change in our behavior and follow what God has said in His Word! We were moving 180 degrees away from God and now we have repented and we have turned around 180 degrees and are moving towards God, we are following our Good Shepherd!

That is true repentance.

But think about people who are sorry, prisons are full of them, sorry for getting caught.

That is worldly sorrow and it does not lead to life, but to death. It does not cause a person to change but they continue to move in the same direction away from God. That kind of sorrow produces death, spiritual death in a person!

It is as Redpath tells us, “How sorry do you thank you have to be? What is the purpose of your sorrow for sin? It is to bring you to trust in the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not your sorrow that cleanses you from sin, but His blood. It is the goodness of God that leads a man to repentance. Has your sorrow for sin led you at one time or another fling all the burden of it at the feet of a crucified, risen Savior? If it hasn’t, anything short of that is what Paul here calls sorrow that leads to death.”

Remember what Paul said, “**For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.**” II Corinthians 7:10.



And Paul is now going to speak about what he saw in them, this true repentance and it brought Paul great joy!

### VERSES 11-12

Notice the effects of godly sorrow, what it produces in a person's life, and what our repentance shows.

First Paul says that we have "**diligence**" or we keep moving forward, we don't give up easily. If you repent one minute and then the next minute you are doing the very thing you just repented of, you really are not walking in repentance because you are not diligent in your sorrow, in your repentance!

Next Paul speaks of "**clearing yourselves**" and it speaks of the freedom as we release that burden that we were carrying around with us as we have repented and given it to the Lord.

It is as I John 1:8-9 tells us, "**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**"

Next Paul speaks of "**indignation**" and it speaks of us being aware of our foolishness of walking in sin and this too will help keep us walking in the right direction.

Redpath tells us regarding this, "I am glad that the Bible allows me to get mad, mad with the devil! To think he had the audacity to pull me down and make me do that! What indignation, what fury at sin and all the agencies of Satan!"

Keep in mind, the Devil may tempt us, but we take that step. Thus, don't take that step, be aware, be mad that the Devil has tripped you up before and don't go down that same path!

Next Paul speaks of “**fear**” a fear that would cause us not to fall into that same sin again. A fear that does not want to go down that same path because we know the problems it caused us in our relationship with God. Let the fear of God guide you and don’t let the fear of man drive you. We need to have that kind of perspective, this is a good fear because it causes us to follow the Lord!

Then Paul speaks of “**vehement desire**” or a longing for purity, a longing to live a life that is pleasing to God!

Paul put it this way in I Thessalonians 4:3-8, “**For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.**”

Paul then speaks of “**zeal**” and it speaks of heat. There are two ways to look at this and I think both do apply.

First, are you hot for God, on fire for Him?

Also, are you hot against sin; you don’t want to go down that path again?

You see, I think both do apply here and they will keep us moving in the right direction!

I love the Lord so much and I hate sin so much that I will follow the Lord all the days of my life and not be hooked by the traps that Satan is setting to catch me and cause me to sin, to move away from God!

It is as Peter warns us in I Peter 2:11-12, **“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.”**

May we have that kind of zeal for God and against sin!

Lastly, Paul speaks of **“vindication”** and God has vindicated us of our sin as we repent of it before Him!

Truly that is the key, not that we sin or don’t sin, but that we repent when we do!

And here is the wonderful conclusion of all of this. When repentance is marked by the preceding characteristics, we are *clear* of guilt and sin. The stain of sin is gone! We can feel it, and others can see it.

Spurgeon put it like this, “Happy is that man who has had enough of the smart of sin to make it sour and bitter to him all the rest of his days; so that now, with changed heart, and renewed spirit, he perseveres in the ways of God, never thinking of going back, but resolved ‘through floods or flames’ to force his way to heaven, to be, by divine grace, master over every sin that assails him.”

We need to deal with sin seriously or it will consume our lives!

What we see here with the Corinthian believers is that they repented of their sin as the evidence is seen by the characteristics we just went through.

It is as David said in Psalm 32:1-2, **“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.”**

How happy we are to have our sins forgiven! Remember what Spurgeon wrote, what we just read!

And Redpath puts it this way in what Godly sorrow is and isn't. He tells us, "Godly sorrow that leads to repentance, therefore, is a sorrow that leads to a change of purpose, of intention, and of action. It is not the sorrow of idle tears; it is not crying by your bedside because once again you have failed; nor is it vain regret, wishing things had never happened, wishing you could live the moments again. No, it is not that. It is a change of purpose and intentions, a change of direction and action."

Let me show you someone who knows that they are guilty and does not try to make excuses for what they have done or try to say they did no wrong. We are told,

Lloyd H. Steffen wrote in *The Christian Century* how when King Frederick II, an eighteenth-century King of Prussia, was visiting a prison in Berlin, the inmates tried to prove to him how they had been unjustly imprisoned. All except one.

That one sat quietly in a corner, while all the rest protested their innocence. Seeing him sitting there oblivious to the commotion, the king asked him what he was there for.

"Armed robbery, Your Honor."

The king asked, "Were you guilty?"

"Yes, Sir," he answered. "I entirely deserve my punishment."

The king then gave an order to the guard: "Release this guilty man. I don't want him corrupting all these innocent people."

I like that and the reality is, if he did not recognize his sin, he would have never been set free and the same is true for us!

Now we also see here that Paul speaks of someone who did wrong and someone that was wronged but he doesn't mention names or go into the details, they were fully aware of the situation and there was no use in rehashing the event or events that brought this about.

Paul didn't take sides either, which tells me that they both needed to repent and get right with God and the matter would be resolved!

### VERSES 13-16

As Paul sent Titus to Corinth, he boasted about them and Titus, at first a little unsure of how they would respond, was probably a little nervous. And then he found out that Titus was refreshed when he saw them and that was a blessing to Paul.

Yes, they had problems, but they also were brethren in the Lord, and it was seen in their life.

And Paul is just encouraging these believers to continue on in the faith.

As you can see, Paul wasn't interested in ministry, in the general sense, he was interested in people and his ministry was thus, people!

How important that is for us to remember, we just don't serve, we serve the Lord and as we do, we serve people!

Remember that we opened up talking about Paul discouraged, depressed and we see here that he is refreshed. Let me close with these words to encourage you. We are told,

Deep, mutually appreciative friendships developed between Titus and the Corinthians. They came to revere him, treating him “with fear and trembling” as a messenger of God himself. It was a refreshed, energized, buoyant Titus who embraced this mentor, Paul in Macedonia.

Thus we see how Paul was comforted and elevated to joy. First, there was the “Titus Touch” as Paul so eloquently explained: “But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 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” (vv. 6, 7). Secondly, he was encouraged by news of the Corinthians’ repentance, and, thirdly, by Titus’ joy.

As we reflect on this, we see that Paul’s threefold comfort was all of God. God arranged the coming of Titus just at the right time. God effected the Corinthians’ godly grief and repentance. God refreshed Titus. And Paul’s great apostolic, other-directed heart was lifted from gloom precisely because he so cared for others. God’s comfort was effectual because Paul had the kind of heart that could receive it.

We also see from this account that God’s comfort very often comes through the instrumentality of others. And more, we must be sensitive to God’s so we can minister the golden touch – so some will sense that the hand of God was yours, but it was the hand of God – that the kindness was yours, but it was also the kindness of God – that the voice was yours, but it was the consolation of God.

Depression sometimes visits the most godly believers, and often it is because they have willingly followed God into the fray so that their bodies have had no rest, and pressures have squeezed them as they are surrounded by fightings without and fears within. They need a loving touch.

Is there someone whom God is laying on your heart to encourage? Then be his instrument now.

- R. Kent Hughes, 2 Corinthians – Power in Weakness, pp. 153-159

I don't know where you are at this evening in regard to feeling down, discouraged, maybe even depressed.

Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 1:3-7, and we have spoken these words already but how important they are to us. Paul wrote, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.”**

May the Lord lift you up, may He encourage you and may you then go and bring that comfort to others!