

II CORINTHIANS 7:1-7
HEARTS OVERWHELMED!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Corinthians chapter 7 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth.

Keep in mind that the chapter divisions and verses were added much latter to the Scriptures and they are not inspired, but they are very helpful to us.

Can you imagine me telling you to go to the book of Isaiah, and instead of chapter and verse I tell you, it is around the middle of the book of Isaiah, which has 66 chapters! That would be difficult.

My point in telling you that is some of the chapter divisions are not accurate. What I mean is that they end and start in the middle of what Paul was saying. Again, when Paul wrote this letter it was one long letter.

And we see that here with Paul closing out his thoughts in II Corinthians chapter 6 and what we read here in the opening verse in II Corinthians chapter 7.

So let me fill in some things so you get the flow of what Paul is saying as we move into chapter 7 of II Corinthians.

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.

The reason he said that was because they will bring you down, you will not lift them up.

Remember the illustration that Spurgeon gave to us.

A Christian girl once told Charles Spurgeon, the legendary preacher, that she was about to marry a man who didn't attend church or make any allegiance whatsoever to Jesus.

Spurgeon, true to form, quickly reminded her of the command from 2 Corinthians 6:14-15:

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? (N.K.J.V.)

But the young woman had another plan. She explained that she would lift the young man up spiritually after they were married.

Spurgeon listened to what she was saying and then asked her to stand on a chair.

The girl was puzzled by such an odd request, but she obliged.

Once she was standing on the chair, Spurgeon said to her, ***“Now you try to pull me up to your level.”***

The girl tugged hard on the portly preacher, but no matter how hard she pulled she couldn’t pull him up on the chair with her.

Now it was Spurgeon’s turn. He said, ***“Now I am going to pull you down, and I want you to do your best to remain where you are.”***

You can guess what happened. Despite the young woman’s best efforts, Spurgeon easily pulled her down from that chair.

Then he said to her, ***“That is what will happen if you marry that man. You won’t lift him up, but he will pull you down.”***

Again, Paul is speaking of our holiness and how it will be affected by those we keep company with.

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 hear 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! Too often Christians will look down upon those that are depressed, that should not be.

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 fighting’s 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, discouragement, I pray that God would bring His comfort to your heart as we go through these lessons. Again, you are not alone!

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

What I hope you will see is that even the mostly godly men and women can get down, they can get depressed.

God is aware, that is not the issue.

The issue comes when we begin to live in this state. We will go through them. Some of you are going through them right now. And if not now, you will go through those tough times and the bigger issue is, what are you going to do about it?

I think for most of us, we see David as a man of faith, a giant killer. And yes, he had his failures, his sin, but for the most part, David was a man of faith.

Why am I telling you this?

Because I want you to listen that this great man of faith also went through discouragement, depression, but again, he did not live in that condition.

In Psalm 42:5 David cries out, “**Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? . . .**”

In other words, David is discouraged, he is depressed.

Now, if the Psalm ended there, well, there is not much hope in what he is saying, the way he is feeling!

But it does not end there. In that same verse we see where David's hope came from, why his spirits were lifted out of that deep depression. David said, "**Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.**"

Again, it is not that we won't go through these times, we will. But it is about what we do when we are going through them, who we are going to cry out to and who we are going to trust that will give us hope!

I have called our study – ***HEARTS OVERWHELMED!***

And I have broken down the verses we will be looking at into the following main points. They are,

LIVE IN HOLINESS – II CORINTHIANS 7:1

LOVE WINS – II CORINTHIANS 7:2-3

THE HEART OF A SHEPHERD – II CORINTHIANS 7:4-7

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 into their lives by their actions!

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, he wrote, **“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 as we study through His Word and look at this topic – ***HEARTS OVERWHELMED!***

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? I know I have said that a lot, but it is important to remember and look back!

That is what this word should do, it should make us look back at what the writer just said, these promises God 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.*”

I often thought how wonderful it would be that at the moment we come to Christ, that flesh nature is gone, that we don't have to deal with it anymore!

One day that will happen, but not on this side of heaven!

And what this does for us, having to deal with the flesh on a daily basis, is that we have to trust in the Lord, we need to seek Him daily and ask Him to help us with this flesh nature. And I guess I should not say daily, but it truly is more often than that because wherever we go the flesh goes with us and we have to deal with it.

How can we deal with this and move towards holiness?

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

First, I will tell you how we can remain in the flesh and the consequences then of doing that.

All you have to do is resist the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and the more you do that, the more you fight against Him, the longer it will take.

But, as we surrender our life to the Spirit's leading, as we submit to Him, as we walk accordingly, then our life will reflect the nature of Jesus, for that is what God wants to do in our lives.

Let me also say this. You are not trying to be holy!

Why is that?

Because you are already holy!

I know, you are thinking, ***"Are you kidding me pastor Joe? I struggle every day with sin and you are saying that I am holy! No way!"***

No, I am not saying that, but God is.

In Colossians 1:22 Paul wrote, **“in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight.”**

And in Ephesians 1:4 we are told, **“just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”**

We are holy because the blood of Christ has cleansed us of all our sins, that is in the positional sense.

On a practical level, where we live out our faith, we still struggle, we still sin, but we are holy in the eyes of God. We are being transformed into the image of God!

Holiness is seen in our lives by acting like the one you have become. That is the point that Paul is making here.

In knowing all that God has done for us, in knowing that we have been adopted into the family of God, we need to walk accordingly!

Let me show you what I mean. At the end of Ephesians chapter 3 Paul is calling for us to start our engines because the race is about to start.

In Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus, he spends the first three chapters dealing with doctrine. A very important subject.

Then, as he moves into Ephesians chapter 4 through chapter 6 Paul is going to speak of how we are to live out our faith now that we have the correct information or doctrine! We have seen what God has for us, now we are to live for Him!

I remember at the Indy 500 how they prepare by saying, ***“Gentlemen, start your engines!”***

What does that mean?

It means that the green flag is about to go down and the race is about to begin!

Again, three chapters of doctrine and then, in Ephesians 4:1-3 we are told, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

God has not only told us to walk in holiness, but by His Spirit, He has given us the power to walk in holiness!

You see, we are being transformed into the image of Christ, His nature flowing through our lives and thus, walk accordingly!

In II Corinthians 3:18 we are told, **“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”**

This metamorphosis that is taking place in our lives is not just a façade or an outward change. We are being transformed into the image of God, from the inside out!

It is kind of like a work of art.

Imagine someone like Michelangelo working on a piece of marble, creating a picture of you into a work of art!

It is a process. He does not take his hammer and chisel and with one hit, the work is done!

It takes time and different tools are used to carve out his masterpiece!

That is what God is doing in our lives, working in us, making us more like Him, and thus, we are to walk in holiness!

Keep in mind that God begins this change on the inside, and it is manifested outwardly. It is a transformation and not just make-up!

And this transformation is a life-long process, as I have said. Remember what John tells us, **“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”** I John 3:2.

David said in Psalm 17:15, **“As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.”**

May that be our hearts desire, to be satisfied as we are transformed into the likeness of God and that happens as we gaze upon Him and allow the Spirit of God to transform us! And folks, He will complete the work in us, so don't give up, He doesn't!

And folks, let's face it, it is a life-long process but don't become stagnant or go backwards!

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

Thus, may we – ***LIVE IN HOLINESS!***

As we read on, we will be looking at how – ***LOVE WINS!***

VERSES 2-3

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

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!

We will deal more with that idea of a shepherd's heart in our next point, but just keep that in mind.

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!”***

Once again 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.

Make no mistake about it, the rift between Paul and the Corinthian church could be healed, but it was in the hands of the Corinthian Christians to do it. They had to also be open.

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 take a good 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!

And we have seen that there are some Christians who are willing to reach out to those that are struggling and others are there to mock them and make fun of them.

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

The renowned Christian teacher and author Dr. Howard Hendricks often shared a story of a young man who had strayed from his faith. The young man found himself in deep spiritual trouble, caught in a life of sin.

When he finally hit rock bottom and repented, Dr. Hendricks asked him what it was like to be away from the Lord.

The man replied that it felt like he was out at sea, drowning in deep water. He said that while he was out there, all his “*good*” Christian friends were standing safely on the shore, shouting at him, hurling biblical accusations, and reminding him of his penalty, his sin, and the justice of God.

Then the man added: “*But there was one Christian brother who actually swam out to get me. He didn’t condone my sin, but he waded into my mess, wrapped his arms around me, and would not let me go.*”

That should be our heart as well, going out to rescue those who are drowning in sin, those that are saved and those that are not saved.

And this is Biblical.

In Galatians 6:1-2 Paul wrote, **“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”**

Paul is not speaking of someone who is in ongoing and unrepentant sin. That person should be rebuked if they refuse to repent and if they continue on, they need to be disfellowshipped!

But have we made an effort to restore them?

Have we made an effort to rescue them?

That is an important point.

But here in Galatians 6:1 Paul is speaking of someone who has fallen into sin, finding themselves in situations that they never dreamed they would be in and yet they are. And we are here to help them get back on track, you might say!

Now, why did Paul even have to mention this?

The reason Paul has to deal with this is because those that are bound in legalism come down hard against those that stumble, those that fall into sin, those that don’t live up to the standard they have set.

As I have said, there is no compassion in the Law, no love, just condemnation for not meeting a certain standard that they have set.

If you doubt that just read through the Gospels and see how the Jewish religious leaders looked down upon those who didn’t meet their standards.

The Pharisees would walk down the street and if you walked by, they would gather up their robes so they would not touch you and make them unclean!

No love, no compassion, just disgust in the way people acted and thankful they are not like them. Pride and legalism do go together!

And that is nothing more than a work of the flesh!

But, for those Christians who understand grace and thus, live by grace, they will act graciously towards others.

You see, we have seen what God has given to us, His amazing Grace and we in no way deserve it.

Thus, as we see others struggling with sin, we can extend the grace of God to them and help them in the situations that they are in.

And here's the thing. And this is very obvious. When you put a legalist and a person who lives by grace, side by side, and a weaker Christian confesses their failings to them, their response is like night and day!

From the legalists, they don't get support, they don't get help, they get a lecture on how to be better, they get condemnation for what they have done.

They may say something like this, ***"I don't know how they could do that and call themselves a Christian! I would never think of doing anything like that!"***

Why do they respond like that?

Because it makes them look good since they have not done what this other Christian has done. That is not love, it is not the Fruit of the Spirit!

But, when a person who is walking in the Grace of God hears someone who is struggling with sin, they minister to them with the love and grace of God! It is the Fruit of the Spirit that is flowing through our lives!

What a difference that is and what a wonderful gift God has given to us – ***GRACE!***

You see, we are not to destroy or condemn the person nor are we to condone their sin. There is a balance.

Then what are we to do?

We are to restore them to the faith. You see, they transgressed, they sinned either willfully or unintentionally and thus they don't need excuses, they are not to be ignored, but they are to be restored.

In fact, Paul uses the Greek word ***KATARTIZO*** (kat-ar-tid'-zo) for “restore” and it carries with it the idea of “*to put in order*” or “*to restore to its former condition.*”

It was used as a medical term to set a broken or displaced bone or in Mark 1:19 it is used of the apostles mending their nets.

Look at how this is played out, and you will see how we are to minister to people, help them, love them, extend the Grace of God to them.

You see, setting a broken bone means you have to get close to that person in need, you have to touch them. It may cause them some pain as you reset the bone, but the idea is always a healing not destruction. It is done in love not hatred.

To mend a net, you have to physically touch that net and repair it, so too with someone who has fallen into a trespass.

We see this played out for us in a bad way and in a good way back in Genesis 9:20-23.

These events took place after the flood and we are told, **“And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father’s nakedness.”**

Ham gossiped, told others of what happened to his father. That truly is how the Law is used by them. It brings condemnation, it puts them down, it makes fun of them while making us look good.

But we also see what Noah’s two other sons did, Shem and Japheth. They walked in backwards and covered their father’s sin – that is love!

They extended ***GRACE*** to their father!

It is as Peter tells us in I Peter 4:8, **“And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’”**

Now please understand that Peter is not saying that we just ignore the sins of others, as some like to think.

The idea here is as follows,

He must pay attention to his fellowship with other believers . . . and ***have fervent love*** for all members of the household of faith. Such a love will not publicize the faults and failings of other believers, but will protect them from public view. Someone has said, ***“Hatred makes the worst of everything. Love is entitled to bury things out of sight.”***

The statement “*love will cover a multitude of sins*” (Prov. 10:12) should not be taken as a doctrinal explanation of how sins are put away. The guilt and penalty of sins can only be removed by the blood of Christ. Neither should the statement be used to condone sin or to relieve an assembly from its responsibility to discipline an offender. It means that true love is able to overlook minor faults and failures of other believers.

- William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary, p. 227

In other words, can you forgive what others have done to you and love them with that Agape, that unconditional love that God has towards you?

Are you willing to let those things go?

And the idea with this “**fervent**” love is that of a muscle that is stretched to its limit! Can we love like that?

Not on our own but by the power of God’s Spirit working in us and through us we can. You see, it is the Fruit of the Spirit manifested in our lives.

Paul is calling for them to forgive him and restore the relationship that they once had with him.

And for some in the church of Corinth, that is what happened, they forgave or, as I have said – ***LOVE WINS!***

As we finish up this morning, we will be looking at – ***THE HEART OF A SHEPHERD!***

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 then, in Macedonia, he encountered trouble!

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.

But listen again at what Paul went through, **“For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears.”** II Corinthians 7:5.

Discouragement, depression affected Paul just as it affects our lives.

Why does this happen to us?

Because as we look at what is going on around us. As we look at what is happening in our own lives. As we look at these things, we can't seem to find an answer, we can't seem to find hope!

And hope is important because it gives us a reason to go on!

Let me show you what I mean.

This is a true story.

In 2010, a shocking mining accident took place in Chile that drew the attention of the entire world.

Thirty-three miners were trapped underground, about 700 meters deep.

To give you an idea of what that means - it's roughly as deep as one of our country's tallest skyscrapers if it were buried straight down into the earth.

Day after day passed as these miners remained trapped underground. Their water and food supplies grew scarcer, and they still couldn't communicate with anyone on the surface. It seemed completely hopeless.

After 16 days, although they were still alive, despair began to take hold - some even thought about ending their lives.

But then something happened. Outside, rescue workers and experts from around the world tried every possible method and finally managed to drill a small passage that reached them.

All of a sudden, the 33 men went from hopelessness to hope.

But did that mean they were saved already?

Not yet. They were still trapped underground, but their state of mind completely changed - they no longer felt overwhelming fear or despair.

Through that small passage, rescuers were able to send them real, practical help - food, water, and oxygen.

With hope and this support, they endured for 69 long days.

In the end, all 33 men were rescued - a true miracle.

Yes, these men found hope, but what about us, where is our hope found?

Our hope is in the Lord and His Word opened up to us by His Spirit!

When things look hopeless from a physical point of view, spiritually speaking, we know that all things are possible with God! He is our ***HOPE!***

Let me show you how the Scriptures can give you hope when there is no hope.

In Isaiah 43:1 we are told, “**But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.’**”

Now some may argue that this is speaking of Israel, and I would agree.

But aren’t we formed by God?

Hasn’t God redeemed us?

Doesn’t God call us by name?

Aren’t we His?

I think we can all agree on that, specifically for Israel, but the principle applies to us as well! We are His!

And from there we see when the Lord is with us and it is not just in the good times.

Continuing on in Isaiah chapter 43, looking at verse 2, we are told, “**When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.**”

When will God be with us?

He will be with us in those deep waters that seem to cause us to sink down. He is there to lift us up!

He will be with us through the rivers, where the currents seem to sweep us away. And the idea is that the course of this world that wants to pull you down into its ways. But the Lord is there to help us go against those currents in the river of life so we don't go under!

The fires of trials and persecutions, of diseases and sickness and this and that, will not scorch our lives because the Lord is with us and He will prevent us from being burned by them!

And it is not easy, but please understand that you are not alone. We all face these things and can easily get discouraged and depressed.

The problem is that we are not seeing the bigger picture. Let me show you what I mean.

We are told,

One day John Wesley was walking with a troubled man who expressed his doubt as to the goodness of God.

He said, ***"I do not know what I shall do with all this worry and trouble."***

At the same moment Wesley saw a cow looking over a stone wall.

"Do you know," asked Wesley, ***"why that cow is looking over the wall?"***

"No," said the man who was worried.

Wesley said, ***"The cow is looking over the wall because she cannot see through it. That is what you must do with your wall of trouble - look over it and avoid it."***

We need to look over all these things that have come upon our lives and look to Lord, the One who is with us through all these things and the One who will see us through them!

As we have seen, at times even the courageous apostle was afraid.

It's been said, *"Courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to trust God in the midst of fear."*

In other words, *"When your knees knock kneel on them."*

Not only that. Notice what Paul said in II Corinthians 7:6, **"Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus."**

Why did Paul speaking of the downcast being comforted?

Because he was the one who was downcast, discouraged and depressed and that situation all changed when God brought Titus to Paul!

What I see here is that God brings into our lives great comfort through the people He brings into our lives, our brothers and sisters in the Lord as well as His Word!

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. And my wife wins out on this one, she has comforted me so much over the years!

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, as I have said!

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 us comfort, to encourage us, 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!

And in II Corinthians 7:7 Paul was encouraged when Titus brought news of how many of the believers in Corinth were praying and supporting the work that Paul was doing!

Make no mistake about it, we are to – ***LIVE HOLY LIVES!***

This is not a salvation issue. It is an issue of identification, who we identify with. And people will know by the things we do and the things we say.

And remember, all that God has done for you should cause you to live for Him a holy life!

We also see that – ***LOVE WINS!***

It is the love of God that brings people to repentance, for the most part. Yes, some need to be dangled over the fires of Hell, but for the most part it is God's love for sinful man that brings many to saving faith and encourages fallen believers!

And, as we have seen, Paul had – ***THE HEART OF A SHEPHERD!***

Nothing was going to stop him from the work that God had called him to do. And yes, he was discouraged at times, he was depressed at times, but our God is so gracious and merciful that He brought to Paul times of refreshing, just as He does with us.

As I close this morning, some of you may feel overwhelmed, discouraged and depressed. You have so much to do, so much in front of you and it just doesn't seem to end, there is no way out.

Let me give you this perspective and hopefully it will help you and encourage you.

We are told,

One man was suffering his little daily deaths in the form of job stress and tension.

Finally, after he had been overworked to the point of near total exhaustion, he began to pray.

He said that almost immediately he received a clear insight into what he had to do.

He had to resign as manager of the universe. And God accepted his resignation.

Some of us are trying to be manager of the universe.

We want to manage the lives of the members of our families.

We want to run things down at the Church our way.

“And why doesn't the President do this or that. And when will all the people in government learn to do things my way.”

There is a kind of dying involved when we give some of that up, and learn how to trust God to manage the universe instead of ourselves!