

AFTER A CONFRONTATION
II Corinthians 7:2-16

Intro: If you have an outline or manuscript of this morning's sermon in hand---you may have wondered about the title---"After a Confrontation."

- But let me assure you---I'm not going to be talking about the confrontation that took place at the capitol last Wednesday---or the rhetoric we've been inundated with ever since.
- No---we're going to be looking at something you don't have to read about---or watch on TV---to even know it's taken place.
- We're going to be thinking about confrontations that take place much closer to home---and our personal involvement in such.
- Obviously no one likes to be confronted---especially by something they know is true.
- No one enjoys having their sins put on display.
- But even worse than being confronted with our own sin is the need to confront someone else about theirs.
- And whether we like it or not---we do have a responsibility to confront our brothers and sisters when we see unrepented sin in their lives.
- Didn't Jesus say in Matthew 18:15:
- "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."
- Indeed He did.

- Now---He also had much to say about how we go to our brother---what our motivation and attitude should be when we go.
- And He made it clear that we need to get the log out of our own eye before we try to take the speak out of our brother's.
- But He did make it clear that we have an obligation to confront one another---and this really shouldn't surprise us.
- Don't we---as parents---confront our children when their behavior needs to be changed?
- And don't we confront those we care about---when we see them heading down a path that we know will lead to heartache?
- If we love someone---we must be willing to confront them---when confrontation is called for.
- Ignoring a potentially dangerous---or even damning direction in life---is not the loving thing to do.
- Paul certainly didn't ignore what was going on in the Corinthian church---and there was much they needed to be confronted about.
- The church had been founded in a very immoral society---and the believers had come out of lives dominated by all kinds of sin.
- In I Corinthians 6:9-11 Paul reminded them of their past when he wrote:
- "Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,
- nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

- And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.”
- Then---even after reminding them of their past---and the difference Christ had made in their lives---he still felt it necessary to tell them to flee immorality---and stay away from prostitutes.
- They may have become Christians---but they were still struggling with the flesh---and apparently giving in to it.
- He even had to order them to excommunicate a man who was sleeping with his stepmother.
- They were to do so not only to remove his influence from the church---but to do so in the hopes that he would acknowledge his sin and repent---and could then be restored to the church.
- Paul made it clear that they were not to even associate with so-called brothers who were immoral---covetous---idolaters---revilers---drunkards---or swindlers.
- He also confronted them about divisions and rivalries in the church.
- About taking one another to court---about giving no thought to the effect their eating and drinking habits might have on a weaker brother---about the misuse of spiritual gifts---and many other things they were doing or not doing.
- Obviously they didn't like hearing such things.
- And that led Paul to make a “painful” visit to them---and to send Titus to them with a “severe” letter.

- The end-result---however---was that the church responded positively to the confrontations.
- And in our text for today Paul is expressing his joy over their response.
- Not only are we to follow Paul's example of confronting one another when it's necessary---but we should also learn from him what to do after a confrontation.
- And---like Paul---we begin by reassuring those who have been confronted of our love for them.

I. REASSURE OF YOUR LOVE

II Corinthians 7:2-4

- “Make room for us in your heart; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.
- I do not speak to condemn you; for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.
- Great is my confidence in you, great is my boasting on your behalf; I am filled with comfort. I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.”
- Paul began by pouring out his love for the Corinthians---and pleading for them to love him as well.
- He asked them to make room for him in their hearts---and to not shut him out because of what he had had to do.
- He had wronged no one---corrupted no one---taken advantage of no one.
- Paul had a clear conscience about the confrontation---and his motives had been pure.

- He hadn't taken advantage of a bad situation to get his licks in.
- His reason for confronting them hadn't been to condemn them.
- He loved them.
- Now---obviously---if we confront someone to get even---or to pass judgment on them---we can't reassure them of our love after the confrontation.
- Unless we repent---and seek their forgiveness first.
- But if our action is motivated by love---and we are careful to confront in a loving manner---we must not hesitate to reassure someone of our love after it's all over.
- Paul reminded them that he had said before that he loved them enough to die together with them---or to live together with them.
- And that was still true.
- What had happened hadn't lessened his confidence in them---or his love for them.
- In fact---he was comforted and filled with joy because of what they had gone through together.
- The confrontation had been an expression of love---of caring enough to confront.
- And their love had been tested---and strengthened.
- If Paul hadn't loved them---he'd have washed his hands of them.
- He'd have just gone on to someone else---writing them off as a lost cause.

- But he couldn't do that---because he loved them.
- And he wanted them to be reassured of that fact---now that the confrontation was over.
- We too need to reassure those we confront that we still love them.
- Don't push your child off your knee after a spanking.
- Take him in your arms and let him know how much you love him---even when he is bad.
- And---as I've been reminded in a book I'm currently reading---*The Well-behaved Child*---contrary to what we've been led to believe---children are bad.
- None of us are by nature good---we are all sinful.
- Children are not made bad---by bad parenting---they come that way.
- And when their sinful nature begins to show itself---they need to be confronted.
- Likewise---if a fallen nature reasserts itself in a brother or sister---they may need to be confronted as well.
- Just make sure you go with love in your heart.
- And by all means---don't let anyone feel you love them less after a confrontation.
- In fact---make sure they know that you still love them.
- Paul made sure the Corinthians knew that---by letting them know of the pain and sorrow he felt after the confrontation.

II. SHARE YOUR SORROW II Corinthians 7:5-7

- “For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.
- But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;
- and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.”
- Paul had already told them how he had walked out on a real opportunity for ministry in Troas when he headed for Macedonia---hoping to meet Titus there---because he was so anxious to hear how things were going in Corinth.
- Now he says when he got to Macedonia he was beside himself ---having conflicts without---and fears within.
- We don’t know what external conflicts he’s talking about.
- But we know the fears within were anxieties about the church in Corinth---because it was the coming of Titus---and the news he brought---that comforted him.
- Paul was suffering because of the situation in Corinth---and was so filled with anxiety about their response to his severe letter---that he was depressed.
- Paul didn’t enjoy having to confront the Corinthians.
- He didn’t get any pleasure out of it---it depressed him.
- And it took God---the One who comforts the depressed---to bring any relief to Paul.
- He did so by leading Titus back to him.
- When he heard how the church had responded to his letter---he was comforted.
- How they had longed to do what was right---how they had mourned over what they had done---and how they were zealous to do what Paul suggested.
- That brought great joy to Paul---and relieved his depression over the situation.
- But again---notice that the joy came when the confrontation was over---when it had succeeded.
- It didn’t come during the confrontation.
- Paul didn’t enjoy disciplining his sons and daughters in the faith any more than we enjoy disciplining our sons and daughters.
- And he wasn’t afraid to tell them how it hurt him to have to do it.
- I can almost hear him saying something many of us have no doubt said---“This hurts me than it hurts you.”
- He did it because it was necessary.
- He did it for their own good---to help them.
- That was the goal of his action.
- And he makes that clear by explaining his goal.

III. EXPLAIN THE GOAL OF YOUR ACTION II Corinthians 7:8-10

- “For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—
- I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.
- For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”
- Paul recognized that his letter caused the Corinthians sorrow---and admitted that he had had second thoughts about it after he sent it.
- But now he was glad he did---because it got the results he had hoped for.
- True---it made them sorrowful---but only for a little while.
- And that sorrow had motivated them to do something to remedy the situation---and that’s what he wanted.
- The sorrow his letter caused brought them to the point of repentance---and that was the whole point of the confrontation in the first place.
- His goal was to bring the Corinthians to the place where they would recognize they were doing something wrong---and make the necessary changes.
- That’s repentance---a change of heart that leads to a change of direction in life.
- And sorrow that is caused according to the will of God often leads to repentance---repentance without regret.
- Repentance that appreciates the action that was taken---and harbors no ill-will toward those who took it.
- Again---Paul emphasized the intention of his confrontation wasn’t that they suffer loss of anything---but that they gain.
- That through repentance they might gain a clear conscience toward God and man.
- He didn’t confront to bring sorrow---but to bring salvation.
- That’s why he did what he did.
- He wasn’t trying to get even---or to make them pay for what they had done.
- He wasn’t trying to lay guilt on them---and bring them to the hopeless despair that comes from worldly sorrow.
- He was trying to bring them to a godly sorrow that would make them reexamine where they were going---and who they were hurting.
- Sorrow that would lead them to repentance and restoration.
- That was the goal of his actions.
- And he wanted them to know it---so he stated it plainly.
- He then went on to praise them for responding to his actions as he had hoped they would.

IV. PRAISE FOR DESIRED RESPONSE

II Corinthians 7:11-13a

- “For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.
- So although I wrote to you it was not for the sake of the offender, nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.
- For this reason we have been comforted.”
- Paul praised the Corinthians for responding to his confrontation as he had hoped they would.
- Their earnestness had been made evident by their godly sorrow---and they had vindicated themselves by changing what needed to be changed.
- Their righteous indignation---and fear of God’s judgment---had motivated them to take the drastic steps that were necessary.
- They had zealously addressed the sin in their own lives---and in the lives of each other.
- And they were therefore declared innocent of any wrongdoing.
- Now that’s not to say they had done nothing wrong.
- Only that they had been forgiven---and that they were no longer doing anything wrong.
- They had cleared their name by making amends for what they had done---or had neglected to do.

- Paul’s confrontation had given them the opportunity to dramatically demonstrate the earnestness of their faith.
- And he praised them for doing so.
- He was comforted.
- He was glad he had done what he had done---and praised them for responding so beautifully to his confrontation.
- Perhaps we need to remember to praise those who respond as desired to our confrontations as well.
- Do we let our kids know when they have been vindicated in our eyes?
- That things are good---and their past behavior is not being held against them?
- Do we make those we confront fully aware that after repentance we no longer view them with suspicion?
- That they are completely forgiven---with full confidence restored?
- Paul did.

V. REAFFIRM YOUR CONFIDENCE

II Corinthians 7:7b-16

- “And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.
- For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth.

- And his affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.
- I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.”
- Apparently when Paul had sent Titus to Corinth with his severe letter he had told him of his confidence in the Corinthians Christians.
- He had boasted of their faith---and assured Titus that everything would be cleared up.
- He was confident the Corinthians would vindicate themselves.
- That confidence had been proven valid by their response---and Titus now shared the confidence Paul had always had in them.
- He had been impressed by the way they had received him as a spokesman of God---and by the way they had accepted what he had to say.
- That brought great joy to Paul---and even strengthened his confidence in them.
- And he told them so.
- He made sure they knew that the need for confrontation hadn't lessened his confidence in them.
- In fact---the confrontation---and their response to it---had actually increased his confidence in them.
- They had faced a need for change in their lives---and had changed.
- That raised Paul's level of confidence in them---and he made sure they knew it.
- And all of that came about because someone cared enough to tell them the truth.
- Truth that had made them sorrowful for a time---but truth that had also led them to see the need for repentance in their lives.
- Repentance that resulted in their being forgiven---and being declared innocent.
- I'm sure we all need that kind of confrontation at one time or another.
- In fact---it was probably just such confrontation that led us to the Lord in the first place.
- We had to be confronted with our sinful nature---we had to be made sorrowful.
- And we had to repent---to change the direction of our lives---responding in obedience to the will of God.
- That's what led to our forgiveness---and our present standing before God.
- So let's not be afraid to confront those we love---if it's needed.
- And after we have done so---let's make certain they know we still love them.
- And if the Spirit is confronting anyone---here or at home---that they need to repent of something that's damaging their relationship with the Lord---or with a brother or sister---that they'll respond in a way that makes possible rejoicing in heaven---and on earth.
- That they'll surrender to the Spirit's prompting---and find not only forgiveness---but the assurance that they are still loved by their heavenly Father---and by their brothers and sisters.