

2nd Corinthians Chapters 6 and 7- John Karmelich

1. My title for this lesson is "God, love and repentance". Well, if that doesn't scare you away from reading this lesson, feel free to read further. ☺
 - a) This issue at hand has nothing to do with salvation. It strictly has to do with sin issues. This is about confession of sins and understanding what is "repentance".
 - b) Know that God does not expect us to be perfect. Christians are already perfectly forgiven. Just because God has already forgiven all of our sins, past, present and future, that does not give us a license to go out and sin. When we sin, God wants repentance.
 - c) The concept of "repentance" does not mean we walk around all day in a sorrowful mood as we are facing our own shortcomings before God. It simply means that once we are aware of a sin issue in our life, we confess it, we agree to turn from that sin, and we ask God's help to get us to change our lifestyle.
 - d) We as Christians have the "Spirit of God living inside of us." That does not mean God forces us how to live. God does not violate our free will. When we sin, God is "grieved" by that sin, but He does not force us to repent of that sin. God will often let that sin "stew for awhile" so after things go downhill, we realize that God was right on that issue. We then turn that situation over to God. That is repentance. Repentance is simply to understand that "God was right and we were wrong" about something. To understand that "God was right" is also to understand we need God to help us turn from that issue.
 - e) It is important to understand that God desires a loving relationship with us. It is a "vertical relationship" in that it is to be between God and our self. It is also a "horizontal relationship" between others and us. Sin issues block that love relationship. Those sins have to be dealt with in order to enjoy healthy and loving relationships.
2. Paul wants a healthy "love" relationship between the Christians in Corinth and himself.
 - a) In other words, Paul wants the type of love relationship that God desires.
 - b) Paul is currently many miles away from that church, and in that place are people who are saying Paul is wrong about God. These false teachers were saying that one has to obey all of the Old Testament commandments in order to be saved. That was contradictory to Paul's message that we are saved by Jesus blood payment, and that is it.
 - i) Given that problem, Paul didn't feel any "love relationship" with that church knowing that they were turning against Paul's gospel message.
 - ii) The good news is that by the end of Chapter 7, Paul knows that this church has repented of its sin issues and wants to have a loving relationship with Paul.
 - c) In other words, what motivated Paul was knowing that the churches he founded were growing in God's love and they are regularly dealing with sin issues in their lives.
3. I have to admit, this is one of the hardest lessons for me to write in a while, because it deals with sin issues that we all (that is all believers in God) have to face on a daily basis.
 - a) The reality is that we all want peace with God, but usually we are so busy blaming others, that we refuse to look at our shortcomings before God. We refuse to look at our own "bad", but we all desire the "good relationship" with God and other believers.
 - b) What I hope this lesson accomplishes for all of us, is not an understanding of the ancient history of Corinth, but an understanding that all of us need to deal with the issues of sin in our lives. My hope is we all regularly confess those sins as we become aware of them so that we can enjoy God's love relationship with Him and with each other. As for "other people" that are causing problems in our life, if I believe God is big enough to handle my issues, then I also believe God is big enough that He can handle other people's issues.
 - c) OK, with that guilt-ridden introduction completed, we can go on to this lesson. ☺

4. Chapter 6, Verse 1: As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.
- a) Paul has been focusing on why he is preaching the Gospel message. He is dealing with opposition who were arguing one must keep the Old Testament laws in order to be saved.
 - b) Paul is concerned the Corinthian Christians were "wasting" their salvation by trying to keep the Old Testament laws in order to "earn" their salvation.
 - i) This leads us directly to Verse 1 of this chapter. In this verse, Paul urging Christians in this church not receive God's grace in vain. What that means is they are saved, but they are not being "fruitful" with that knowledge of Jesus.
 - c) The text indirectly asks the question, "Can one receive God's grace in vain?" Apparently the answer is yes, or else Paul would not have asked the question. ☺
 - i) If you know of a person who truly believes Jesus is God and that He died for our sins, but then never did much with that information, that is what "receiving God's grace in vain" means. It means such a person is still saved, but "that's about it".
 - ii) Before we analyze the consequences of believing this, notice first that Paul believes such a person is saved, and cannot lose that salvation. Yes, Paul is urging such a person to grow in their faith, but Paul doesn't doubt their salvation.
 - d) Why would such a person live like this? The best answer I can think of is Jesus' parable of the four types of soils: Those soils represent four different types of people. One type of person "doesn't get it in the first place" and rejects the gospel message. One type of person gets it and becomes fruitful for God. I want to focus on the other two types of people. One is a person who doesn't become fruitful as they begin to care more about the "things of this world" than God. The last type of person is one who faces some sort of persecution and doesn't grow in their faith out of the fear of that persecution. (Source Matthew 13:3-9 and 19-23. The story is also in Mark Chapter 4 and Luke Chapter 8.)
 - i) My point here is the two "bad ones" apparently are still saved, despite the problems of "caring more about the world" or "fear of persecution".
 - ii) The point of the "four soils parable" is not so much about salvation as it is about how to be "fruitful" (i.e., living to make a difference) for God.
 - iii) This leads us back to Paul. He was worried that Christians in Corinth were not being "fruitful" for God. This proves that Paul not only cares about people getting saved, but cares that they grow in their faith towards God.
 - e) So what is being "fruitful" and how do we do that?
 - i) The short answer is to live in a way to make a difference for God. It means getting involved in some sort of ministry work(s) for Him. It is about using one's God given talent(s) to make a difference for Him. It is about regularly praying and seeking God as to find out what He wants you and me to do with our lives.
 - ii) Technically speaking, one can get saved, and then go about one's life with that knowledge and never do anything about being saved again. That is what Paul is warning against in this letter. What Paul is urging all of us to do is go the next step and use the knowledge of our salvation to make a difference for God.
 - iii) OK, most of a page on Verse 1. At this rate, I'll never get through the text. ☺
5. Verse 2: For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.
- a) Verse 2 is Paul quoting Isaiah 49:8. Notice Paul does not say, "Isaiah says" but "he says". The only "he" in Verse 1 is God. Paul is implying God inspired Isaiah to write his book.
 - b) Let me "translate" this quote: The key point is "now" is the time of God's salvation. The idea is about turning one's life over to God. Apparently Paul saw his mission as being similar to that of Isaiah. It is to preach "repentance" in that we should turn to God.
 - i) Isaiah was preaching to a group of people who for the most part, did believe in the existence of God and the fact that He judges people.

- ii) The point is both Paul and Isaiah had a "whole lot more to say" than the fact that God exists. The main point is about trying to get people to turn their hearts toward God and we should live to make a difference for Him.
 - c) Let me put this another way: God does not want us to draw closer to Him so we can avoid "having fun" the rest of our lives. God wants us to draw closer to Him so we can live a more fruitful and productive life for Him in all that we do. I find that I enjoy life far more since I gave my life to Christ than all the years prior to that moment. Giving one's life to Christ gives one the "true" purpose for living as opposed to "a" purpose.
 - i) To give one's life to God does not mean we now get to avoid problems. It means that we now have the power to face any issue we are dealing with and we can draw upon God's strength to get us through those issues and problems.
 - d) This leads me back to Paul and Isaiah. The point here is Paul realized that he was called in a similar way to the Old Testament prophets to help lead people closer to God.
 - i) As I've stated in past lessons, it does not mean Paul was a better person than you or me. In fact, our job, like Paul is to lead people to God through Christ and help them to grow in their faith. That is the essential idea being taught in this verse.
6. Verse 3: We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited.
- a) Paul is saying in effect, "Being a Christian brings enough troubles on its own as when one is a witness for Christ, spiritual resistance does come. With that said, I don't want to add to the difficulty of the Christian life by putting some sort of stumbling block in your path."
 - b) Paul wanted to make sure people understood that he didn't load people with any burdens that prevented them in growing in God's grace. Examples of added burdens do include the concept of "obeying the law" for the sake of salvation. Paul's "enemies" in Corinth were not so much the nonbelievers in God, but were those who wrongly wanted Christians to do more things in order to be saved.
 - c) There is an underlying point here: Paul cares about his reputation as a minister. He didn't care about money, or how much suffering he had to do. What he was interested was, is that he wanted people to get saved and then grow in their relationship with God.
 - i) This can be summed up in Paul saying he did not want his ministry discredited.
 - ii) How can Paul's ministry be discredited? By people saying that Paul was doing all of this for some sort of personal gain.
 - iii) Paul is teaching that his message of salvation has been consistent since "day one". Paul not added any other burden on people other than their acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior and their growth in that fact. Because Paul has not added to that message, he can correctly say he has not "burdened anyone" in his ministry.
7. Verse 4: Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; ⁵ in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; ⁶ in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; ⁷ in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; ⁸ through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; ⁹ known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.
- a) Paul is saying in effect he has not burdened anyone by "giving his suffering resume" in Verses 4 through 10. If you notice carefully, all of these verses are one big sentence. As I've stated before, when it comes to run on sentences, I can't touch Paul's ministry. ☺
 - b) The main point of all of this is that Paul has endured a lot for the price of helping others to grow in their relationship with Christ.
 - c) Let me put this list another way: Do you think Paul wanted to have all these negative things happen to him? Don't you think Paul would enjoy having an "easy life" with a nice house and lots of money? Why go through all of this suffering?

- i) There's an underlying point to all of this for us: God never promises us that being in the ministry would be a "piece of cake". God never says we are go out and make a difference for Him, and in the meantime, never experience hardships.
- ii) So why do it? If being in the ministry for God, causes all of the problems listed in these verses, why bother? Why not just go earn an "honest living" somewhere and not be bothered with all of this? The only acceptable answer is that the Gospel message is true. One's salvation is dependant upon accepting that message and then learning to live for God in all one does.
- d) Paul does not wish the same hardships on us as listed in these verses. He understands it is necessary, but does not wish it on anybody. Paul is in no way saying he is a superior Christian because of this "suffering" resume. Paul is trying to teach us the principal that we have to be willing to give up all for the sake of the Gospel.
- e) These verses do not mean that we will suffer the same things as Paul here. It does mean that all believers, not just those who have the title of "minister or priest or whatever" have to be willing to give up everything for the sake of Christ. That is the attitude of a servant. If we have given our lives to Christ, then we are His servants whether we realize it or not.
- f) With all of that out of my system, ☺ look at Verses 4 through 6 again, and put our own name on this "list of sufferings" and ask, "Am I willing to do this for the Gospel sake?"
 - i) Most of us would honestly answer no. If we knew of all the hardships God had in store for us on "day one", we probably never would have agreed to the deal.
 - ii) The good news of this life is that God never gives us more than we can handle at any one given moment. Sometimes God does "push us" to our limit, but God does give us the strength to get us through those times if and only if we are willing to trust Him through such times.
- g) This leads me to Verse 7. It says that we can handle whatever life throws at us, through "truthful speech and in the power of God".
 - i) The idea of "truthful speech" is that we must speak the gospel truth. Sometimes the words don't come out of our mouths right and we all say the wrong things. The point is we are honestly trying to say the right thing and people catch that. In other words, it is about putting our "mouths" where our hearts are.
- h) The second concept Paul states in Verse 7 is the "power of God". The verse goes on to say, "with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left."
 - i) Paul most likely is using the illustration of a soldier in battle. Roman soldiers carried a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. If that is true, it is similar to what Paul taught in Ephesians Chapter 6, Verses 10-18. Paul refers to the Word of God as the Christian sword. By the way, a sword is only good if a person learns how to use it, which may be a further reference to studying the Word of God. In Ephesians Chapter 6, Paul refers to our faith in God as our shield.
 - ii) What all of this means is that God gives us the power to handle any situation that comes our way, and that includes all the types of situations listed in these verses. When Paul says God provides the "power", that does not mean we just stand there and allow ourselves to be beaten up. To draw upon God's power is to regularly prayer and regular study of God's word so we can face whatever comes our way.
 - iii) Going back to the soldier analogy, when does a soldier get dressed? The answer is prior to battle! That is why I like to pray for God's guidance and protection as well as read my bible first thing in the morning. For other people, "night time" is their best time. The point is if we dedicate our "best time" to God, He gives us the strength to get us through whatever gets "thrown our way".

- i) Now we can talk about the last two verses, which are Verses 9 and 10. As opposed to making you look back a few pages and trying to find where I listed those verses, let me write them again. ☺ They are: "Known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything."
- i) Paul's essential point other than the fact "He is still alive" is the fact that his life is not very appealing to the outside world. You read Paul's resume and it is one of suffering. A non-believer would not be impressed with Paul's resume. He was beaten and sorrowful. He made others rich in the sense he taught others about God so they are rich in the knowledge of God.
- ii) If you knew nothing about the Gospel message and then read Paul's resume, you would think, "Why should I bother joining this guy"? Paul's life is not something that draws people to want to join him unless one believes the Gospel is truth. The only reason to accept all of this if one has the knowledge that this is the truth and the only way to eternal salvation is through Jesus Christ.
- iii) Here's something else to consider: More text is written to the Corinthian church than any other Christian group in the New Testament. Why them? For starters, they have more problems listed than any other church in the New Testament. They haven't suffered as much as other churches (the church in Jerusalem gets that award. ☺), but more is written about their problems than any other.
- a) The point is no matter how bad things are, as long as we are trusting in Jesus as both our Lord (in charge of our lives) and our Savior (the one who paid the price for our sins), we are saved. The related point is if God won't give up on these people despite all of their sins and problems listed, then have confidence God won't give up on us.
- j) My final point of these verses (I promise ☺) is that despite all of Paul's suffering, he considered himself rich. He was by no means financially rich, so that is not the point. If you study the book of Acts, Paul had to work his way from town to town as a tent maker in order to support his ministry. So what did Paul mean by the term "rich"?
- i) The idea of our salvation is we are not saved so we can be servants for eternity. We get to share in every blessing that Jesus shares in. In other words, we are co-redeemers in the eternal blessings of God. What does that mean? It means that whatever rewards Jesus got for paying the price for sins, we get to share in that. (See Ephesians 3:6 on this point.)
- ii) So does that mean in heaven we each get a fully furnished house and lots of material things? If one believes that, then one is missing the purpose of the next life. I'm not positive what is entailed in the next life, but I promise it won't be boring, nor will we have to suffer in any way. What we do know is that we get to rule and reign with Christ forever. (See Revelation 5:10). All I know is living for Christ is greater than any sort of reward we can have in this lifetime. Paul understood that and in effect called himself "rich in all things" in Verse 10.
8. Verse 11: We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. ¹² We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. ¹³ As a fair exchange--I speak as to my children--open wide your hearts also.
- a) When Paul says he has spoken "freely to you", he means that he has written what was on his mind and there is no hidden message in his text, or what he has said to them live.
- b) On a side note, one of the great advantages of my writing ministry is I too can "freely say" what is on my heart with no fear of permanent repercussions. Yes, I could suffer in this lifetime, but that is the worse thing that could happen to me. I am convinced like Paul that this message is "the truth" and I am willing to stand by that fact. Hopefully, you can do the same in whatever God has called you to do for Him.

- c) When Paul says in effect he has "opened his heart wide to the Corinthian church", he means that he has given his all in order to see this church grow in the knowledge of God and more importantly, grow in God's love. Paul is saying he poured his "heart and soul" into seeing this church grow and prosper.
 - d) This leads to the "kicker". The problem is the church in Corinth has not responded in "like kind" to Paul the way he has opened himself to that church.
 - i) So, is Paul talking about financial payment for his services? No. Paul is referring to the fact that many Christians in that place have turned from his message and are believing the "false gospel" that we must do other things (in this case, keep the law) in order to be pleasing to God.
 - ii) The good news of Paul's message is that one can have peace that one's salvation is a done deal. If one adds to the Gospel message, then one has worry about one's salvation in terms of being "worthy enough" to be saved. If you are doing good deeds to please God, the question is "How much is "enough"?"
 - e) Let's apply this principal another way: Supposed we are "worried to death" about some serious situation in our lives. The situation is real and "touchable" as opposed to God, who we cannot feel or touch. How do we have joy with other Christians when we are going through so much pain and suffering at the present time?
 - i) The answer is not to feel "artificially happy" when things are going wrong. The idea is to share one's situations with other Christians to help with that suffering burden. The idea of Christianity is we all use our spiritual gifts to help each other through whatever is that situation of the moment. We are to help comfort each other through those tough moments in life.
 - ii) In a sense, that is what Paul wanted to share. A false idea is that everything was "wonderful" in Corinth and Paul wanted his share of that happiness. What Paul wanted to share with the Corinthians was to be "one with them" in their lives. That means to share in their burdens as well as their blessings.
 - iii) To sum up this point, "joy and happiness" is not based on circumstances. It is based on our trust in God and our eternal salvation. That hope in God gives us the strength to get us through life.
9. Verse 14: Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?
- a) We now come to the most famous verse in these two chapters. When couples are engaged and want to be married, this verse is often quoted to them. The point as it applies to marriage is that Paul believes Christians should only marry other Christians.
 - b) This verse is actually a lot bigger in scope than marriage, but since we are on the topic of marriage, let me give a few key points.
 - i) I've seen way too many single Christians do "evangelical dating" in the sense they try to convert their partner "who they love dearly" in hoping they change. One has to remember that true conversion only comes from the heart. By ourselves, we can't "save" our boyfriends and girlfriends just because we want too.
 - ii) I have also seen too many Christians suffer in marriage because they didn't follow this principal and now their spouse has little or no interest in church or in God.
 - iii) If one is married to a non-Christian or got saved after they were married, that is a separate topic. One should study 1st Corinthians Chapter 7 on that issue.
 - iv) The big idea is that the ideal marriage is where both partners believe in God more than they believe in their spouse. One learns that one cannot change their spouse, but one can seek God to help in one's marriage. I've seen married Christians survive all sorts of things because they both put God first in their marriage.
 - c) Getting back to the verse, it is much bigger than just marriage. It should also apply to business relationships. Our "partners" should have the same eternal outlook as ours.

- i) When I went to business school, I took classes on "entrepreneurship". One of the things the teachers had us do was to "partner up" a lot. The idea was to teach us about the problems of dealing with partners and, well, it worked. ☺ In fact, most experienced businessmen prefer to set up corporations as opposed to partnerships as they understand the problems associated with partnerships.
 - d) The main idea of the verse is that Christians should not partner up with unbelievers. Also keep in mind that Paul's "enemies" in Corinth were other "Christians" who were teaching that one should keep the laws of Moses in order to be saved.
 - i) My point here is that just because some people calls themselves a Christian does not mean they are now worthy of "partnering up". Whether it is for marriage, business or "whatever", learn about the other person before going further.
 - ii) I have a very close friend who I have work with for many years. We pray together and lift each other up. While we have separate ministries and separate "callings", we are both prayer for each other and I am grateful God brought that person in my life. My point is God often wants us to work with other individuals. Spend time with them before developing any sort of partnership relationship. God will often bless than relationship and help each other to grow closer to Him.
- 10. Verse 15: What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."
 - a) Paul uses the term "Belial" in Verse 15. This is a term for Satan. It was used in Jewish literature of that time, although it is not used anywhere else in the bible. That term means "the worthless one". The idea is to say that to follow Satan in any way, shape or form turns out to be "worthless" use of our time.
 - i) So how does one follow Satan? The idea is when we follow anyone or anything other than God himself, we unknowingly are following the "worthless" one.
 - b) Let me put this in more practical terms. If we are in some sort of relationship with someone that belongs to a different religion or even a "similar" religion, but that religion denies the fact that either/or Jesus is God or that Jesus alone paid the price for salvation, then they are not in harmony with our Christian beliefs. That is a case where our "partner" is attending a "temple" of a different god, whether or not they call it that.
 - c) In Verse 16, Paul comes to the key point: That point is that if one believes in the God of the Bible and one believes Jesus rules over our hearts, then God "dwells" within us.
 - i) As I stated in the last lesson, God has no weight or mass. When God takes up residence in us, we can't feel the difference on a scale. ☺
 - ii) We can feel God inside of us in the sense we desire to please God in all that we do. We are different then before we got saved in that we care about God and want to make a difference for Him in our lives.
 - iii) If we are "partnering" somehow with a person who does not have God living inside of them in the same way we do, then that partnership is to be avoided. Again, beware of people who "say" they are Christians. It's not what people say that counts, but how they act. Watch their behavior for a good while before agreeing to partner up with them in any way, shape or form.
- 11. Verse 17: "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." ¹⁸ "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."
 - a) Paul ends this chapter with a quote from two separate sources. Verse 17 is a quote from Isaiah 52:11 and Ezekiel 20:34, 41. Verse 18 is a quote 2nd Samuel 7:14.

- b) Verse 17 as it was originally intended, was a call to the Israelites to separate themselves from other nations. The concept of "touch no unclean thing" was about the Old Testament laws to not touch certain types of animals. The concept behind that law was for the Israelites to act differently than everyone else and focus all of their lives on serving God.
- i) OK John, you have been lecturing us for a bunch of lessons now that Paul's opponents were arguing for keeping the law while Paul taught that salvation was by grace alone. Yet here, Paul quotes from the Old Testament about "acting differently" in order to be pleasing to God. So does that mean Paul wanted the Christians in Corinth (and us) to obey God's laws or not?
 - a) The correct answer is we are saved only by our trust in Jesus. With that salvation in tow, God wants us to "act differently". Paul's opposition wanted Christians to obey the law in order to be saved in the first place.
 - ii) OK John, so are you saying the difference between "Christians" and "Jews" is a technicality of how we obey the law? No. The key similarity between what God expected of the Jewish nation and what God expects of Christians is that God wants both groups (i.e., anybody who is going to follow Him) to separate themselves from the "world" and live in a way that is pleasing to Him. The key difference between what God expected of the Jewish nation (after Jesus) and Christians is that God now provides Himself as the "power source" for us to be obedient to God, as opposed to trying to do it through our own strength.
 - iii) Suppose you say, "I'm still confused. So am I supposed to keep the Old Testament laws or not?" The short answer is the New Testament is our guide on how to be pleasing to God. There are some Old Testament laws that are "universal" such as laws about stealing and murder. There are some laws specifically intended for the Jewish nation (the food laws, for example). The "latter laws" have principals for Christians to learn but they don't directly apply to us.
- c) This leads us back to Verses 17 and 18. The point is God wants Christians to "separate themselves" from non-Christians. OK, what does that mean practically? Does that mean we are never to associate with our "old friends" or our unsaved relatives? ☺
- i) No. The best analogy I heard on this is we are to be like a ship on the sea. A ship moves "on" the sea. Sometimes a big storm influences the direction of the ship, but when the storm calms, the ship can go where it wants to go. Sometimes water gets in the ship and that water slows down where the ship wants to go.
 - ii) In this analogy, the waves represent the "world" we have to separate from.
 - iii) My point of this analogy is our lives on earth are like a sailing ship. The world is not our home, but we have to live in this world until God calls us home. We don't let the "sea" control where we want to go. We don't let too much of the sea get inside of our boat. God wants us to make an impact in the world and that is like us being on that sailing ship. When we trust in God we can get through the storm and we trust that God is guiding us on that ship.
 - a) In short, what Paul meant by "separating ourselves" is to be not controlled by things that would harm our relationship with God.
 - iv) To take that analogy one step further, the mistake we make as Christians is we try to "guide" the ship ourselves. We forget that the ship "has a motor" which is my analogy of God living inside of us. God wants to "lead" as opposed to us leading.
- d) Finally let's talk a little about Verse 18. The verse says that God will be like a father to us. That is the idea that God wants to "guide us" through our lives. If we agree to live our lives for God, He promises to guide us through whatever we are going through in life.
- i) Yes I know it is difficult at times to discern what God wants from us. Sometimes God seems very silent on what to do next. I find that in the "silent times" is when God is saying to me in effect, "Keep moving forward and trust Me".

- e) The main point is God wants to guide us through life. Sometimes God makes it very obvious what is His will, and sometimes God is "silent" and wants us to keep going and trust that He is working. Seeking God regularly through prayer and His word is the main way we discern what is God's will for the moment. Sometimes God guides us "over and above that", but the main way I find is that I study the bible to see what is "right and wrong", pray and then make the best decisions possible based on the information at hand.
12. Chapter 7, Verse 1: Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.
- a) Verse 1 is saying in effect, "Since God made unconditional promises to us, let us separate ourselves from the world to live how He wants us to live."
- b) First question, what are these promises? The first one is we will live with Him forever. One reason I accept the idea that God is perfect is so I can then accept the concept that God is incapable of changing His mind. Yes I believe God has a sense of humor and at times, my life is proof of that fact. ☺ At the same time, God is incapable of going back on His unconditional promises to me.
- i) The second key promise is that God will make His home in us and guide us "when we are willing to listen". Even though God is in us, He never violates our free will. When we choose to disobey what God wants from us or do something unpleasing to Him without knowing it, God has this way of saying in effect, "I'll just wait right here until you fall on your face and you call Me for help." ☺
- c) This leads to Paul's second point of this verse. It says we are to "purify ourselves" from everything that contaminates the body out of respect for God. This means that God wants us to live a "holy" life. If I had to pick the most misunderstood word in "Christian speak" it is "holy". It does not mean we are to act in a "holier than thou" way around people. It does mean we are "separate ourselves" for God.
- d) OK John, get practical. How do I not act "holier than thou" as you call it and do act in away where I separate myself for God? Let me try to think of examples:
- i) When we see our non-saved friends and they invite us to do something we know is not pleasing to God, we simply say "no thank you" and not imply in anyway we are better people than them. We just say in effect that for our lives it is too much of a temptation to join in that act, or it is not beneficial for us to join in that action.
- ii) We go to church not to earn points with God, but mainly to enjoy the privilege to spend time with Him. We go to show our gratitude for what He has done for us and to "renew our spiritual strength".
- iii) The other way of being practical is to carve out time in our day to seek God.
- iv) In summary, the idea of "holiness" is not living by a specific set of Old Testament laws. It is about separating our lives for God in all that we do. It doesn't mean we avoid all contact with nonbelievers. It means that when we are with nonbelievers we do our best to monitor our conduct and choose carefully what activities are good or bad for us to do.
- e) The actual act of purifying ourselves is the idea of admitting to God that our sins are wrong (and here's the important part) repenting of that sin and making an effort to change our lives for the better. In other words, we're back to "repentance".
- f) Before I move on, I want you to catch one more thing: We are to purify ourselves of everything that contaminates the "body and the spirit". Most of us can visualize repenting of sins that affect our body. Think of it this way: What types of people most sought out Jesus? They were tax collectors (collecting more than they were supposed to), harlots and those who had some sort of disease or sick family member.
- i) Now think of those who refused to turn from Jesus: The "very religious". My point is I think it is much easier to repent of "flesh sins" than of "spiritual sins". Spiritual sins are about doing things for God in order to (falsely) earn God's favor.

- ii) The idea of "purification" is similar to the Christian concept of repentance. After living a good while as a Christian I am convinced that repenting of "fleshy sins" is much easier than repenting of "spiritual sins".
 - iii) So what is the difference between Jesus forgiving all of our sins and "repenting" of our sins? I think of it this way: We first come to Jesus "just as we are". After that moment, God works on convicting us of sins in our lives and asks us to repent. We are forgiven of all sins when we first accept Jesus. At the same time, we grow closer to God by repenting when we become aware of sin in our lives.
13. Verse 2: Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one. ³ I do not say this to condemn you; I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. ⁴ I have great confidence in you; I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged; in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds.
- a) Here comes Paul's plea to make room in their hearts for him personally. That does not mean Paul somehow manifests himself in their hearts the same way God does. What Paul is saying is to count him as a fellow believer in God. Remember that Paul was battling against those who didn't believe he was a "true apostle" of God.
 - b) These verses are a reminder that Christianity was never meant to be a billion separate "solo acts". God wants a team effort for Him. What that means practically is we take the time to get to know the other believers in our church and our lives and remember we will spend eternity with them.
 - c) I want to catch something else in Verse 4. Paul takes great pride in the Corinthian church. Remember that Paul wrote a "scathing letter" to them and had to deal with problems in that church as indicated in Chapter 2, Verse 1 of this letter. At the same time, one of the main reasons Paul is writing now is that some Christians in Corinth were having their doubts about Paul as others were teaching one has to obey the "Law".
 - i) Paul is saying here (and will make more clear in the next few verses) that despite their problems, Paul was sure the Christians in Corinth would overcome these issues and would have the love for Paul that he has for this church.
 - d) OK, and what does this mean for us? For starters, it is to accept Paul as an apostle of God. It is to accept his letters as for all churches and not just them.
 - i) It is also about having an open heart to all who trust in Jesus as both Lord and Savior, and that includes Christians we disagree with on other issues.
14. Verse 5: For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn--conflicts on the outside, fears within.
- a) When Paul was in Macedonia (another part of Greece) he had "no rest". He was harassed those who opposed his teaching of Jesus. Paul also dealt with internal fears. We have this tendency to picture Paul as a "superman". The truth is as much as Paul trusted in God, Paul had fears like us and dealt with lives problems on a daily basis.
15. Verse 6: But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷ and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.
- a) I've made a number of references in 2nd Corinthians to a "stern letter" by Paul, which has been lost in the sense we have no copy of it today. It is probably better that it gone, as Christians would probably come down too hard on each other today if that were Scripture. In fact I suspect the Corinthians themselves tore it up after "fixing" the issue.
 - b) My point here is that Titus is the one who delivered that stern letter from Paul. It was then Titus's job to check on the Corinthian church and report back to Paul.
 - c) Now tie Titus' return to Paul with how "sorrowful" Paul was in Macedonia. Paul said that he was comforted by the positive report that Titus brought back from Corinth.

- d) Now think about Paul and his current problems in Macedonia. Paul said in Verse 5 that he had "conflicts on the outside and fears within". Do you think that any of those problems went away when Titus showed up? The point is the good news about the repentance of the church in Corinth gave Paul the spiritual strength to now face the fears and the problems he had in Macedonia.
 - i) Here's my point: At times when life is difficult, sometimes good news from other Christians can lift up our spirits in ways that give us the strength to face the problems of the moment. (See Proverbs 25:25 on this point.) This is why God encourages Christians to work together. That includes encouraging each other and it also includes helping each other through the issue of the moment.
 - e) There are times when I am down, and I get a short message from someone who is reading one of my studies and that simple "thank you" note makes my day. Knowing that one is making a difference for God can give one the strength to face the issues of the moment. I am not saying this to encourage you to e-mail me. I am saying this to encourage you and me to do things to make a difference in the world around us for God.
16. Verse 8: Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it--I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while--⁹ yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance.
- a) We're still on the issue of Paul's "harsh" letter. He is saying in effect that he regretted writing it at that time, but now he doesn't regret it, as it led to repentance.
 - b) I'm reminded of a saying by the late Walter Martin. He had a popular Christian radio ministry some time back. When it came to preaching the Gospel, Walter would say, "Give them Jesus. If they won't hear Jesus, then give them Moses!" What he meant by that is if people refuse to hear the good news of salvation, give them the bad news that the law condemns them to hell.
 - i) In a technical sense that does not apply. Paul was writing to people who were saved. Paul wanted that church to deal with that sin issue. In another sense it does apply in that the job of a good leader is to inspire people to do the right thing. Sometimes coming down hard is necessary, but not preferred.
 - ii) I should also add that the key thing is getting a church to do the right thing as opposed to just the "pastor's will". Coming down hard on a Christian group may be the right thing to do if it is a sin issue. If a pastor (or whoever) is using guilt to get people to say, donate more money that is wrong. If a pastor is using guilt to deal with a sin issue in the church, that may be necessary.
 - c) Getting back to these verses, the point is Paul regretted having to "come down hard". In hindsight, Paul does not regret it, as it made the church repent of this undisclosed sin.
 - i) The related point is God wants us as Christians to avoid sin. If there is a sin issue in a group then that group must not avoid the problem and deal with it.
17. Verse 9 (cont.): For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us.¹⁰ Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.
- a) The Christians living in Corinth could have come down hard on Paul for writing this letter as opposed to facing their own issues. One of the hardest things for anyone to do (including myself) is to deal with one's own problems instead of "blaming the messenger".
 - b) The good news is that this church repented of their sins. Paul adds the comment in Verse 10 that repentance leads to salvation and "worldly sorrow brings death".
 - c) The fact that these Christians repented does not mean they won't have to deal with that issue or a similar issue again. It simply means they faced the problem "head on", realized their sin and are now making a concerned effort to not repeat that mistake. The idea of repentance is that God expects us to turn from sin so that we can move on from that issue. If the issue repeats, then we simply need to confess it again and turn from it again.

- d) The second part of this sentence says, "Worldly sorrow brings death". What does that mean? It means that people could miss their old life prior to becoming a Christian and turn back to that life choice. Paul is saying the ultimate end of turning from God is death.
- i) This reminds me of a Christian friend whose wife left him as she misses her old life. She goes out drinking with her friends on a regular basis and wants nothing to do with her husband's "church life" anymore. That is an example of "worldly sorrow brings death". Yes I pray for her repentance. I'm not saying that was the issue in Corinth, but that is an example of how it applies.
18. Verse 11: See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. ¹² So even though I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong or of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are. ¹³ By all this we are encouraged.
- a) Notice how positively Paul is speaking about the church in Corinth. Paul described earlier how when he saw his friend Titus, who brought the good news that the church in Corinth had repented of their sins. Now Paul is complimenting that church for turning.
- i) Paul is saying in effect what concern he had for this church. Paul is also saying the main point of his "tough letter" was not so much that the individual deed of wrong was corrected, but so that the church could be rid of this issue.
- ii) In other words, the individual sin issue was secondary to the damage caused by the fact this church was not dealing with that sin issue. Yes the person "injured" by the sin is an issue as well as the one who did the "injury". Paul is not ignoring that. Paul is saying the "bigger issue" is the fact the church ignored it and now they have dealt with the issue.
- b) This gets back to the issue that Paul doesn't just care that people get saved and then wishes them well so Paul can then go on his "merry way". Paul wants to see individuals and churches grow in their faith and love for God and for each other. Paul is teaching the balance of having love for each other and at the same time not allowing sin in the church.
- c) Verse 12 also mentions Paul's positive point about how devoted that church is to him. Paul is not so much concerned about his own feelings as he is about the church being "healthy again". Paul's point is this church has not only accepted his message about salvation, but that this church has accepted his concept of dealing with sin and repenting of such sin(s). He is encouraged that the church is following his example of how to properly deal with issues.
19. Verse 13 (cont): In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you. ¹⁴ I had boasted to him about you, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well. ¹⁵ And his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. ¹⁶ I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.
- a) Paul's point is that he was not the only one that was happy that the Corinthian church had repented, but Titus was happy as well. Paul was boasting about church in the sense he was giving them a "positive reputation" to live up to!
- b) Remember that a purpose of the Christian church is to encourage and help one another grow in their faith. That good news that the church repented. This news encouraged and strengthened both Paul and Titus to "go another day".

- c) One has to remember that living the Christian life often requires us to look "inward" and deal with sins in our lives. Remember that God wants a loving relationship with us and doesn't want anything to block that relationship. Further, God wants Christians to love each other and to not let anything block that. A key reason to deal with church problems is so that the church can collectively focus on God and not worry about our problems.
 - d) Let me take on this issue another way: Suppose you are aware of a significant sin problem in your church group and no one else is willing to deal with it. You've talked to the leaders, you want to go through the "proper steps", but your group wants to ignore the issue and hope it goes away all by itself. What we should do is pray for that group to face the issue. I find that God has his way of "bringing the issue" to the surface it needs be, or making it die if it needs be. In other words, we can't handle it, but God can.
 - e) On that happy note, ☺ this lesson is over for the week.
20. Let's pray: Father, when we argue with other believers, help us to look inward at our role and not focus on trying to fix other people. Help us to be aware of our sins, to confess them, and turn to You as opposed to trying to fix it ourselves. Help us to deal with issues in a loving way with those around us. Help us to focus on our own issues and know that You are big enough to handle other people. Help us to become aware sin issues of our own lives and confess them as they occur. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.