

## 2 Corinthians 7:11

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[ 0 : 00 ] I turn to you to 2 Corinthians chapter 7. It's been a great week of prayer. It really does me the world of good.

! Is it alright for me to thank you for coming to the prayer meeting? I don't know whether it's my place or not. It was a really encouraging week. I hope it was as encouraging to you as it was for me. There are three important words, aren't we, that we want to teach our children. So if you're a child here, there's three important words that your mum and dad want to teach you as you grow up. Do you know what those three words are, do you think? Little ones? Listen, what do you think one of the three important words are? Noe. Noe. Noe.

Noe. Noe. Noe. Noe. Noe. Any other guesses? Every parent wants to teach their children this. Yes. Please, thank you.

[ 1 : 06 ] Sorry, you. You got it. In the end, you got it. Please, sorry, thank you. And they're very important words, aren't they? I don't know whether you hear this in your home. Why do you find it so difficult to say sorry?

We hear it from each of us at different times. On the 25th of January 1996, no, 2006, 42-year-old Nick Flynn was visiting the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge when he tripped over his shoelace and was catapulted down a staircase and crashed into three extremely expensive 3,000-year-old Qing Dynasty vases from China.

Some of the museum's most prized assets. The vases shattered into hundreds of pieces and Mr. Flynn was left with a bruised leg and a red face. The museum were left with a very tricky repair job and a huge bill as well as barely concealed anger against what they thought was a clumsy fool who couldn't keep his balance.

The interesting thing about the story is, as it was covered by the media, was Mr. Flynn's unashamed denial that he'd done anything wrong. And his flat refusal to apologise.

Although he did admit that the incident was regrettable in an interview with Radio 4, he explained his actions like this. I snagged my shoelace, missed the step, crash-bang wallop, there was a million pieces of high-quality cream ceramics lying around underneath me.

[ 2 : 28 ] He then went on to blame everyone else apart from himself, saying, I suppose seeing that they were the prized possession of the museum, they were just left lying on a windowsill.

I thought they might take better care of them. If those vases had been in the British Museum, they would have been left secure and not so that anyone could bump into them. And if there'd been a handrail, I would have been able to grab hold of it.

I asked if he was a clumsy person. Mr. Flynn said, well, I've been driving for a considerable amount of time and not had any serious accidents and seem to have most of my faculties.

I have a few household accidents, maybe drop a cap or two and smash a plate, but nothing like this has ever happened to me before. The museum refused to comment, merely saying that the director had written to Mr. Flynn and requested him not to visit in the near future.

Why is it that people find it so difficult to say sorry? Why do you find it so difficult to say sorry? Of course, just saying sorry is not enough, is it?

[ 3 : 31 ] Being sorry is the thing that matters. It's like I'm speaking to my children, you know. Just saying the word is not enough. Doing the action is what matters.

And that is what this chapter is all about. And if you notice verse 10, I think you can take verse 10 as the summary verse of the whole chapter. In that verse, he really distinguishes between two kinds of grief, two kinds of sorrow.

He says that godly grief, godly sorrow, produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret. Whereas worldly grief, worldly sorrow, produces death. And it's really important for you and I to

know, how do you tell the difference between the two?

How do you tell the difference between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow? I think I told you about my friend, he's a minister in North London. After a Sunday preaching last October, he did a big lunch. Dude preached in the evening, he felt kind of a bit of pain in his chest.

So he took some Rennies, thought he had indigestion, and preached that Sunday evening. He'd not been to the GP in 15 years. The following week, the same thing happened. He took his Rennies, and off he preached in the night.

[ 4 : 39 ] The following day, he woke up, and he still had a little bit of pain. So he went to the doctors. His doctor said, you've had a massive heart attack. And he needed quadruple bypass the following week. But the symptoms are the same, aren't they?

I've seen indigestion and a heart attack, isn't it? Those times that you think you're having a heart attack, and you just eat your McDonald's too quickly, or something like that. It's very difficult to distinguish at times.

It's very important to distinguish between the two things, isn't it? A heart attack can be a matter of life or death. Indigestion is not. And a distinguish between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow is a matter of life and death.

We are not simply, tonight, being precious or picky. True repentance is a matter of life or death. It's like you like eating mushrooms.

And you grow up into the countryside. Well, you need to know the difference, don't you, between a toadstool and a mushroom. They look very much alike, don't they? But a toadstool will kill you.

[ 5 : 42 ] A mushroom might have a very different effect. Godly sorrow leads to life. Worldly sorrow, do you see it? Verse 10, leads to death. And the vast illustration are always the Bible illustrations.

The vast illustration is of Peter and Judas, isn't it? Peter and Judas both committed the same crime. I mean, if you were there at the time, it would have been very difficult, wouldn't it, for you to distinguish between what Judas did and what Peter did.

Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss. Peter betrayed the Lord with a curse. Peter was ultimately restored to fellowship and ministry.

Judas went out and killed himself. One led to repentance. Godly grief, Godly grief, which led to salvation. And life, in the case of Peter. The other led to worldly grief.

And death unto an eternity of bitter regret. Which I presume is what Jesus means when he speaks about the worm that never dies. That's part of the suffering, isn't it?

[ 6 : 48 ] Of hell. That people exist forever with regrets. So we really do need to distinguish between those two things. Because they were both sorry, weren't they? Judas was sorry.

And Peter was sorry. If you read Matthew's account, Judas' betrayal in the aftermath, it says he wept bitterly. And when the cock crowed for Peter, he wept bitterly. They both wept.

They both shed tears for what they'd done. But Judas' sorrow led to death. And Peter's sorrow led to repentance, which leads to life and salvation. So how can I be sure tonight that I'm a Peter and not a Judas?

When I feel sorry for my sin. And that's the question we're thinking about. And it's an important question for ourselves, isn't it? And it's a very important question for when we're trying to help other people. Christianity is not an individualistic thing, is it?

We are in this together. When we ask, when we talk to people, our brothers and sisters who are struggling with this. When people are thinking of putting their faith in the Lord Jesus. The Spirit put it beautifully.

[ 7 : 52 ] He said this. Repentance is the tear in the eye of faith. Isn't that a lovely way of putting it? Repentance is the tear in the eye of faith. You cannot actually come to believe in Jesus without shedding tears.

And you might not physically do that. Right? We're all very, very different, aren't we? Our psychological makeup is very different. We might not shed physical tears. But you cannot be. You cannot be a Christian without being sorry for your sin.

You cannot come to Jesus without at the same time shedding some tears over your sins. You cannot come without repentance. Repentance is the tear in the eye of faith.

So let's look at this. I want to look at three things about true repentance. About godly sorrow. As opposed to worldly sorrow and grief. First of all this. True repentance begins with genuine sorrow. True repentance begins with genuine sorrow.

Look at verse 5. It says, You grieve with my letter.

[ 9 : 22 ] I do not regret it. Though I did regret it. For I see that while that letter grieved you, though only for a while. Deep sorrow.

Do you see that? You're mourning. In verse 7. That's a very, very good translation. There's only one other place where that's used in the New Testament. That word.

And it's the slaughter of the innocents in Matthew chapter 2. You know that? Where Herod murdered all the children under two years old. And we're told that there was deep mourning. It's exactly the same word. In Bethlehem. And so, as Paul describes what happened to the crickets. It is not crocodile tears. It is not emotionalism.

Where you sing a hymn that moves you. And you find yourself weeping tears. This is deep mourning in Corinth. As a result of Paul's rebuke. And you see that if you notice verse 4 of chapter 2.

[ 10 : 25 ] Verse 4 of chapter 2. Paul hints, doesn't he, that he's written a very stern letter. A stern letter. A severe letter.

Verse 4 of chapter 2. For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart. And with many tears. Not to cause you pain. But to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

He's written what is sometimes though, if you read the commentaries, as the stern letter. The severe letter. We haven't got it. We don't know what it said. He sent it via Titus.

There was a case of church discipline in Corinth. And they were sweeping it under the carpet. The church wasn't dealing with issues. And Paul wanted to deal with that. And so he sent them a stern rebuke.

He sent them a severe letter. And he sent it via Titus. And that letter has its desired effect. We're told that they were sorry. And the reason that they are sorry.

[ 11 : 27 ] Is that Paul made them sorry. Not in a spiteful kind of way. But in a constructive kind of way. Look at verses 8 and 9. Of chapter 7. Verse 8 and 9. For even if I made you grieve with my heart.

I do regret it. And I did regret it. For I see that the letter grieved you. Only for a while. As it is, I rejoice. Not because you were grieved. But because you were grieved into repenting. Repenting. For you found a godly grief.

So that you suffered no loss through us. Can you hear the Apostle Paul. Saying to himself. As he shoots off that email. To Corinth. What's he saying?

As he writes that. He's saying to me. This is going to hurt you. More than it hurts me. Can you whisper that in your children's ears? This is going to hurt me. More than it hurts you. That's what Paul is saying to the Corinthians.

Isn't he here? As he writes this stern rebuke to them. This severe letter. That he sent through Titus. And now he's waiting for the fallout. He can't settle. He can't do his work.

[ 12 : 29 ] We've seen that in chapter 2. There's a door of opportunity. That was opened for him. In a place called Troas. But he can't focus. So he doesn't go there. He goes on to Macedonia.

And he's waiting for Titus. To come back with the news. He's sent them a stern rebuke. And they've received that rebuke. In a godly way. And so he is glad.

They've received it in a godly way. Not in a worldly way. That's the question you see. So he's waiting to hear from Titus. Waiting with bated breath.

Maybe I was too harsh he thinks. You know what it's like. You press send on the email. And they can tap tap tap tap. Try and get it back. Emails are particularly dangerous.

Emails have this amazing ability. To be misread. In a way that other forms of communication don't. I don't really understand it. But you send the email. You send it. Because you want to address something.

[ 13 : 28 ] That needs to be addressed. And you think. As you send that email. Maybe I didn't express myself in the right way. Maybe I didn't say that. Maybe what I've written is going to be misunderstood.

And perhaps I went too far. Perhaps. My enemies. Maybe. My enemies. Maybe they will use what I've written. Paul had enemies. Paul had super apostles.

Who were trying to oust him. From the affections of the Corinthians. Perhaps they'll take this letter. And they'll use it to alienate me. In the affections of the Corinthians. He's waiting there. He's concerned. But you can almost hear the sigh of relief.

In verses 6 and 7. When Titus. Rose up at last. But God who comforts the dumbcast. Comforted us by. The coming of Titus. And not only by his coming.

But also by the comfort. With which he was comforted. By you. He told us. Of your longing. Your mourning. Your zeal for me. So that I rejoice even more. And when Titus.

[14:25] Turns up. At long last. He's so glad. You gave him a good reception. You warmly received him. Even though he was bringing a rebuke to you from me.

From your apostle. God used Paul's rebuke. His stern letter. As an instrument.

To convict them of their sin. They could have got on their high horse. Couldn't they? They could have got on their high moral ground. They could have said.

Ah. You don't do this kind of thing by a letter. They could have told him to butt out. Some of your concern. They could have said. Mind your own business. They could have started rationalizing. Their behavior.

And justifying themselves. But they didn't. They received the rebuke. In a godly way. Not in a worldly way.

[15:23] As from God. It was godly sorrow. And so often. We see. Even in the church. That we often refuse. To accept.

Responsibility. For our sins. And we hate to admit. We are the ones. In the wrong. I was wrong. I was wrong.

Listen to these. Insurance claims. Here's some insurance claims. Leaving home for work. I drove straight out of my home. Into a bus. The bus was five minutes early.

Here's another one. I consider neither vehicle to blame. But if either was to blame. It was the other one. Another one. I was sure the old fellow. Would never make it. To the other side of the road.

When I struck him. Here's another one. In attempting to kill a fly. I drove into a telephone pole. It's my favorite. I pulled away. From the side of the road.

[16:22] Glanced at my mother-in-law. And headed over the embankment. It's always good to blame. The mother-in-law. Well we do exactly that. With our sins.

Don't we? And that is the worldly way. To accept rebuke. Isn't it? That we don't accept it. And we shift the blame.

On someone else. And we've been doing it. From the fall. It was the woman you gave me. Adam said. When God came looking for him in the garden. It wasn't me. It was the woman.

And you gave her to me. What did the woman say? It was the serpent. And so Adam blames Eve. Eve blames the snake. And the snake doesn't have a leg to stand on. And we've been doing it ever since.

Haven't we? Blameshifting. Blameshifting. And that is the worldly way. To accept rebuke. And that is worldly sorrow.

[17:19] And there's resentment in it. Who do you think you are? To tell me. There's an attempt to justify ourselves in it. But if you want to change.

Then first of all. You've got to admit. Yeah. I've got a problem. And you have to own up to your problem. True repentance.

That's the first point. I'm trying to make lasting change. Begins with genuine sorrow. It's not crocodile tears. It's deep mourning.

Let me read to you. From the book of common prayer. In 1662. It is a remarkable document. Let me read to you this prayer. Almighty God. Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Maker of all things. Judge of all men. We acknowledge and bewail. Our manifold sins and wickedness. Which we from time to time. Most grievously have committed. By thought, word and deed.

[18:19] Against the divine majesty. Provoking most justly. Thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent. And our heartily sorrow. For these are misdoings. The remembrance of them.

Is grievous unto us. The burden of them. Is intolerable. Have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us. Most merciful Father. For thy son. Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Say. Forgive us all that is past. And grant that we may ever hereafter. Serve unpleasely. In newness of life. To the honour and glory of thy name. Through Jesus Christ. Our Lord. Amen. That prayer was revised.

In 1982. Let me read it to you. Almighty God. Our heavenly Father. We have sinned against you. And against our fellow men. In thought and word and deed. Through negligence. Through weakness. Through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry. And repenting of our sins. For the sake of your son Jesus Christ. Who died for us. Forgive all that is past.

[ 19 : 16 ] And grant that we may serve you. In newness of life. To the glory of your name. Amen. Now there's nothing wrong with that prayer. That is a good prayer. That is theologically sound. But there's something missing for us.

Do you see what was missing from us? Sin. Is no longer an intolerable burden. It is no longer something that grieves.

Sin is no longer something that breaks the heart. And so when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. They saw their sin as an intolerable burden. And there was deep mourning in Corinth.

That's the first thing. True repentance begins with genuine sorrow. Second point is that true repentance. Leads to a changed life. Just feeling sorry. And feeling bad about your sin. Is not going to save you.

True repentance leads to a changed life. I can verse 9. For godly grief produces repentance. That leads to salvation. Without regret. Whereas worldly grief produces death.

[ 20 : 19 ] For we see that earnestness. This godly grief is produced in you. But also what eagerness to clear yourselves. What indignation. What fear. What longing. What zeal. What punishment. At every point you have proved yourselves innocent.

In the matter. So although I wrote to you. It was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong. Nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong. But in order that your earnestness for us. Might be revealed to you in the sight of God. Therefore we are comforted.

William Temple. The old archbishop of Canterbury. Said this. Repentance is not a heart breaking for sin. It's a heart breaking from sin. It's quite helpful.

Repentance is not a heart breaking for sin. But it's a heart breaking from sin. In other words. Don't think you've repented. Just because you feel bad about your sin.

Notice how Paul distinguishes. Between those things. Doesn't he? A godly grief. And a worldly grief. Godly sorrow. Leads to no regrets. People get full of regrets.

[ 21 : 23 ] Don't they? When they've been found out. And people get full of regrets. Because of the consequences. That is what regret is. That is why Judas wept. And he wept bitterly.

Because ultimately. And ultimately he committed suicide. He was full of regrets. When he saw the consequences. It actually says that in Matthew's Gospel. When he saw the consequences. Of what he'd done. True repentance.

Godly sorrow. Can you see it? Leads to salvation without regret. Regret is feeling sorry for yourself. Not for your sin. Sorry not for what you've done. But for the consequences. And true repentance is not regret. Godly sorrow is not remorse either.

Remorse is repentance with no hope in the heart. No light at the end of the tunnel. That's what the devil loves to do to us. Doesn't he? He loves to get on your back.

[ 22 : 22 ] And to accuse you. And to point out your sin. And say there's no light at the end of the tunnel. But he's just allowed to destroy you. But when the Holy Spirit convicts of sin.

There's always light at the end of the tunnel. Because the Holy Spirit always points us to the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit only points out our sin. To point us to Jesus.

Remorse is repentance. With no hope in its heart. No light at the end of the tunnel. Well you see that in Judas again don't you? Compare it with Peter. Somebody has put it like this.

With Judas. The ice is broken. With Peter. The ice is melted. That again is right.

It takes a bit of thought. That icy heart. Is broken in Judas. But it's melted in Peter. To tell you one of the church fathers said this about remorse.

[ 23 : 25 ] He said. It is an emotion of disgust. It eats its old heart out. Instead of seeking a new heart. It eats its old heart out. That's what happens in Judas isn't it?

Instead of seeking a new heart. For godly sorrow. It is not regret. It is not remorse. For another hour it's not reformation.

Don't confuse it with the. Don't confuse the consequences of repentance. And godly sorrow. Don't confuse. The consequences with the cause. Don't confuse the fruit of godly sorrow.

Which is change. With the root. Thomas Chalmers. He was converted under his own ministry in Scotland. He'd been a minister for years. Many years. And he became a Christian under his own preaching.

And here's what he says. He says. Before I became a Christian. Before I was converted. I preached to the drunk to give up drink. I told the blasphemer.

[ 24 : 27 ] To give up using God's name wrongly. I told the idol. To stop being lazy. But the drunk continued being drunk. And the blasphemer continued blaspheming.

And the idol remained idle. And then. When I was converted. I preached the gospel of the free grace of God. And I stopped telling people.

To sort themselves out. And I told them that God had done it all. And a funny thing happened. The drunk became sober. The blasphemer stopped swearing. And the idol got work.

True repentance. Godly sorrow. It's not reformation. It's not you pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. And turning your life around. Because you can't do it. And we've got to stop telling people to do it.

Because only the gospel can produce that in you. Godly sorrow. True repentance. Leads to reformation. Yeah. John the Baptist.

[ 25 : 29 ] And the crowd he was preaching to. He told them to produce fruit. In keeping with repentance. That's what Paul is talking about. There in verse 11. Look what he says. For see what earnestness.

This godly grief. Has produced. In you. But also what eagerness to clear ourselves. What indignation.

What fear. What longing. What zeal. What punishment. At every point you've proved to yourself. In this is the matter. There's an energy there. There's no lethargy. But an energy to do something about it.

This life I've been living in rebellion against God. What eagerness. What earnestness to clear yourselves. What indignation. What alarm. What longing. What concern. What readiness.

Is he justice done. In other words. What he's saying to them is. I sent my letter of rebuke to you through Titus. And you could have taken it the wrong way.

[ 26 : 23 ] You could have received it. In a worthy way. And what would have been bad for all of us. But you didn't. You took it as one. As from God.

You've come out of this with flying colors. He says to them. Just like I thought you would. In fact. I boasted to Titus. You would. You could have gone either way. You could have responded in a worldly way.

But you didn't. You responded in a godly way. You took it to heart. And it's produced a changed life. We see it again don't we. The other illustration is that of Zacchaeus.

Do you remember the kind of tax collector. Jesus came to town. He went up a tree. Jesus says come down Zacchaeus. I want to come to your house for tea. And Jesus invites himself into that home.

And Zacchaeus becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus. And this is what he says. This is how he responds. Zacchaeus stood there.

[ 27 : 18 ] And in Luke chapter 19 and verse 8. He says this amazing thing. This man who's ripped off so many people. Luke 19 verse 8. He says. Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord.

Behold Lord half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I defrauded anyone of anything. I restore it to him fourfold. Look Lord. There's an element of surprise there in Luke 19.

If you told me that I got out of bed this morning. Zacchaeus said that this was going to happen. I wouldn't have believed you. Lord look at me here. Now I give half of my possessions away to the poor. And if I cheated anyone.

Well cheated anyone. He spent his whole life cheating people. Exploiting people. Ripping them off. That's what tax collectors did. That's why they had such a bad reputation. If I'm cheating anyone. I'll repay it fourfold. Zacchaeus can't believe the words that he's just said. Is this the same Zacchaeus that got out of bed this morning? You can imagine.

[ 28 : 18 ] Can't he pouring over his Excel spreadsheet that night. Trying to work out where he's ripped people off. And then he goes around the doors of the town. Can you imagine it? They get a knock on the door.

And who's there? The little Zacchaeus. They hide under the bed. Don't they? They don't want to answer. They say what does he want? And they open the door and he drops. A big bag of money. And he says I've come to know the Lord Jesus. They can't believe it. It's what the grace of God produces. Isn't it? It's a changed life. Like John Newton.

Zacchaeus could say. I'm not the man I want to be. I'm not the man I hope to be. But thank God I'm not the man I used to be. In the 1920s in the shipyards of Belfast.

There was a preacher called W.P. Nicholson. An amazing preacher. In a remarkable effect. In Belfast in Northern Ireland he preached there. And in the 1920s under his preaching.

[ 29 : 14 ] So much stuff was returned to the Harland and Wolf shipyards in Belfast. That had been stolen. They had to build a huge hangar. To contain all the stolen goods that had been returned.

As a result of his preaching. That's what the gospel produces. Repentance is not. Just feeling sorry. There has to be sorrow for sin.

And not just crocodile tears. But true repentance leads to a changed life. It produces fruit. Thirdly and lastly. True repentance results in transformed relationships. Transformed relationships.

And this is what this chapter is all about really. Look at verses 2 to 4. Make room in your hearts. We have wronged no one. We've corrupted no one.

We've taken advantage of no one. If you read between the lines. That's what his enemies were saying weren't they? Look at Paul. He's a charter. But he defends himself. He says we've not done that.

[ 30 : 10 ] We've wronged no one. I do not say this to condemn you. For I said that you are in our hearts. To die together. And to live together. I'm acting with great boldness towards you.

I am proud in you. I'm filled with comfort. In all our affliction. I'm overflowing with joy. I'm encouraged by you. In other words. All this talk. Of repentance.

And godly sorrow. And conviction of sin. Is in the context of Paul's relationship with the Corinthians. And we saw that last week. That is so important.

That if you've not got room for the apostle Paul in your heart. You cannot be a Christian. If you're one of those people that says. Well I believe in Jesus. But Paul messed things up. Paul is saying. Make room in your heart for me. Because I am the Lord's ambassador. And if you won't receive the Lord's ambassador. You will not receive the Lord's. Paul wrote for me.

[ 31 : 06 ] For me 30 letters. Of the New Testament. He wrote half of the New Testament. If you don't make room in your heart. For the writings of the apostle Paul. If you will not accept his authority.

To tell you what to do in your life. You cannot be a Christian. If you don't make room for Paul. You've got no room for Jesus. And so this is a really important issue for us.

As we saw in chapter 6. The Corinthian relationship with Paul. Giving and receiving a rebuke. Is very risky isn't it? None of us naturally.

Want to rock the boat in our relationships. We shy away don't we. From anything that might offend. But here is the apostle Paul. And what is at stake. Is so important.

That he is prepared. To risk everything. In his relationship with the Corinthians. He writes them this. Harsh. Stern. Letter of rebuke.

[ 32 : 06 ] It's like one of the Proverbs isn't it? It's just underlined this Proverbs. Not in the church Bibles. But it's a great Proverbs. Look at Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 6. Proverbs 27 and verse 6.

It's a brilliant Proverbs. It says this. Faithful are the wounds of a friend. Profuse. Many are the kisses of an enemy.

I was on the bus the other day. Dirt Manor. High school kids. Shouldn't be allowed on the bus. But they got on the bus. And it was early morning.

And the girls kind of greeted each other. In this really over the top way. You know. So all. Mwah. Mwah. Mwah. You know. And hugs. Then one of them got off the bus.

And they all smacked her off. It was incredible. I couldn't believe it. It's like the Oscars isn't it? They absolutely hate each other's guts. And then when they give each other the wards on the stage.

They're all over each other.

[ 33 : 13 ] It's a great reminder isn't it? Faithful are the wounds of a friend. How many friends have you got? How many people have you got in your life who will tell you the truth? Will tell you the truth about yourself and risk the friendship.

And I think us guys. Particularly as we go older. Get older. I think there's a danger with that. That we find ourselves having less and less friends that will speak the truth about us. And we do not want to be a church. That allows things to go undealt with. We don't. And if you want to be a friend. You must be willing to do what Paul does in 2 Corinthians. And take a risk of hurting your friends. And endangering the relationship. And sweeping things under the carpet. It doesn't actually do anything. Sweeping things under the carpet. It actually weakens relationships. But when you're willing to take the risk of giving and receiving rebuke. Then relationships are restored. And often they become much stronger as a result. [ 34 : 12 ] Don't they? Well you notice this as I finish. Whenever I talk about sin and repentance and sorrow. It's a bit doom and gloom isn't it? But I hope you notice as I read it.

This passage isn't doom and gloom at all. There's joy and there's encouragement and comfort. Those are the words that keep occurring again. Let me just show you verse 4. I'm acting with great boldness towards you.

I have great pride in you. I'm filled with comfort. In all our afflictions I'm overflowed with joy. Verse 6 and 7. But God who comforts the downcast comforted us by the coming of Titus. And not only by his coming. But also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you. He told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me. So that I rejoice still more. Verse 12. So I wrote to you it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong. Nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong. But in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. Therefore we are comforted. Gladness, joy, encouragement, comfort.

[ 35 : 12 ] And that happens when sin is taken seriously. When differences are settled. Where breaches are mended.

When wounds are healed. When those who have not gone on with each other embrace one another. And it's what the gospel does.

And it's the triumph of grace. Queen Elizabeth our Queen. Apparently when she was a young girl. She was always very embarrassed by the national anthem. And she didn't know quite how her dad was the king. How he felt about the national anthem. So you know it. God save our gracious king. And apparently according to one biography.

She wondered if he when the anthem played. If he actually sang a different version. She wondered for a time if he might sing something like this.

[ 36 : 11 ] Instead of God save our gracious king. She wondered if he might sing God save my gracious me. Well one thing is certain. If God does not make me gracious.

I cannot be saved. But he can. And he does. And he often does it by the faithful wounds of a friend. It is by the giving and receiving of a rebukes.

That is what God did here in Corinth. And that is what God does as the gospel is preached. And that is what God does in a fellowship of Christians. That is how we grow. That is how God makes us gracious.

In the giving. And receiving of rebukes. Let's pray. Father.