

Washington church of Christ

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The Washington Messenger

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Order of Services Sunday November 16, 2014

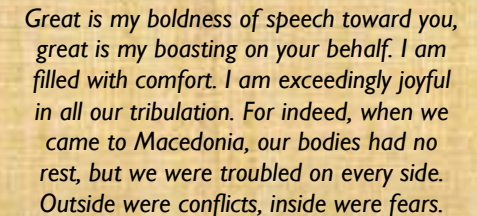
Song Leader	David Osinski
Prayer	Scott Thomas
Preaching	Bob James
Lord's Supper	
Prayer for the Bread	Stan Thompson
Prayer for the Cup	Brian Jeffries
Prayer for the Collection	Bob Celentano
Assisting at the Table	Bob Celentano Jr.
Morning Closing Prayer	Arnold Thompson
Evening Opening Prayer	Bill Duryea
Announcements	Matt Grimaldi

Schedule of Weekly Services

Sunday Morning Bible Classes	9:30 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening Bible Classes	7:30 pm
Thursday Morning Bible Study	11:00 am

When Pain Produces Joy...

The fundamental text for this week's thought is found in 2 Corinthians 7:1:16. However, throughout all of the writings of the apostle Paul to the Corinthian Christians, we can sense the deep and genuine love, care, and affection he had for them. When he learned that there were problems there within the church he wrote his first letter ... but, it seems that rather than improving, the spiritual condition of the church deteriorated. As we recall from our recent studies of first and second Corinthians, Paul then made a hurried visit to Corinth to try and address the issues among them. Then, in yet another effort to stabilize the situation he wrote them a very strong letter and sent it by Titus.



Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears.

(2 Corinthians 7:4-5 NKJV)

In the second recorded letter to the Corinthians, Paul had expressed in emotional language the deep concern and anxiety he felt over their reactions to his strongly worded letter ...

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you. (2 Corinthians 2:4 NKJV)

And, in our text for this article he writes ...

For indeed, when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears. (2 Corinthians 7:5 NKJV)

It is difficult to read those words without feeling the emotion that flows through them. Paul's love for the Corinthian Christians compelled him to do what was necessary to address the problems existing among them, though he found no joy in his actions.

Most of us can identify with Paul's anxiety as we remember those times when we've waited for a reassuring word ... and, if we skip over to the last verses of our text we can see Paul's reaction to news he received from Titus. Here we see that the coldness is gone, with its tears and anxiety, and in its place there is comfort, rejoicing, and joy. Even though he was still physically separated from the Corinthians, Paul sensed in the report of Titus that there had been a complete reconciliation, for he says ...

Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything. (2 Corinthians 7:16 NKJV)

Everyone who has ever experienced the joy that comes when a broken relationship was healed will understand Paul's response to Titus's report. I'd think that Paul questioned Titus again and again about every little detail of his visit. On the basis of the good news Titus brought Paul, he began to go back and interpret his actions with the Corinthians. That's what we have in 2 Corinthians 7:8-12. I believe that from Paul's experience as documented in these verses, we can

learn that there are circumstances in which honest confrontation, with all of its pain, must occur. This is true in marriage, in parent-child relationships, in friendships, and in our church life.

Most of us, at some point in our lives learn that sometimes we have to endure something painful for healing to take place. I remember so well my first trip to the dentist ... I had a terrible tooth ache. Most adults reading this may have heard all of the stories about how painful root canals are. I realize that modern dentistry as progressed such that this procedure is more comfortable today ... but that was not the case back when I had mine. And, as much as I considered that the pain of the tooth ache may be more tolerable than the pain from the root canal, I realized that experiencing the latter pain was necessary for me to heal.

When I consider my interpersonal relationships, I still want to shy away from the pain and risk of confrontation. Both in the family in which I grew-up and in the world in which I live now ... I have been exposed to the philosophy that when confronted with a bad situation, the best thing to do is to ignore it and maybe it will go away.

It also seems that when there is a natural reluctance to deal head on with critical problems, there is often a resentment of those who act differently.

There are times in our Christian relationships and service when we need to faithfully confront issues as a means of correcting wrong. And these times can be very painful. Of course, it is natural for us to want to avoid them. But if the ongoing integrity of our faithfulness is to be maintained, there will undoubtedly be times when we must take the risk and take our stand ... the church cannot always be a spiritual massage parlor where everyone leaves feeling good about themselves.

In taking a stand, though, we are to do it with the same attitude Paul had toward the Corinthians. His deepest feeling for them was love, and this love was not just a slogan that he used as a salutation. It was a deep love whose source was God Himself. Paul described it in his first letter to them ...

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NKJV)

This wasn't just one of Paul's favorite sermons but was the way he lived his life. He loved the Corinthian Christians and they knew it.

I'm certainly not suggesting that all it takes to turn a painful situation into one of joy is for a strong word to be spoken in love. Not at all.

It was the right response of the Corinthians to Paul's words that give this a happy ending. A wrong and defensive response from them would have filled Paul with sadness. After all, they could have responded in anger ... or they could have denied that anything was wrong and, in turn, could have attacked Paul. I'm aware that a variety of responses can be made.

So, if any confrontation is to produce redemptive results, everyone's attitude must be open and not defensive.

Just as God was in Paul's letter to his brethren in Corinth, He must have been in their response. The letter created not only a godly sorrow in them but a change of mind and attitude that led to the restoration of their relationship with Paul. And, as he reflects on their response, he draws the distinction between godly sorrow that leads to repentance and worldly grief that leads to death.

It was worldly grief without repentance that drove Judas to suicide after his infamous betrayal of Jesus. By contrast, though, it was godly sorrow or grief that, through repentance, restored Peter to the circle after his betrayal of Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest. And we know

from Paul's comments, "*In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter*" (2Corinthians 7:11), that it was indeed godly grief in the hearts of the Corinthian Christians which brought healing and hope.

Like every reflective person, from time to time I look back over my life and think of things I would do differently. This is not just a fanciful game of "what if" for me ... rather, it helps me work through new and creative attitudes and life responses for the days ahead. One of the things I regret not having learned to do earlier and more effectively is to bring to the surface and deal with certain potentially destructive situations more directly and openly and lovingly. The principle Paul models for us here can be applied to our marriages, our friendships, our work, and to every area of life.

Our Prayer List...

For Spiritual Responsiveness – Those studying with us in the Thursday morning Perkin's Study ... All of our wayward members

For Physical Healing – Ellen Jinks - Bill Duryea's Parents ... Arnold and Ray Thompson ... Georgia DeLorenzo

For Wisdom and Good Judgment – The Leaders of our congregation ... the leaders of our nation

For God's Care and Good Providence – Our young people away at college ... Our young people here at Washington ... our members who are traveling ... the men and women in military service ... our congregation ... the Evangelist and Teachers We Help Support

EVENTS AND NOTES

- ▲ THERE WILL BE A MEN'S MEETING NEXT SUNDAY AFTERNOON. THE FOCUS WILL OUR 2015 FINANCIAL BUDGET.
- ▲ THE CHURCH IN FAIR LAWN WILL HOST A SONG LEADING AND CONGREGATIONAL SINGING CLASS ON NOVEMBER 21ST – 22ND. INFORMATION IS ON THE BULLETIN BOARD.
- ▲ REMEMBER OUR TUESDAY EVENING *PANERA BREAD* AND THURSDAY MORNING *PERKIN'S MEET-UP STUDIES*. ALL ARE WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE WHENEVER YOU CAN ... MORE IMPORTANTLY INVITE THOSE WHO MAYBE SEEKING JESUS!
- ▲ DON'T FORGET TO JOIN OUR "MEET-UP" SITE ON THE WEB ... [HTTP://WWW.MEETUP.COM/THURSDAY-MORNING-BIBLE-STUDY-AT-PERKINS-IN-PHILLIPSBURG-NJ](http://www.meetup.com/Thursday-Morning-Bible-Study-at-Perkins-in-Phillipsburg-NJ) ... CHECK IT OUT!