Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – August 19, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s *Second* letter to the Corinthians

how the Cross changes everything

Text: 2 Corinthians 7:2-16 Let’s get together!

The Background: Waiting. . . and knowing the power of God

Paul wrote this letter after his associate, Titus, brought back the good news about the Corinthians. He finally gets to the relief part, after he explains the anxiety part, or why he has taken great pains to do what he has done in his apostolic ministry. It was a long, slow period of waiting, and Paul’s words are like a dam-bursting emotional torrent. His letter was risky, but by God’s grace, this church had listened, and good things resulted!

Unity: The Cross brings reconciliation.

Why does Paul keep complimenting the Corinthians, and expressing confidence in them? Because trust is the foundation of any relationship. If I want you to trust me, I must entrust myself to you. This is why many relationships don’t survive. One or both parties do not have the inner strength to trust another person (settling instead for trust’s counterfeits, gullibility or codependency or its opposite, cynicism). Why? We lack faith in God. To be secure in my relationships, I must know that God “has my back” AND that He is at work in the other person. When I am secure in Him, I have less trouble risking new relationships or strengthening old ones. Accepted in Christ, I am safe. In yet one more way, the Cross changes everything.

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not-so-hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

(2) In contrast to the manipulative unbelievers from whom you should separate, make room in your hearts for us! For we have never harmed you, wronged you, exploited or tricked you.

(3) I don’t say this to make you feel guilty, since (as you know) you already have a place in our hearts. We are proud of you and have great confidence in you--now even more so.

(5) I admit that as I waited, I was in great turmoil over the letter I had sent. But when Titus brought the good news of your enthusiastic, obedient response, my joy overflowed.

(8) So I can’t regret that letter, since it brought about your repentance (as godly sorrow always does). And what repentance! Not only that, the underlying purpose of the letter was to give you an opportunity to support us and righteousness. And you passed that test in flying colors!

(13) All of this makes us rejoice, for you lived up to our boast about you, so, once again we affirm: we trust you completely.

The Challenge: Am I honestly pursuing unity even when it’s difficult?

***Memory Verses: Proverbs 27:6***

Am I willing to speak the truth, even at the risk of misunderstanding?

When I speak the truth in times of tension, do I do so in love?

Are my rebukes for the person’s good, or my own satisfaction?

Are my confrontations over righteousness or merely legalistic?

Does fear of confrontation keep me silent when I should speak?

Do I give others the benefit of the doubt?

Am I as quick with praise as I am with a rebuke?

Can I discern between “godly sorrow” and “worldly sorrow”?