

2 CORINTHIANS

STUDY NUMBER THREE – 2 Cor. 2:5-11

TEXT:

- v. 5 But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree - - in order not to say too much – to all of you.
- v. 6 Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority.
- v. 7 So that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest possibly, such a person should be swallowed up (overwhelmed) by excessive grief.
- v. 8 Wherefore I am urging you to reaffirm your love for him.
- v. 9 For to this end also I wrote in order that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.
- v. 10 But whom you are forgiving anything, I also am forgiving; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven it for your sakes in the presence of Christ.
- v. 11 In order that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

INTRODUCTION:

Out of the mouths of.....

A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. She was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again. Finally she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?"

"Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago."
 "Oh," she paused, "Grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago."
 Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?"

-Shopping

Many of us "Old Folks" (those over 40, WAY over 40 or hovering near 40) are quite confused about how we should present ourselves. We're unsure about the kind of image we are projecting and whether or not we are correct as we try to conform to current fashions. Despite what you may have seen on the streets, the following combinations

DO NOT go together and should be avoided:

1. A nose ring and bifocals
2. Spiked hair and bald spots
3. A pierced tongue and dentures
4. Miniskirts and support hose
5. Ankle bracelets and corn pad
6. Speedo's and cellulite
7. A belly button ring and a gall bladder surgery scar
8. Unbuttoned disco shirts and a heart monitor
9. Midriff shirts and a midriff bulge
10. Bikinis and liver spots
11. Short shorts and varicose veins
12. Inline skates and a walker

And last, but not least. My personal favorite:

13. Thongs and Depends

Please keep these basic guidelines foremost in your mind when you shop

-Be Yourself – Georgie Sicking – Kaiser, Wyoming – ref# 450-09

When I was young a foolish
 The women said to me,
 "Take off those spurs and comb

Your hair, if a lady you will be.

“Forget about those cowboy ways.
Come and sit awhile.
We will try to clue you in on women’s
Ways and wiles.

“Take off that Levi’s jumper, put up
Those batwing chaps.
Put on a little makeup and we can get a
Date for you perhaps.

“Forget about that roping, that will make
Callouses on your hands.
And you know it takes soft fingers
If you want to catch a man.

“Do away with that Stetson hat for
It will crush your curls.
And even a homely cowboy wouldn’t
Date a straight-haired girl”

Now, bring young and foolish,
I went my merry way,
And I guess I never wore a dress
Until my wedding day.

Now I tell my children,
“No matter what you do,
Stand up straight and tall.
Be you and only you.

“For if the Lord had meant us all
To be alike and the same rules to keep,
He would have bonded us all together
Just like a flock of sheep.
pp. 50-51

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

Thus far, Paul has addressed two problems in the church at Corinth: personal stress and misunderstanding. Now he turns our attention to the third concern: when discipline in a congregation should end.

p. 28

We have learned in study #1 that we are to use the comfort received during the time of stress as a form of ministry to others who are suffering.

In our second study we saw that Paul had been misunderstood by the Corinthian assembly and had made some unfounded criticisms.

(The Second Epistle to the Corinthians by Charles R. Erdman)

Thus it appears that Paul argues from the character of his preaching to the quality of his conduct. Such a message as his could not have come from a man who was fickle and unreliable in his own resolves and promises.

p. 33

Now the apostle is addressing the issue of CHURCH DISCIPLINE and when it should end in these verses that come under consideration.

1 Cor. 5:1-13

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you and immorality as such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. And you have become arrogant, and have not mourned instead, in order that the one who had done this deed might be removed from your midst. For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote you in my letter not to associate with the immoral people; I did not all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler – not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the

church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

The traditional view of this passage is that this is the man who is being talked about here in the second letter. They have been obedient in carrying out the disciplinary action and now the need is for restoration.

There are others, however, who feel that this particular problem has long since been dealt with and the real problem that is under disciplinary action at this time is someone in the Corinthian congregation who has been usurping the apostle's authority and rebuffed the apostle when he came to Corinth on another visit. It is believed that the letter which has been lost which was quite strong, written to the congregation, is the one that addressed this particular issue.

No matter what position you take, we do have a disciplinary action that has been acted upon and now there is a need for restoration.

Matt. 18:15-17

And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.

- v. 5 But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree – in order not to say too much – to all of you.

(The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians by Charles R. Erdman)

Thus, while it is impossible to determine beyond question either the particular offense or its punishment, the practical principles involved in this passage are plain and important. Among these abiding principles the following may be named: (a) No church should fail to discipline its offending members. (b) This discipline should not be administered by the decision of any one man in the church, but by the will of the majority of the members. (c) The one supreme purpose of such discipline should be the reformation and reclamation of the offender. (d) When the offender is penitent he should receive forgiveness and be treated with affection. (e) Severity and lack of sympathy may drive the offender to desperation and again place him under the power of Satan.

p. 39

Paul uses a negative and positive here: "He has caused sorrow not to me, But in some degree – in order not to say too much – to all of you."

The people who are really hurt in this situation are the people who are in Corinth.

v. 6 Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority.

(A Guide to Church Discipline by J. Carl Laney)

The basic message of this book is this: Church discipline is God's loving plan for restoring sinning saints. God's purpose in disciplining His children is not to destroy their lives and end their ministries, but rather to restore them to fellowship and usefulness in the body of Christ. Restoration, not ruination, is the preeminent objective of church discipline. The writer of Hebrews expresses it well: "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak...so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed."

p. 14

Church discipline may be broadly defined as the confrontive and corrective measures taken by an individual, church leaders, or the congregation regarding a matter of sin in the life of a believer.

p. 14

In their runaway bestseller, The One Minute Manager, Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson offer business executives three secrets to increasing their productivity, profits, and prosperity. The third of these secrets is the "one minute reprimand." The procedure is designed to discipline for failure without attacking the employee's self-esteem. The suggestions they offer include the following:

1. Reprimand people immediately.
2. Tell people what they did wrong – be specific.
3. Tell people how you feel about what they did wrong.
4. Shake hands and let them know that you are on their side.
5. Remind them how much you value them.
6. Reaffirm that you think well of them, but not of their performance in this situation.
7. Realize that when the reprimand is over, it's over.

Do these guidelines sound familiar? If you have been reading your Bible, they should. It is amazing to me that while the church has long since abandoned the practice of reprimand, secular businessmen are buying the concept hook, line and sinker. For twelve months The One Minute Manager was on the New York Times bestseller list! And the principles upon which the "one minute reprimand" is based come right from Scripture.

p. 15

Heb. 12:5-13 presents the divine pattern of discipline which the church of Christ must model. Here we see that discipline is the "trump card" of God's grace, designed to move us to repentance and restore us to fellowship with himself.

p. 28

The ultimate rewards do not always seem so obvious. We see the principle illustrated in this story: A small boy was floating his model boat on the pond in a city park when suddenly a light breeze forced the craft out of the child's reach. The boy's desperate attempts to retrieve it caught the attention of an elderly gentlemen who then came to assist. But the child was horrified when the man started tossing rocks in the direction of the boat! Then the boy realized the rocks were going over the boat and making ripples which pushed the boat back to shore.

So it is with God's discipline. When we stray from Him, it may appear He is throwing rocks at us. But really He is using the violent ripples to bring us back to Himself.

pp. 32-33

Both the context of 1 Cor. 5:5 and usage of *sarx* in the epistle argue strongly for the viewpoint that Paul intends to discipline to destroy the self-sufficient, carnal attitude of the unrepentant offender. The purpose of this discipline is reflected in the clause, "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." In this context, the word "spirit" probably refers not to man's immaterial being, but to his inner self or person (cf. 2 Cor. 2:13). The man who faces the Lord with such a history of selfish and sinful action will have little to glory in on the day of evaluation (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10). But if the corrective measures work, then the repentant sinner will look forward to a good evaluation at the judgment seat of Christ.

p. 69

"SUFFICIENT FOR SUCH A ONE IS THIS PUNISHMENT WHICH WAS INFLICTED BY THE MAJORITY."

It is obvious that there was not a total oneness in this punishment. It was inflicted by the majority, which causes us to recognize there's still a minority faction, which is often the case in these matters.

The verse starts with the word SUFFICIENT. It is a key word because human nature has a tendency to go overboard when it comes to the matter of discipline.

2 Samuel 24:14

David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men."

There are those who never feel like it's enough.

And there are those who feel that a person got off too easy.

There are those who feel that the victim never did repent.

And there are those who feel he deserves every bit of pain he is suffering.

With this mentality obviously there must be a problem in Corinth and Paul wants the discipline to end in this particular case.

(How to Help People Change by Jay E. Adams)

Restoration is clearly explained in II Corinthians 2:6-11, where three requirements are set forth:

1. The repentant brother or sister must be “forgiven.”
2. He must be “comforted” (or “assisted” – that is the basic idea in the word *parakaleo*) in whatever ways may be necessary.
3. The church word “reaffirm,” in the original, is a term that speaks of a formal, public action.

Plainly, if discipline is handled properly in the first place, restoration can also be handled properly. The status of a person who is officially and publicly restored by the church is not in doubt: he stands up straight again.

p. 164

- v. 7 So that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest possibly, such a person should be swallowed up (overwhelmed) by excessive grief.

The result of their stopping the disciplinary action will be seen in verse 7: “So that on the contrary you should rather:

1. FORGIVE
2. COMFORT him.

And the reason why this is necessary is: “lest possibly, such a person should be swallowed up by excessive grief.”

There is a real danger if you don’t cease the disciplinary action.

Col. 3:21

Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.

Ephesians 6:4

And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

(The Letters to the Corinthians by William Barclay)

Paul’s insistence was that punishment must never drive to despair, and must never take the heart out of a man. The wrong kind of treatment often gives a man the least push into the arms of Satan. Over-severity may well drive him from the Church and its fellowship, while sympathetic amendment might well bring him in. May Lamb, who had terrible periods of insanity, was hardly treated by her mother. She used to sigh, “Why is it that I never seem to be able to do anything to please my mother?” Luther could

scarcely bear to pray the Lord's Prayer because his own father had been so stern that the word father painted a picture of grim terror in him. He used to say, "Spare the rod and spoil the child – yes; but, beside the rod keep an apple, to give the child when has done well." Punishment should encourage and not discourage. It should aim at producing, not the despair which abandons the struggle of goodness, but the new view which inspires to a greater and a more successful struggle.

p. 203

Paul says here in this verse that they are to FORGIVE AND COMFORT.

(Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Don't Deserve by Lewis B. Smedes)

We forgive in four stages. If we can travel through all four, we achieve the climax of reconciliation.

The first stage is hurt: when somebody causes you pain so deep and unfair that you cannot forget it, you are pushed into the first stage of the crisis of forgiving.

The second stage is hate: you cannot shake the memory of how much you were hurt, and you cannot wish your enemy well. You sometimes want the person who hurt you to suffer as you are suffering.

The third stage is healing: you are given the "magic eyes" to see the person who hurt you in a new light. Your memory is healed, you turn back the flow of pain and are free again.

The fourth stage is the coming together: you invite the person who hurt you back into your life; if he or she comes honestly, love can move you both toward a new and healed relationship. The fourth stage depends on the person you forgive as much as it depends on you; sometimes he doesn't come back and you have to be healed alone.

p. 2

We always face a crisis of forgiving when somebody hurts us unfairly. Forgiving is love's remedy to be used when we are hurtfully wronged by a person we trusted to treat us right. There is a difference between suffering and sheer pain and suffering painful wrongs.

p. 7

It is wise not to turn all hurts into crises of forgiving. If you need to forgive every minor bruise that you suffer in you run for a place in the sun, you will dam up the ebb and flow of all you fragile human relationships. We put everyone we love on guard when we turn personal misdemeanors into major felonies.

p. 15

(A Guide to Church Discipline by J. Carl Laney)

A friend of Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, one reminded her of an especially cruel thing that had been one to Clara years before. But Miss Barton seemed not to recall it. "Don't you remember it?" her best friend insisted. "No," came the reply, "I distinctly remember forgetting it." That is true forgiveness.

p. 94

Still others do not reach out to a repentant sinner because they either are unwilling to fully forgive or are unsure if the repentance is genuine. They withhold full restoration to fellowship until sufficient time has passed to ensure the sinner has mastered the temptation and experienced complete victory over sin. But is this consistent with true forgiveness and Christlike love? A repentant sinner needs immediate help and encouragement. That is why Paul admonishes the Corinthians to come alongside and encourage the brother who has repented from his sin.

Love him

In 2 Cor. 2:8 Paul declares, “Wherefore [the strongest Greek word for stating a conclusion] I urge you to reaffirm love for him.” Hughes comments, “Repentance must be met with full restoration in love.” The word translated “reaffirm” is commonly used in legal documents of the first century in connection with their ratification. Ratification demonstrated the validity or binding nature of a document (cf. Gal. 3:15). Paul is therefore encouraging the Corinthians to demonstrate the reality and commitment of their love for the repentant brother. It was not enough for the Corinthians to say, “We love you.” Paul wants them to give tangible proof of this love in their restoration of the repentant sinner.

p. 97

While the young man was still a long way down the road, the compassionate and forgiving father saw him coming and ran to greet him. The prodigal son confessed, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15:21). To the youth’s surprise the father adorned his repentant son with his best robe, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. He ordered the fattened calf to be prepared for a great feast, explaining, “For this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found. And they began to make merry” (Luke 15:24).

The loving father fully forgave and restored the repentant son to blessed fellowship. He didn’t refuse to forgive or require a waiting period to make sure the repentance was genuine. He not only forgave the wayward son, but he encouraged him with gifts and expressions of love. The forgiving father stands in stark contrast to the older son who was angered by the compassionate gestures and the rejoicing over his brother’s return.

Where do we stand in our attitude toward repentant sinners? Do we condemn them as the self-righteous son? Or do we forgive and restore them as the loving father?

p. 101

Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the famous crusader for atheism, made the cynical comment, “The church is the only army who shoots their own wounded.” Although the statement is untrue, like many exaggerations it is based on a kernel of truth. The greatest failure in church discipline is the matter of restoration. The major goal of church discipline is to restore sinning saints. This is no less true when the saint who sins is in a position of leadership. Christians who “shoot their wounded” are motivated by the flesh, not the

Spirit. Those who neglect the healing process will never experience the blessedness of seeing a sinner restored to usefulness.
pp. 124-25

(Quality Friendship: The Risks and Rewards by Gary Inrig)

The final step in Nathan's ministry to David was his affirmation of love for him. David knew that he was not only forgiven by God but was accepted by Nathan also. About a year after this event, David and Bathsheba had another son, whom David named Solomon, or "peace," a name declaring David's acceptance of God's forgiveness. But Nathan, we are told, gave him a special name, "Jebidiah, for the LORD's sake" (2 Samuel 12:25). Jebidiah means "beloved by the Lord!" What a God of grace that the child of forgiven adulterers bore such a beautiful name, and that that son became David's heir, appointed by a holy God to build His Temple! It was Nathan who not only told David of a God of forgiving love, but who now also demonstrated that love to David.
pp. 119-20

The apostle has made it clear that the punishment has been sufficient, and now there needs to be a change. Since there has been a favorable response to that punishment, the responsibility of the Corinthians is to forgive and to comfort this individual, "lest possibly he should be swallowed up (overwhelmed) by excessive grief."

(Beyond Forgiveness: The Healing Touch of Church Discipline by Donald Baker)

Chastisement can be corrective and it can be preventive. Job's chastisement was for the purpose of revealing Jehovah God to the world, God to Job, and Job to himself. Abraham's chastisement was simply for the development of spiritual graces in his life. Paul was chastised, not for his sin, but to prevent him from becoming proud. David experienced the severe blows of God's chastening rod for his open wickedness. Chastening is designed for perfecting.

For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:10-11).

(Beyond Forgiveness: The Healing Touch of Church Discipline by Don Baker)

"The apostle Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 that failure to bring sin into judgment can cause weakness, sickness, and death. He reemphasizes his statement in verse 32 when he states that refusal to judge our sins results in the chastisement of God.

"I dislike what I am doing tonight – intensely – but I dislike the alternative even more. The dissension and distrust that this problem would create if it were handled any other way could be disastrous. There is more sin lying under the proverbial rug than the rug can cover and far more than the church can handle.

"Another question you might be asking is WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

“Turn again in your Bible to 2 Corinthians, chapter 2. We have been told what to do in the event of persistent sin and in the event that the sinner is a leader in the church. What do we do now that he has asked forgiveness?”

Chapter 2, verses 1 to 11 tell us how and why to restore a repentant brother in Christ. This passage is speaking directly of the immoral person in 1 Corinthians, chapter 5, but indirectly of Greg. Greg meets the qualifications for such a response from us tonight.

Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (vv. 6-7).

“Since confession in this instance was complete, forgiveness was in order.

“Greg’s confession has also been complete. He has bared his heart to every member of his immediate family and to others. He has called those whom he sinned against and asked their forgiveness. Tonight he has asked our forgiveness, and we must forgive him.

“Another question is probably in many minds now: IF WE ARE FORGIVING HIM AND RESTORING HIM, WHY CAN’T HE CONTINUE IN HIS PRESENT MINISTRY?

“Greg has been wounded, critically wounded, and the wounded need time for wounds to heal. Greg has been emotionally, spiritually, physically wounded. He is embarrassed, ashamed, terribly depressed, and he needs time to recover.

“He needs to rebuild confidence in himself, and we need time to rebuild our confidence in him. He needs to be proven, and such proving will take time.

“In order to help him reestablish himself, we have made certain recommendations to him – to which he has already agreed, and some of which he has already performed.

“One, that he acknowledge his sin to his wife and family.

“Two, that he confess his sin to the church family.

“Three, that he surrender his ordination until such a time that we feel he might again be qualified for ministry.

“Four, that he not engage in any public ministry without our permission.

“Five, that he submit to extensive psychological counseling. We recommended a psychologist within the church family, and offered to pay counseling fees if necessary.

“Six, that he and his family remain right here in Hinson and allow us the privilege of helping in his restoration.

“We have asked his family to remain in their places of present ministry. They can’t believe that we would accept them after what has happened, but I’m convinced that the church is a redemptive society – not only for those on the outside, but those on the inside as well.

“We have encouraged Greg to seek secular employment. Whether there are jobs available I don’t know, but I wouldn’t be surprised if someone here tonight knew of something.

“We are going to pray for Greg, that he will be empowered by God to break a pattern that has existed for thirteen years, and that he will be restored full to a ministry that is productive and fruitful.

“How long will it take? I don’t know. But a sufficient length of time to prove himself, to his family, to his church family, and to his God that he is truly spiritually mature enough to carry on a ministry where he can honor Christ.

“So we’ve asked him to stay right here and be restored.

It’s been said of the family of God that it’s the only army in the world that deserts its wounded. One of our family has been wounded, but by God’s grace, we are not going to desert him, do you agree?”

I was not prepared for the response that followed. The entire congregation stood to its feet and applauded – a long-sustained, overwhelming applause that caused me and Greg and Joanna and most everyone else in the building to collapse in tears.

Before leaving and after prayer, I said, “I want to ask one more thing of the church. It has all been said. There’s no need to say more. All the questions have been answered. There’s no reason to ask any more. Nothing stops the rumor mill faster than when it’s all been said. Now, let’s talk to God and reclaim our brother to complete and total restoration – and let’s go home.”

But they did not go home. For two hours the church family stood in a single line so that each could embrace and encourage Greg and Joanna and pledge their support in the difficult months that lay ahead.

v. 8 Wherefore I am urging you to reaffirm your love for him.

In light of what I have just said, I am urging you to reaffirm you love for him.

Get the robe and the ring and the shoes, and kill the fatted calf. We’re going to have a party.

Luke 15:24

For this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’ And they began to be merry.

There are found critical words here in our passage. These words teach us our RESPONSIBILITY FOR RESTORATION OR RELATIONSHIPS that have been either SEPARATED OR STRAINED BY SIN. The four words are:

1. SUFFICIENT in verse 6
2. FORGIVE in verse 7
3. COMFORT in verse 7
4. REAFFIRM YOUR LOVE in verse 8

When you put these four words together, you have the responsibility of the church, the body of Christ, toward the sinning brother.

Galatians 6:1, 2

Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens. And thus fulfill the law of Christ.

- v. 9 For to this end also I wrote in order that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

The reason they are to recognize the punishment is sufficient, to forgive, to comfort, and to reaffirm their love for this sinning brother is given here in the 9th verse: "to this end also I wrote." And my purpose in writing was "in order that I might put you to the test."

I wanted to see if you were real. I wanted to see if you are committed to the Lord.

The key phrase in this 9th verse is: I wanted to see "WHETHER YOU ARE OBEDIENT IN ALL THINGS."

I wanted to see if you were doing the difficult.

It is so easy to pick and choose in the realm of obedience, to forget some areas and to try to be obedient in others. This only leads to frustration.

The key to blessing is obedience in all things.

God is in the business of blessing the obedient heart.

Joshua 1:8

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

(Balancing Life's Demands by J. Grant Howard)

Things are quite similar in the human family. Audrey and I have four children. They love us, and through the years they have each expressed their love in a variety of ways – handmade birthday cards, a craft, a bouquet of flowers, a picture, a gift, or just spontaneous, unsolicited words of love and appreciation. But I'll tell you something that gives us even more intense satisfaction: when they do what we tell them to do! And believe me, it puts a lot of static in the system when they say they love us and they don't obey us. We want both affection and obedience from our kids, but if for some reason we were forced to choose between the two, we would opt for obedience. In the final analysis, cold obedience is to be preferred over warm rebellion. As a heavenly Father, God also wants both affection and obedience from His children. But He will not allow us to substitute nebulous sentiment for informed obedience.

p. 68

Ezekiel 33:30-32

“As for you, son of man, your countrymen are talking together about you be the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, ‘Come and hear the message that has come from the Lord.’ My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

Matt. 7:24-27

Therefore every one who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall; for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.”

James 1:22

But prove yourselves doers of the words, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Thus far in our study we note that the apostle has made an issue out of this matter so that the Corinthians could be tested as to whether they are obedient in all things. And that “obedient in all things” involves not only the punishment for the sinning brother but recognizing the sufficient time to forgive, to comfort, and to reaffirm their love for him.

- v. 10 But whom you are forgiving anything, I also am forgiving; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven it for your sakes in the presence of Christ.

The words FORGIVEN and FORGIVING are found five times in this particular verse.

The apostle recognizes that the whole problem centers around not only receiving forgiveness but one of the big problems is being willing to grant forgiveness in the presence of Christ.

It was the Lord Jesus who was being nailed to the cross, who prayed that classic prayer: “Father, forgive them for they are not knowing what they are doing.”

It was the Lord Jesus in Matt. 18, who taught that the kind of forgiveness that flows from us is the “seventy times seven” or unlimited forgiveness in our relationship with our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

Hebrews 12:11-15

All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for you feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue after peace with all men, and after the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by it many be defiled;

(Forgive and Forget by Lewis B. Smedes)

When you forgive someone for hurting you, you perform spiritual surgery inside your soul; you cut away the wrong that was done to you so that you can see your “enemy” through the magic eyes that can heal your soul. Detach that person from the hurt and let it go, the way a child opens his hands and lets a trapped butterfly go free.

Then invite that person back into your mind, fresh, as if a piece of history between you had been rewritten, its grip on your memory broken. Reverse the seemingly irreversible flow of pain within you.

p. 27

Forgiveness has creative power to move us away from a past moment of pain, to unshackle us from our endless chain of reactions, and to create a new situation in which both the wrongdoer and the wronged can begin a new way.

Forgiveness offers a chance at reconciliation; it is an opportunity for a life together instead of death together. Forgiveness is a miracle of the will that moves away the heavy hindrance to fellowship, a miracle that will be fulfilled when the two estranged people come together in as fair a new relationship as is possible at that time and under those circumstances.

p. 131

When we really love people with respect, we let them be accountable for what they do to us. And then we face the crisis of forgiving.

p. 144

Forgiving seems almost unnatural. Our sense of fairness tells us people should pay for the wrong they do. But forgiving is love’s power to break nature’s rule.

p. xii

If you hurt me and I retaliate in kind, I may think that I have given you only what you deserve, no more. But you feel it as a hurt that is too great for you to accept. Your

passion for fairness will force you to retaliate against me, harder this time. Then it will be my turn. And will it ever stop?

An eye for an eye becomes a leg for a leg and, eventually, a life for a life. No matter what our weapons are – words, clubs, arrows, guns, bombs, nuclear missiles – revenge locks us into an escalation of violence. Ghandi was right: if we all live by “an eye for an eye” the whole world will be blind. The only way out is forgiveness.
p. 131

Did Shylock have a case? He is, as all villain haters know, the classic unforgiver. But who looks at the business from Shylock’s point of view?

We find Shylock in Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice; he had been kicked around, badly, and for no good reason. Listen to his complaint. “Antonio,” he said,

Hath disgraced me...
Laughed at my losses,
Mocked my gains,
Scorned my nation,
Thwarted my bargains,
Cooled my friends,
Heated mine enemies.

And for what? Why did Antonio rub Shylock’s face in the muck? Had Shylock done him wrong? Were there scores to settle? No, Antonio was spurred only by the evil spirit of anti-Semitism. Shylock was brutalized only because he was a Jew.

Why, then, should Shylock forgive Antonio as if nothing had happened between them? He asked for no more than he had coming. Antonio had made a bargain. Let the wrongdoer pay his dues. One pound of flesh please! As promised.
p. 125

(Quality Friendship: The Risks and Rewards by Gary Inrig)

It is very tempting to harbor resentment and to nurse our bitterness over another’s actions. I will never forget one couple whose marriage was dissolving. The bone of contention was the husband’s failure to fulfill a promise made to his wife about a household construction project. The issue was hardly insurmountable, and his explanation was at least partly feasible, although he offered no excuses and asked to be forgiven. Finally, I turned to the wife and said, “It seems to me that you have a clear choice. You can choose to forgive and forget, or you can destroy the relationship.” Her answer was cold and final. “I’d rather remember.” At that moment, the marriage all but died. The alternative to forgiveness is a bitterness and resentment that enslaves and kills. The prison of bitterness is an awful place. Forgiveness is not easy. But difficult as it may be, it brings with it the blessing of restored and growing relationships, and a closer walk with the Lord. Good friends are good forgivers.
p. 185

(Make Anger Your Ally by Neil Clark Warren)

Forgiveness offers many benefits:

1. It sets you free from the past – from hurt, frustrations, and fear – and from miserable experiences of many kinds.
2. It significantly reduces the total amount of anger you will experience in your life, because no painful event is allowed to contribute to your anger more than once.
3. It allows your mind – conscious and unconscious to focus on the present, and that leads to more effective and rewarding living.
4. It sets your relationship with another person free to grow and develop.

But for many of us forgiveness is difficult. Somehow it seems unnatural. No one ever taught us how to forgive. And much of the time we really don't want to forgive the other person anyway. We want to hang on to our sense of having been wronged.

p. 192

Understanding begets forgiving, and forgiving begets loving, and loving brings us close to one another – and “close to one another” is what healthy marriage is all about.

p. 195

All of this is to be done in the presence of Christ.

How would you feel, sitting with the person that you are unwilling to forgive at this moment, and the Lord Jesus is sitting there with you – what is it you think He would want you to do in those circumstances.

Matt. 18:21-35

The Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle account with his slaves. And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow-slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, ‘Have patience with me

and I will repay you.’ He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow-slave, even as I had mercy on you?’ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

(Caring Enough to Confront by David Augsburger)

I am responsible for choosing my responses to you. I am responsible for the way I react to you. I am responsible for how I see you. And from the way I see you – as either friendly or hostile, accepting or rejecting, welcoming or threatening – emerge my feelings. Feelings are the energies that power the way I choose to see you or to perceive you.

I am responsible for how I see you – and from that for the way I feel about you. You cannot make me discouraged or disgusted or depressed. These are choices. You cannot make me hate. I must choose to hate. You cannot make me jealous. I must choose envy. I experience all these and more on all too many occasions, but I am responsible for those actions or reactions. I make the choice.

p. 47-48

Significant movement toward forgiving begins as we bring an end to blaming and move toward the recognition of our joint participation, to whatever degree, in the painful situation. Blaming seeks to finger the culprit, assign the role of villain, and proceed to exacting a commensurate punishment. (All of which are negative alienating acts that increase rather than reduce distance.)

p. 15

Forgiveness, which is a complex and demanding process, is often reduced to a single act of accepting another. In spite of the pain, hurt, loss and wrongdoing that stand between us, we are encouraged to forgive in a single act of resolving all by giving unconditional inclusion. Such a step becomes too large for any human to take in a single bound. Forgiveness is a journey of many steps, each of which can be extremely difficult, all of which are to be taken carefully, thoughtfully, and with deep reflection.

p. 30

Step one moves from devaluing the wrongdoer to valuing the person again. The second step advances from the neutral recognition of the other’s worth to a return to loving the other as a precious person again. Then the past must be recognized as past through canceling demands for undoing. Then present anger, pain or sadness must be negotiated in renewed trusting. This allows both parties to risk opening the future again and to reward each other in celebrating the new understanding and love achieved.

p. 32

The past exists
only in
memory,
consequences,
effects.

It has power
over me only as
I continue to
give it my power.

I can
let go,
releaser it,
move freely.
I am not my past,
The future is not yet.

I can
fear it,
flee it,
face it,
embrace it,
and be free to live now.

p. 46

Forgiveness is letting what was, be gone; what will be, come; what is now, be.

In forgiving, I finish my demands on past predicaments, problems, failures and say good-bye to them with finality. I cancel my predictions, suspicions, premonitions of future failure and welcome the next moment with openness to discover what will be. I make a new transaction of affirming integrity between us now.

p. 52

The inability to say good-bye leaves one unable to live cleanly in the present and incapable of seeing clearly what is here, now, present before him or her. In failing to say good-bye, the person carries along images of persons, after-effects of situations, dated emotions of past conflicts, obsolete perceptions that are no longer valid, fixed opinions that are not open to reconsideration, reified judgments that have turned to stone. A whole coterie of ghosts, phantoms and dramatic fantasies hover over his thinking, plaguing him with fears and danger warnings.

p. 58

Letting go, saying good-bye and risking trust are sequential steps toward freedom. Venturing trust is a risk, in fact trust occurs only when there is a risk involved. When one

is aware that a desired outcome is dependent upon another's behavior – and one stands to love more than would be gained by success – yet risks the outcome into the other's hands, trust is expressed.

Life is a series of trust ventures: it is trust risked, risk reward, new trust ventured, and new risks taken. Living is a constant movement between the twin tensions of trust and risk. As they go hand in hand, or join hands in willing forgiveness, we grow.
p. 59

- v. 11 In order that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

The purpose for recognizing the discipline is sufficient; the purpose behind forgiving, comforting, reaffirming their love; the purpose behind being obedient in all things, and the purpose behind forgiving in the presence of Christ is so “that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan.”

Plummer translates this 11th verse in the following way:

Satan is always on the watch to get an advantage over us. He did get an advantage when he caused this member of our body to sin so grievously. Are we to let him have another advantage over a sinner that has repented?

The focus of the passage is on forgiveness. We see the word occur 6 times in these brief verses.

Satan certainly has had a heyday in Corinth. He has had advantage with the previous problems in the church there.

It is good for us to ask the question: How does he get advantage. And I note that there are four ways that just come from this passage:

1. OVERPUNISHING – Never allowing grace and love to return.
2. FAILING TO FORGIVE
3. WITHHOLDING COMFORT AND LOVE
4. DISOBEDIENCE IN SOME AREAS OF LIFE.

“IN ORDER THAT NO ADVANTAGE MAY BE GAINED OVER US”

Paul includes himself here. He knows that he is just as vulnerable for Satan to get the advantage over him as the saints in Corinth are also vulnerable.

We need to recognize and accept the fact that we are in a real warfare, that Satan is very real, and that he does desire to get advantage over us and will use any of numerous strategies and schemes to put us out of operation, to render ineffective our lives and ministries.

The writers of the New Testament make this quite clear.

Matt. 16:22, 23

And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.” But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.”

Ephesians 6:10-18

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world-forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

1 Thess. 2:18

For we wanted to come to you – I, Paul, more than once – and yet Satan thwarted us.

James 4:7

Submit therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

1 Peter 5:8, 9

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

1 John 4:4

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

In this epistle of 2 Corinthians we are going to encounter him on numerous occasions.

2 Cor. 4:4

In whose case the god of this world blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2 Cor. 6:15

Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

2 Cor. 11:13-15

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.

2 Cor. 12:7

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me – to keep me from exalting myself.

The apostle says, The reason I am suggesting that you restore this sinning brother, that you forgive him, is: “In order that no advantage be gained over us by Satan for we are not ignorant of his schemes.”

What are some of his schemes?

I found 7 that describe some of his numerous plans:

1. DIVISION
2. DISOBEDIENCE
3. DISCOURAGE
4. DISTANT – (withhold comfort and love)
5. DAMAGE – (both individual and corporate)
6. DECEPTION
7. DISTORTS – (makes it bigger and worse, and distorts the Word of God)

Satan loves:

To FRUSTRATE
 To FASCINATE
 To cause the believer to live in the world of FANTASY
 To believe the FINALITY OF FAILURE.

These are all parts of his schemes to destroy the life and ministry of the believer.

(A Guide to Church Discipline by. J. Carl Laney)

Paul tells the Corinthians that their response to his instructions regarding the repentant sinner had been a “test” determining whether they were “obedient in all things” (2:9). To forgive, comfort, and reaffirm love would prove obedience to the Apostle’s instructions. Failure to follow up on the matter of church discipline would involve a serious breach of Paul’s commands. He sets the example for forgiveness in verse 10 by informing the Corinthians that he has already forgiven the repentant sinner. The words, “if I have forgiven anything,” certainly reflect Paul’s view that the sin of 1 Corinthians 5 was primarily “an offense against the church within which it was committed.” That the sin was forgiven “in the presence of Christ” suggests that Paul did so with Christ’s authority and approval (cf. Matt. 18:18-35).

In verse 11 Paul further explains what he meant by “for your sakes” in verse 10: “In order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.” If the repentant sinner is not forgiven and restored to fellowship, Satan will use the situation to advance his purposes. Failure to encourage full restoration after repentance is to play into the hands of Satan who is already causing discord and dissension in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:11, 12). The words “no advantage be taken” translate the Greek word “to have more,” which suggests “having more than one’s due.” Failure to restore the repentant sinner will give Satan more claim on the church than he is due. It will give him an advantage that he certainly doesn’t deserve.

Paul explains his concern in the last phrase: “for we are not ignorant of his schemes.” Satan has many evil plans and purposes – plots for moral disaster and spiritual deadness which he would love to unleash on the church. Since the Corinthians are fully aware of Satan’s wicked designs, they ought to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm love for the sinning brother. Failure to do so is to give a victory to Satan. It would be like Roy Riegels’ history-making touchdown in the 1929 Rose Bowl – he scored for the opposing team!

pp. 98-99

(Pastoral Renewal, Nov. 1983)

Every one of the trends surveyed here points to a deterioration in the lives of young Americans. Taken together, the increasing rates of youth suicide, homicide, arrests, birth out of wedlock, and alcohol and drug abuse paint a picture of a troubled generation.

The institutions that should be preparing children for stable, useful adult lives, the families and the schools, are thus experiencing less and less success in their basic tasks. There are many reasons. Many of the causes lie in cultural patterns, the separation of the

worlds of children and adults, the decline of authority in the home, the prevalence of mothers working outside the home, the overuse of television, the pursuit of material comforts, longer schooling, the erosion of family networks, frequent changes or residence, boy-girl relationships at younger and younger ages, and many others. To a great degree these are the cultural patterns alike of Christians and non-Christians. Having adopted all these patterns which are making it more difficult to transmit basic social skills and character traits to the next generation, should we be surprised that we find it increasingly difficult to pass on Christian faith and life.

(Spiritual Awakening, Sherwood Eliot Wirt, editor)

Desires indulged grow faster and farther than gratifications extend. Ungratified desire is misery. Expectations eagerly indulged and terminated by disappointment are often exquisite misery. But how frequently are expectations raised only to be disappointed, and desires let loose only to terminate in distress! The child pines for a toy; the moment he possesses it, he throws it by and cries for another. When they are piled up in heaps around him, he looks at them without pleasure, and leaves them without regret. He knew not that all the good which they could yield lay in expectation; nor that his wishes for more would increase faster than toys could be multiplied, and is unhappy at last for the same reason as at first: his wishes are ungratified. Still indulging them, and still believing that the gratification of them will furnish the enjoyment for which he pines, he goes on, only to be unhappy.

Men are merely taller children. Honor, wealth, and splendor are the toys for which grown children pine; but which, however accumulated, leave them still disappointed and unhappy. God never designed that intelligent beings should be satisfied with these enjoyments. By His wisdom and goodness they were formed to derive their happiness and virtue from Him alone.

pp. 151-152

-- Timothy Dwight

The Devil tells me my trouble is so great, I shall never lift up my head again; but unbelief and the Devil are liars. I shall yet praise Him. My God will carry me through all. I shall praise Him, even for casting me down. I shall praise Him even for that which is the cause of my disquietude. He will be "the health of my countenance." Though my afflictions have now made my body low, have sucked up my spirits, and hurt my animal frame, He will be the help of my countenance. I shall by and by see Him again, and will be favored with those transforming views which my God has favored me with in times past.

p. 31

-- George Whitefield

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

The third step in restoration, brought out in verse 11, is the need to keep Satan from gaining an advantage over us, for Paul says, "we are not ignorant of his designs." It is Satan who keeps bringing back to your mind the hurts of the past; he keeps interjecting them back into a situation. He is trying to get hold of you through the situation and wreak havoc with you and your loved ones. It is Satan who makes the leadership of a church quail at confronting some situations and say, "Oh, let's not get involved; let's

forget it.” That is Satan. He is seeking to gain an advantage over the whole congregation, to dilute their testimony and render them powerless in their effect on the community. He will bring it up again whether you like it or not; he will interject the same situation into circumstances in the future and you will have to face the same issue over and over again.

pp. 33-34

(II Corinthians by H. A. Ironside)

His devices are, first, tolerate sin, and then if you won't do that but you deal with sin in discipline, then never forgive. How often that spirit is manifested among Christians! There is not a great deal of discipline in the Church of God today. A minister said to me one day, “One of our leading members is well known to be supporting a mistress in a hotel down town, and breaking the heart of his wife and children, yet he is a leader in our church, a very wealthy man. If we were to bring him up for discipline it would split the church, and I do not know what we would do without his money.” I said, “Better split the church and go on with the godly part. God's Word is clear, ‘Put away from among yourselves that wicked person’ (1 Cor. 5:13). Let him take his tainted money and go.”

p. 59

(Adventure in Adversity by Paul E. Billheimer)

If the flesh is more effective than agape love, would not God be using it and its methods? To believe in and adopt Satan's methods, to place confidence in earthly wisdom, to believe that Satan's way of human might is more efficacious and successful, more powerful than God's way of agape love, is to believe that Satan himself is more powerful than God. This means he has deceived us as he did Eve and one-third of the angels and as he has deceived the whole world, even some spiritual leaders.

p. 100

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: There comes a time when the discipline is adequate, and we must be sensitive to that time.

LESSON #2: The four steps in restoration are:

1. SUFFICIENT
2. FORGIVE
3. COMFORT
4. REAFFIRM YOUR LOVE

LESSON #3: It is possible to be overwhelmed by excessive grief.

LESSON #4: Are you endeavoring to be obedient in all things?

LESSON #5: Is there someone you need to be forgiving in the presence of Christ?

LESSON #6: Does Satan have the advantage over you in some area of life at this moment?

LESSON #7: Have you failed and fallen victim to some of his schemes?

Martin Luther in his great hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” says:

And tho’ this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God has willed
His truth to triumph through us.

The prince of darkness grim – We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure, For le! His doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him

-Salvation ref# 289-11

Paul even managed to make us laugh by donning a tam-o’shanter cap and rolling up his suit trousers to reveal a pair of argyle socks, imitating a look like Payne’s knickers. Paul told funny stories about Payne, but he summed up the heart of the service when he said, “Payne Stewart has finished the race, he has kept the faith, and now the crown of righteousness is his. Payne Stewart loved life and loved people...During this past year everyone knew Payne Stewart saw this dramatic change in his life. They saw in Payne what the Bible calls a ‘peace which passes all understanding.’ Only God can do that because only God can change a heart.”

Paul then did one of the most courageous things he could have ever done. In front of his professional peers and millions of people watching on television, Paul said, “It is an honor to stand before you as Payne Stewart’s, Robert Fraley’s and Van Ardan’s friend. And because I knew them so well, I know what they would have wanted me to say in my closing remarks. Whoever you are, wherever you are, whatever you have done; if you feel the tug of God’s Spirit on your heart, do not turn away. If, like Payne, Robert, and Van, you want to know the happiness and peace that only Jesus Christ can bring, I invite you to confess your sins and receive him as your Savior. Regardless of what your life has brought you, his love is enough. And his peace is for real.

“Because I knew these men, my life will never be the same. I am so thankful for their friendship, for their character, and their faith.” Nearly overcome with emotion, Paul’s voice cracked as he said, “Good-bye, Van...good-bye, Robert...good-bye Payne. We love you and we miss you, but we know we will see you again.”
pp. 307-8