

2 Corinthians 7:1- *"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."*

What promises is Paul referring to? That we are God's temple, that He would dwell in us and walk among us, that He would be our God and we would be His people, and that He would be a Father to us while we are His sons and daughters.

If there were no other promises in Scripture, this alone would be enough. It would have been great if God were simply with us, as He was with Moses, but this verse reveals something greater: He is in us. In the Old Testament, God's people were servants who related to Him through performance. Now we are sons, having moved from religion into relationship. God once walked with Adam in the cool of the day, but now He has come to dwell within us every day.

This truth may seem simple, but it should radically shape how a believer lives. It is not enough to merely know or hear it; truly understanding that God is our Father should transform the way we endure every challenge or crisis we face.

This verse is not saying that our born-again spirit is filthy. Rather, when we attempt to offer our own righteousness to God, it is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Our spirit is united with Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit, where sin cannot penetrate (Ephesians 1:13; 1 John 3:9). Before we were born again, we possessed a sin nature; now we are united with Christ and indwelt by Him (1 John 4:17).

2 Corinthians 7:2- *"Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one."*

Do you know that one of the ways to win people over is to be transparent and open? I believe ministers who are more vulnerable about their own journey and shortcomings often have a more receptive audience because they are relatable. People who attempt to present themselves as if they are above struggle or have never experienced loss or failure often create distance between themselves and those they are trying to reach.

Even in business, people tend to gravitate toward entrepreneurs who started from nothing, lost everything, and rebuilt again, because that reflects the reality most people are in. In the same way, Paul is doing this with the Corinthians. He has already shared that he has suffered greatly on behalf of others and that his ministry was not one of luxury but of hardship—being hard-pressed, perplexed, and persecuted.

When God called Paul, he did not check into a five-star hotel; he checked into the desert.

This was meant to show the Corinthians that Paul was willing to endure much for their sake, and in doing so, he was creating an environment where their hearts could become more open and receptive to his message.

2 Corinthians 7:3- *"I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together."*

The word *condemn* in Greek is *katakrisis*, meaning an adverse judgment or sentencing. It is similar to condemning a building and declaring it unfit for use. In the same way, the enemy attempts to render believers ineffective when we become focused on ourselves and our shortcomings.

Condemnation is never from God. The Holy Spirit brings conviction, but He does not bring condemnation. I recognize condemnation when it leaves me feeling hopeless and unworthy, rather than leading me to repentance and a clear path forward.

Conviction, on the other hand, brings awareness of what is wrong and shows how to walk in what is right. God does bring correction (Hebrews 12:6), but it is always for growth and restoration, not destruction or shame. Correction should function as an eye-opener that leads to change, not something that leaves us stuck where we are.

This verse is strong because it reveals Paul's motive in his correction of the Corinthians. It shows that his heart was not to condemn them but to restore them. His desire was unity and oneness within the body—to live together and even, if necessary, to suffer together in love and sincerity.

2 Corinthians 7:4- *"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."*

Paul says he spoke to them with great boldness. Many people can be intimidated by someone who speaks boldly. I know this all too well as a female who does not simply float onto a stage with a soft voice saying, "God loves you." It is important that we minister the way God made and designed us.

There is certainly a place for grace and balance, but if God created you with an authoritative style that carries boldness, then be who He created you to be.

Peter and John were very different, and I cannot find anywhere in Scripture where Jesus tried to make one into the other. John rested on Jesus' bosom at the Last Supper, while hours later Peter was cutting off Malchus' ear. It is dangerous to spend your life trying to copy someone else when God made you an original.

Joel Osteen is not John Osteen, and I believe God knew exactly what He was doing when He formed each of them in their mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5).

Paul states that his boasting was not in himself but on behalf of the Corinthians. His confidence was rooted in what God was doing in and through them, not in his own accomplishments. Scripture teaches that our boasting should be in the Lord, not in ourselves (Romans 3:27).

What amazes me about this verse is that Paul says he was filled with comfort and exceedingly joyful in all his tribulation. Think about that. He was facing tremendous pressure in the natural, yet he was not crushed by it. Why? Because he weighed everything in light of eternity.

Paul's circumstances did not determine his joy. His perspective did.

A crisis on earth is nothing more than an incident in heaven. In the kingdom of heaven, there is no crisis. When our eyes remain fixed on Him and His promises, we can experience comfort and joy even in the middle of tribulation.

2 Corinthians 7:5- *"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."*

I have heard many well-known ministers say that if you could be content doing something outside of the fivefold ministry, then do it. Many people see someone behind a pulpit and decide they want to travel the world and preach the gospel. I saw this often in Bible college. Everyone said they were the next Joyce Meyer or wanted what John G. Lake had.

You may want their platform, but do you also desire their persecution?

The promise you see someone living in today was a process that most people would not choose to walk through. Many desire the life but do not want the invoice that comes with it.

Personally, I simply want to be where God wants me. If that means doing something different than what I am doing now, I will gladly step aside. Many of the same people I knew in Bible college who said they wanted to travel the world and were on fire for Jesus eventually fizzled out. They discovered that just as Jesus walked in miracles, signs, and wonders, He was also accused, misunderstood, betrayed, denied, and constantly opposed.

We want His fruit, but not always the sufferings that accompany the call.

I am not talking about suffering sickness or disease. I am talking about the kind of suffering Paul mentions here—suffering that comes through persecution and opposition for following Christ (2 Timothy 3:12).

Anytime there is growth, there will be pressure. A plant cannot grow until it first exists as a vulnerable seed. That seed is placed into isolation in the ground where soil covers it. There is no light—only darkness and weight. Yet it is in that hidden place that the seed breaks open, develops roots, and begins to grow. The growth cannot be seen at first. Only later does everyone see the plant.

The same is true with a pearl. Before there is a pearl, there is an oyster dealing with irritation and grains of sand. What eventually becomes valuable first begins as something uncomfortable.

Paul was honest about his struggles. He said there were conflicts on the outside and fears on the inside. Yet he continued forward because his focus was not on the pressure but on the purpose. The hardships did not stop the call of God on his life; they helped shape him into the man God had called him to be. It is similar to what Joyce Myers says, “do it afraid”.

2 Corinthians 7:6- *"Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus."*

It appears from this verse that Titus was used by God to bring comfort to Paul and his companions. This is a reminder that God often comforts people through other people.

Paul had just described being troubled on every side, with conflicts on the outside and fears within. Yet God did not leave him there. He sent Titus at the right time to encourage and strengthen him.

Many people want to be used by God in great and spectacular ways, but sometimes one of the greatest ministries is simply showing up for someone who is discouraged. Titus may not have parted a sea or raised the dead, but his presence brought comfort to a weary apostle.

Notice that Paul gives God the credit. He does not say Titus comforted us, but rather that God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus. The source of comfort was God, but the vessel He used was a person.

This should encourage us to be sensitive to those around us. You may be the Titus in someone's life. A phone call, a visit, a text message, or simply being present can be the very thing God uses to strengthen a person who is weary and discouraged.

2 Corinthians 7:7-*"and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more."*

The word *consolation* in Greek is *paraklēsis* and means comfort or exhortation.

Titus reported three things: their desire, mourning, and zeal for Paul. Zeal is good, but it must be according to knowledge (Galatians 4:18; Romans 10:2). The Jews had zeal, but it was rooted in the Law (Acts 21:20). Once Paul heard this report, it caused him to rejoice.

Paul's motive for ministry was not whether people applauded him or not, but it certainly brought him joy to hear this report. Although the motive for ministry is not to be liked or disliked by people, it does help to know that people are being fed and influenced by Christ in us.

Here's a great question: what if we are not in the fivefold ministry? It is important to know that no matter what our sphere of influence is, we may not have a platform or a pulpit, but we do have a purpose.

2 Corinthians 7:8-*"For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same epistle made you sorry, though only for a while."*

Paul is saying that he is not sorry for the first letter because of what it produced. It led to repentance and he states this in the next verse.

It is important to speak the truth (Ephesians 4:15). It must be done in love, but many people believe that because you love someone, you should shy away from the truth.

The letter Paul previously wrote was more corrective in nature and made those in Corinth sorrowful, but only for a little while.

2 Corinthians 7:9- *"Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing."*

Paul was not rejoicing because the Corinthians experienced sorrow. Rather, he rejoiced because their sorrow produced repentance. Godly sorrow does not leave a person in guilt or condemnation; it leads to a change of heart and a change of direction.

2 Corinthians 7:10- *"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."*

There are two types of sorrow: godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. Paul makes a clear distinction between the two. Godly sorrow will always lead us to a place of change and repentance. It causes us to turn from our old ways and move in a different direction. The sorrow of this world, however, leaves us stuck in grief and hopelessness without moving forward.

When we are truly sorrowful over sin, which is simply missing the mark, we appropriate the forgiveness that has already been paid for us through Christ. As we receive that forgiveness, it produces change in our lives. Godly sorrow does not leave us condemned; it leads us to repentance and restoration.

Paul states that godly sorrow leads to salvation. This is how a person comes to the Lord. We realize that our own righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) and that we can never produce a right relationship with God through our own efforts. You cannot cry out to be saved until you first recognize that you are lost. The moment we come to that realization, it leads us to Jesus.

Worldly sorrow, on the other hand, produces death because it focuses on self without offering a solution. Godly sorrow points us to Christ, while worldly sorrow leaves us looking at ourselves.

2 Corinthians 7:11- *"For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."*

Notice that this is all the fruit that godly sorrow produced. Paul's first letter in 1 Corinthians included correction regarding the man caught in incest. It was necessary that he write that letter, and although it made them sorrowful for a little while, the fruit and end result were worth it.

Godly sorrow always produces something healthy and redemptive. Even though the initial response may involve discomfort or grief, the outcome leads to repentance, restoration, and lasting change. A mentor of mine once told me anytime there is correction, it must have a motive or *carection*.

2 Corinthians 7:12- *"Therefore, although I wrote to you, I did not do it for the sake of him who had done the wrong, nor for the sake of him who suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear to you."*

Paul said his focus in writing the letter was for those in Corinth. His care was directed toward the church, and his heart was to see them repent and be restored.

The one who had done wrong was the man who committed incest in 1 Corinthians 5.

2 Corinthians 7:13- *"Therefore we have been comforted in your comfort. And we rejoiced exceedingly more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all."*

Titus had been encouraged by those in Corinth once they received the benefit of Paul's rebuke and responded to it.

Titus was mentioned by Paul in Galatians and was a Greek who was not circumcised but was of the faith.

God can send people to comfort and refresh us. This is why it is important not to do life alone. I do not believe your circle will always be big; however, there should be people we surround ourselves with who are like-minded. I have learned that the people I am closest to are not necessarily people I speak to every day or even every month. But when things occur or there is time to connect, they are there to refresh, edify, and encourage.

2 Corinthians 7:14- *"For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, so our boasting to Titus was found true."*

Paul spoke well of the Corinthians. This is interesting, as this was one of Paul's most dysfunctional churches, but I believe Paul carried the heart of the Father toward them.

Although he saw their shortcomings and issues, it never stopped God from extending His love toward us (Romans 5:8). "For whom the Lord loves He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6).

Paul's correction came from a heart that desired their change and growth, not to tear them down. This is similar to the woman at the well that Jesus ministered to in John 4. He never exposed her sin to embarrass her, rather he was revealing something to produce freedom in her life.

2 Corinthians 7:15- *"And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him."*

Titus was received by those in Corinth. The "fear" mentioned here refers to reverence and respect. This continues the theme of restoration seen throughout First Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 7:16- *"I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you."*

Paul uses the word *rejoice* multiple times in this portion of Scripture. As he continues in this letter, it is striking that his perspective produces joy even though his natural circumstances gave him little reason to rejoice. We can see some of what Paul endured later in 2 Corinthians 11.

What are your current circumstances? Maybe a job loss, someone else received the promotion, caring for an elderly parent, or betrayal has set in. These are all situations that could attempt to interfere with our joy. Yet as we continue, we see that these are nothing more than temporary incidents that will pass (2 Corinthians 4:18), and we can still experience joy in the midst of challenges.