

THE JOYS OF THE MINISTRY
2 Corinthians 7:1-16

We discussed paradoxes in the lesson in Chapter 6:8-10.

To the world of unbelievers, the joy of the believer, even in hardship, is a mystery.

dishonor	glory;
bad report	good report;
imposter	genuine;
unknown	known;
dying	we live on;
beaten	not killed;
sorrowful	always rejoicing;
poor	making many rich;
having nothing	possessing everything.

Galatians 5:22-23 lists the “fruit of the Spirit.”

Gal 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Someone suggested that the attributes listed after love should be parenthetical, i.e. a definition of Christian love.

Peter and Paul and the others were not gloomy no matter what trials they endured.

Paul had a volatile relationship with the church at Corinth that was sometimes painful and sometimes joyful. Paul’s first letter was sent for their correction and instruction in many things. Some of the people were offended by Paul. But because they were believers they soon realized that he was telling them the truth and they responded in repentance and obedience.

Chapter 7 is a break over from pain to joy.

Paul repeatedly points out his joy: 4; 7; 9; 13b; 16.

1. The Heart of an Apostle

Verse 1 of Chapter 7 is the end of the last paragraph in Chapter 6, which is a warning for believers not to have fellowship with unbelievers.

a. Making the Heart Perfect 2 Corinthians 7:1-3

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

² Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. ³ I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.

Verse 1 also joins chapters 6 & 7. The call for purity and perfection goes with not being “unequally yoked with unbelievers” and the enlarging of our hearts to make room for each other. We should make room for other believers in our hearts in order to avoid destructive relationships.

The “heart” includes our spiritual, emotional, intellectual, rational, and volitional thinking; i.e. our entire being.

In verse 3 Paul says that he is an example of how to relate to others.

b. Having Confidence and Joy 2 Corinthians 7:4

I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.

Paul makes four statements that demonstrate positive emotions.

Even though Paul had suffered pain from the actions of the Corinthians he was still overflowing with joy at what God was doing for them.

c. Titus brings Comfort

2 Corinthians 7:5-7

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn— fighting without and fear within. ⁶ But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷ and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more.

Back in 2:13 Paul wrote how anxious he was when he went to Troas to find Titus and he was not there. This affected Paul to the point that he could not take advantage of an “open door” at Troas. Instead he headed to Macedonia hoping to find Titus there. Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to learn of their response to his letter.

When Paul arrived in Macedonia his discomfort continued [5]. In addition to his concern about Titus there were other afflictions in the church in Macedonia [8:2].

But relief came to Paul when Titus came [6] and he was no longer downcast. The news from Corinth was encouraging. The response of the Corinthians had comforted Titus and they wanted to see Paul. They were truly sorry that their resistance to Paul had caused him grief and brought some of them to tears. The result was that their concern for Paul had encouraged him and gave him more joy.

2. A Good Kind of Grief

a. Rebuke of a Spiritual Leader

2 Corinthians 7:8-9

⁸ For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹ As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

Paul’s first letter dealt with serious spiritual problems at Corinth. He knew that the letter would cause them grief. As a spiritual leader it was necessary for Paul to confront them and rebuke them but it gave him no pleasure to do so. When Titus came with the report that, yes, the letter had grieved them, but only for a time. The result was what was hoped for: the apostolic rebuke had caused the Corinthians to repent and the end result was positive; no one was harmed.

b. Grief that is Necessary

1 Corinthians 5:1-2

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. ²And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

One of the worst problems in Corinth was the matter of a man having a sexual relationship with his father's wife. Instead of grieving over this sin the church was proud and arrogant.

c. Godly Sorrow and Worldly Sorrow

2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

The Bible makes a difference between godly sorrow {being sorry for what was done} and worldly sorrow {being sorry for being caught}.

Godly sorrow brings repentance, meaning a change, a reversal from the sinful way. Godly sorrow produces deliverance from the sinful practice and freedom from regrets.

Worldly sorrow results in alienation from God which is the opposite of repentance in which one is turned toward God.

d. Godly Sorrow

2 Corinthians 7:11

¹¹For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

Paul had rebuked the Corinthians for their failure to grieve over the man who had his father's wife. He listed unconcern for their brother, failure to act decisively to remove the sin from their fellowship, boasting and arrogance.

Here in 2 Corinthians Paul commends them, using seven Greek words that describe true repentance.

Earnestness: haste and diligence;
Eagerness to clear yourselves;
Indignation: to be pained and vexed;
Fear: alarm, a sense of awe;
Longing: wishing to be reunited;
Zeal: concern;
Readiness to be proved innocent in the matter.

All of these characterize “godly sorrow,” which leads to change.
Godly sorrow cannot include indifference.

e. Mission Accomplished

2 Corinthians 7:12-16

¹² So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. ¹³ Therefore we are comforted.

And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. ¹⁴ For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true. ¹⁵ And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. ¹⁶ I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you.

Even though they had many flaws Paul had boasted to Titus about their faith. He had assured Titus, before sending him to Corinth, that the Christians would respond as they did. Sometimes he may have doubted if his confidence was warranted. Now all doubt has been removed; the Corinthians were clear in the matter [11].

Then Paul writes that the primary purpose of his letter was not so much the discipline of the brother, or even the rescue of the one who suffered the wrong. Paul says he wrote to force the issue, believing that the Corinthians would show themselves to be genuine believers.

Titus brought Paul the great report that the church in Corinth was alive and well just as Paul had boasted it was [14]. A difficult situation had been resolved and Titus was spiritually refreshed [13].

This is great encouragement to see how serious issues can be confronted and correction results in godly sorrow and repentance. The outcome is great joy.

God does great things in the lives of those whose hearts are open.