



## 2 Corinthians 7:2-8:7

Taught at our Sunday evening service, 13th March 2022 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

**Reading:** TBD

**Good evening. Let's pray.**

### Introduction

We're studying our way through Second Corinthians - Paul's follow up letter to the church in Corinth - and last week we covered all of chapter six where Paul spoke of this incredible promise of closeness we can have to God the Father. And tonight we'll recap verse 1 of chapter 7 that we concluded with, and then get as far as verse 7 of chapter 8.

### Overview of 2 Corinthians

That means we're at the end of this first section of the book that mostly speaks about Christian living, or in other words; our response having been saved by Jesus. And we'll start chapter eight, where we'll venture into the portion of this letter focussed on Christian giving. The week after next we'll look at the final chapters which can be summarised as speaking on Christian guarding.

- Chapters 1 to 7 - Christian living
- Chapters 8 to 9 - Christian giving
- Chapters 10 to 13 - Christian guarding

## Overview of chapter seven

For a quick picture of where we're headed, there's a few points covered in chapter seven that can be summarised as:

- Cleansing (v1)
- Repentance (v2-12)
- Joy (v13-16)

## Overview of chapter eight

Then as we look at the first 7 verses of chapter 8, we'll see they speak about:

- Giving (v1-7)

## Chapter seven

So let's dig in. Here in chapter 7, we previously looked at verse 1 which says:

### **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?

Well, we reAd "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." back in 6:16. And "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." in 6:18.

However, these verses were preceded by "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." and "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."

That is, God wants to be a Father to us - and indeed we are His children and He IS our Father... nothing changes that. But for Him to be able to treat us as a Father, to pour out all His blessings on us, and have that closeness of relationship, we must live within His will.

And so that's why Paul writes "Therefore, having these promises"... "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit". Whether that is in our workplace, or our relationships. Whether it be in our home, or in our church. Whether it be stopping our gossip, lying, slander or pride. Or stopping our drunkenness, lust, or gluttony.

How do we do that? By reading God's Word, by spending time in prayer, by fellowshiping with others that love Him, and by never forgetting the price that He paid for us.

And now he continues...

#### **2 Corinthians 7:2**

Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one.

That is three reasons for this church to listen to Paul - he says; We have wronged no man in judgment. We have corrupted no man in doctrine. We have defrauded no man of property.

Contrasted to those who would fleece, rather than feed the flock, Paul says - please listen to what we say, for we're saying it for your benefit, not ours. Furthermore he says...

#### **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.

In other words, we love you! And we're not trying to beat you up, but to show our love.

If we're honest, I think we all find it hard to correct. Most of us don't like confrontation of any kind. But consider what is necessary as parents - you know that if you don't correct your child, they'll not turn out well! However, correcting them, as hard as that can be in the moment, will bring joy for both you and them in times to come.

And that's how Paul is addressing this church. He's not aiming for their destruction, but rather their instruction. That they would know how to behave themselves as Christians. And like a good parent he's not only willing to correct them, but to commend them to others. He writes...

#### **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.

Yes, Paul had needed to deal firmly with sin in the church, and also with their unwillingness to deal with it. But the knowledge that they had now dealt with it was a comfort to him. He continues...

#### **2 Corinthians 7:5-7**

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. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, 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.

So here we see the difficulty of ministry laid bare. Paul had not had an easy time of things. And I suggest that we should never underestimate the difficulties of ministry, but rather we should love, support, encourage and pray for those serving in ministry, whatever that ministry is, so long as it is a good and Godly one.

But also here we see that God brought comfort in 3 ways;

**First**, through Himself. Through the hope we have in Christ. The sure hope of eternity with Him. That is, the hope of what is ahead, helps us endure whatever we may be going through now.

Remember what we reAd in chapter 1...

#### **2 Corinthians 1:3-4**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

**Second**, God brought comfort through Titus. It seems not only through the news that he brought, nor the joy he had himself because of that news, but through Titus himself. So, never underestimate how your presence can encourage others. Whether it's being at a prayer meeting, or Sunday service. Whether it be as simple as a quick coffee in the midst of a busy week, or even a phone call to see how someone is doing.

But also, realise God will use anyone to encourage you - that's why Christian fellowship is so important. Titus was a young man whom Paul was nurturing - that's important to note. That Paul was encouraged by him. It didn't take a celebrity Christian speaker to encourage Paul - but rather someone younger in the faith... I have a feeling that as a church family we do a poor job asking our young people what they learned in Sunday School that day. Or what they've been talking about at Livewires or Youth Club. Or what's been going on at their Christian Union at University, or how their Christian walk is going as they take their first steps into the world of work. No doubt, if we did do that often, we would be encouraged!

And then **third**, God brought comfort through the news Titus shared - that the church in Corinth had listened to that which Paul had instructed them in his first letter. That they had obeyed God. And of their zeal for Paul. So, never underestimate how the news of your walk with the Lord can encourage others. You know, it's so wonderful when a friend of a friend says that they're doing great - that they're really on fire for the Lord, serving them, serving others. If you walk closely with the Lord, then you will be an encouragement!

And in verse 7 we see Paul rejoices - why? Because of the evident repentance in the lives of these Christians in Corinth. We read...

#### **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.

This captures the **emotions** of pastoral ministry, in that it can be quite a concern or worry how any person or group of people will react to what you teach, what you say, how you correct, and how you disciple others. But the reality is that you will never do any harm teaching people the Bible - in fact you might straighten a few people out along the way!

And here, you can see the conflict in Paul - how he had probably felt wretched inside after sending his first letter, much like we might feel all knotted after clicking send on a difficult message or email, or putting a letter in the post-box. But he's glad that he did so, for we read...

### **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.

And so, this captures the ***purpose*** of pastoral ministry. That there might be change. That we might make disciples. Not of ourselves, but of Jesus. And we must be faithful in doing that. We must not be scared of upsetting people. However, neither should we be set on someone's destruction - that as Paul says here, that no-one should suffer loss from us.

### **2 Corinthians 7:10**

For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

That is, while the teaching, correcting and discipling must of course be faithful, the response is down to the individual. Specifically, down to the individual's heart.

And what we see is that there are two types of sorrow - you can be sorry because of the circumstances your choices led to, or sorry because of the choices that resulted in your circumstances. There is a big difference. And we see this contrast between Judas and Peter.

Both had sat under Jesus' perfect ministry for 3 years. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him. But their responses could not have been more different. We read in Matthew 27:

### **Matthew 27:3-5**

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

So, Judas was racked with guilt. He felt terrible because of the mess he was in - how it affected him. But Peter, on the other hand, wept bitterly because of what he had done - how it affected Jesus:

### **Luke 22:59-62**

Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed, saying, "Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are saying!" Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

What a contrast this is - literally one man's sorrow led to death, and the other to repentance and salvation. How had the Corinthian's responded? Paul writes...

### **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.

This is the fruit of repentance. This is change. They had diligence to know what the Bible says. They had this *clearing* - the greek indicates an apologetic attitude. They had *indignation* - I assume, since this is put as a positive, that they were upset at themselves for how they'd unfairly treated their Saviour. They had fear of God, passionate desire for the things of God, enthusiasm for Him, and vindication - this speaks of clearing someone of blame of suspicion... in other words, they understood God's mercy and grace!

So what about you? Are you sorry because of the mess your actions have left you in? Or are you sorry because your actions have gone against God and His Word? Your response will be telling, for real repentance doesn't say "I'll get around to changing sometime". No. Repentance deals with sin now. Jon Courson comments:

Repentance means you don't return for your coat. Repentance means you rip her name out of your address book, brother. It means you go to the cupboard and throw away that which you were keeping as a little something to help your next celebration on a special occasion. It means you turn your back on the magazines or movies, people or activities you know compromise your walk.

**Jon Courson**

And it was because of this type of evidential change in the lives of the Corinthian believers, that both Titus and Paul had joy! Because they had not procrastinated and played with or tolerated sin, but rather they had dealt with it.

So, note what Paul says next - for Paul wasn't merely interested in the response of the individual that he was speaking of in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 - no, it was the response of them all. He writes:

### **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.

That is, his first letter was with a bigger view than that individual in that specific situation - it was for the good of all that would hear.

### **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 has been refreshed by you all.

What a change! From failing to deal with sin, to having dealt with it. And this has not only been healthy for their walk with the Lord, but an encouragement to Paul though the news Titus brought - news that this church was walking closely with the Lord. What better news to share?!

### **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, even so our boasting to Titus was found true.

That is, in the midst of the messed-up immoral culture of Corinth, there are genuine believers who love God. And that left an impression on young Titus...

### **2 Corinthians 7:15-16**

And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him. Therefore I rejoice that I have confidence in you in everything.

Let's be honest for a moment - sin might be a terrible choice, but sin is appealing - that's why we want to do it! But when you see someone willing to walk away from it, you too can have confidence that they want to please the Lord. And here, Paul is confident they want to please the Lord in everything - including giving, to which he now turns his attention.

## **Chapter eight**

Moving straight into chapter 8 we read...

### **2 Corinthians 8:1-2**

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.

So Paul now calls to their attention the hearts and actions of the churches north of Corinth as an example, that not out of abundance, but out of poverty, they gave to the work of the Lord - to those who were in need. In fact the only things they seemed to be in good supply of was afflictions & joy!

What could possibly motivate people in poverty to give? They simply saw the need. Their eyes were open to it. Sadly, it's a rare thing that a millionaire gives as much as they could. Some speak of bequests once they die - but while they are here, they still keep much to the side for themselves. But let us not excuse ourselves, for do any of us give as much as we could, in any scenario? Verse 3:

### **2 Corinthians 8:3-4**

For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

This is challenging to us, right? For we like to give within comfortable boundaries. But what if we gave of our time, our energy and our finances, that which made us uncomfortable. What if we gave so much time it meant less time with our parents, our children, or our friends. What if we gave so much of our energies that serving the Lord **was** the thing we did. And what if we gave so much of our finances that it meant we couldn't afford some of the luxuries we wanted, or meant we lived in a smaller house. We should really ask ourselves, how much is too much to give, when Christ gave His all for us?



And we should take note of the widow that Jesus spoke of in Luke 21:

**Luke 21:1-4**

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

What an example!

Look, we're going to be considering this throughout our entire study next Sunday evening as we conclude chapter 8 and study all of chapter 9 - and I don't want you to get the impression that God is bankrupt and needs our help. He isn't. And He doesn't.

But giving to the Lord is one of the most wonderful things we can do. Both in regard to our relationship to Him, but also in our love toward others in need. And Paul is setting out the Macedonian churches as an example to follow. And he says of their giving;

**2 Corinthians 8:5**

And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

This is everything. That we would not consider ourselves our own, and that we would be focussed only on giving to the Lord because we love Him, and not because we want to impress others. In fact this is key, for if you only give to please or impress men, then you'll only ever give that which is to your advantage. But the Macedonians gave themselves. Not only their money. But their whole selves. Finnis Dake comments:

This is the secret of all giving of material things. When one gives himself to the Lord, he is willing to do all other things the gospel teaches.

**Finnis Dake**

In other words, when you wake up and ask the Lord - "what do you want from me today?" and are willing to obey whatever you hear, then you're in the right place. For you see, God isn't only worthy of our money - but of our everything. Our time, our desires, our decisions, our careers, our relationships, our children. For all things are from Him in the first place!

Paul continues:

**2 Corinthians 8:6**

So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.

So Paul asked Titus to encourage the Corinthians to give, describing this compassion on the poor, as a grace. And that's because it was not to be done because someone deserved it, but done through providing that which God has already given, to others. So in that regard, all was done at Christ's expense anyway. And therefore this giving wasn't to be mediocre. We read...



## 2 Corinthians 8:7

But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also.

That is, be willing to give to others that which Christ has given you... which is everything!

There is much for us to consider, and as we look further at this topic next week, I'm sure we'll be challenged further. But just before I close, I want to share something J Vernon McGee wrote in his commentary:

The real test of any person lies in what he gives. Someone has said there are three books that are essential for a worship service: the first book is the Bible, the second is the hymn book, and the third is the pocketbook. Giving is a part of our worship to God. If we do not have the grace of giving, we should pray to God and ask Him to give us a generous, sharing spirit.

**J Vernon McGee**

## Summary

Looking back at our study this evening, there are four key points we've seen:

- Cleansing (7:1)
- Repentance (7:2-12)
- Joy (7:13-16)
- Giving (8:1-7)

## Application questions

As we go into the week ahead, how do we apply what we've learnt?

- Are we putting any effort into cleansing ourselves?
- Are we merely sorry for our circumstances, or that we've disobeyed God?
- Would it encourage others to hear how we're doing in our walk with the Lord?
- Are we willing to give that which costs us something?

**Let's pray.**