

2 CORINTHIANS 7 – COMFORTED BY THE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS’ REPENTANCE

A. Cleansing and perfecting.

1. (1a) In light of God’s promises.

Therefore, having these promises.

a. **Therefore, having these promises:** This is Paul’s natural conclusion to 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. In that passage, Paul wrote about the need to separate from worldly influences so that we can live a close life with God.

b. **These promises:** The commandment to *come out from among them and be separate* (2 Corinthians 6:17) is coupled with a promise: *I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters* (2 Corinthians 6:18). If we separate ourselves from worldly thinking and acting, we are promised a closer relationship with God.

2. (1b) Two things to do in light of God’s promises.

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Bible
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Quick
Navigation





2 Corinthians

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

a. **Cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.** THIS IS WHAT WE *take away*. There is a cleansing that God alone does in our lives, but there is also a cleansing that God wants to do in cooperation with us. Here, Paul writes about a cleansing that isn't just something God does for us as we sit passively; this is a self-cleansing for intimacy with God that goes beyond a general cleansing for sin.

i. There is a main aspect of cleansing that comes to us as we trust in Jesus and His work on our behalf. This work of cleansing is really God's work in us and not our work. This is the sense of 1 John 1:9: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

ii. But there is another aspect of cleansing that God looks for us to do with the participation of our own will and effort; not that it is our work apart from God, but it is a work that awaits our will and effort: **let us cleanse ourselves**. This aspect of cleansing is mostly connected with intimacy with God and usefulness for service.

iii. "How can those expect God to purify their hearts who are continually indulging their *eyes, ears, and hands* in what is forbidden, and in what tends to increase and bring into action all the evil propensities of the soul?" (Clarke)

b. **From all filthiness of the flesh and spirit:** We often think of purity before the Lord only in terms of cleansing from **all filthiness of the flesh**, but there is also a **filthiness of the... spirit** to cleanse ourselves



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harlots and tax collectors) found it easy to come to Jesus. But those stained by the **filthiness... of the spirit** (such as the scribes and Pharisees) found it very hard to come to Jesus.

ii. Our pride, our legalism, our self-focus, our self-righteousness, our bitterness, and our hatred can all be far worse to deal with than the more obvious sins of the flesh. “There is a defilement of the spirit which is independent of the defilement of the flesh. The spirit can be defiled in many ways. I sometimes think that the sins of the spirit are more deadly than the sins of the flesh.” (Morgan)

iii. “I wish we were more concerned about cleansing ourselves from the filthiness of the spirit. I am inclined to think that some men heedlessly pollute their spirits; I mean that they do it willfully.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Perfecting holiness in the fear of God**: This is something to *add*. Paul isn’t writing about some state of sinless perfection. **Perfecting** has the idea of “complete” and “whole.” Instead of a state of sinless perfection, Paul writes about a complete, “whole,” holiness.

i. It isn’t enough to only **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness**. The Christian life is not only getting rid of evil but continually doing and becoming good.

d. **Cleanse ourselves**: Note that Paul includes himself among the Corinthian Christians in the category of those who need to be cleansed. If Paul includes

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more conscious we shall be of our imperfections.

The more light we get, the more we discover our own darkness. That which is scarcely accounted sin by some men, will be a grievous defilement to a tender conscience. It is not that we are greater sinners as we grow older, but that we have a finer sensibility of sin, and see that to be sin which we winked at in the days of our ignorance.”

(Spurgeon)

ii. “I remember hearing a man say that he had lived for six years without having sinned in either thought, or word, or deed. I apprehended that he committed a sin then, if he had never done so before, in uttering such a proud, boastful speech.”

(Spurgeon)

iii. But we must take care that we **cleanse ourselves** and not concern ourselves with *cleansing others*. Most of the time we are more concerned with the holiness of others than our own holiness! “It were more in accordance with our tastes to cleanse other people, and attempt a moral reformation among our neighbors. Oh! it is easy to find out other men’s faults, and to bring the whole force of our mind to inveigh against them.” (Spurgeon)

B. Personal words about Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians.

1. (2-3) Paul’s appeal: **Open your hearts to us.**

Open *your hearts* to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one. I do not say *this* to condemn; for I have said before that



wrote: *we have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open... you also be open.* Then, in [2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1](#), he dealt with the worldliness that kept the Corinthians from having the kind of open relationship they should have with Paul. Now, in writing **open your hearts to us**, Paul returns to idea he left off with in [2 Corinthians 6:11-13](#).

i. Paul was completely honest with the Corinthian Christians. Now he tells them they must be honest also and be **open** to seeing the truth about Paul and his ministry.

ii. The Corinthian Christians believed many bad things about Paul – that God wasn't using him, that he didn't have the kind of image, authority, or power an apostle should have – but their problem was not an information problem. Their problem was with their **hearts**. Their hearts had been open to the world but not to Paul. In the “unequally yoked” passage, Paul told them to close their hearts to the world. Now it is time to open their hearts to him.

b. **We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have defrauded no one.** Paul reminds the Corinthians of what they already know: Despite what some troublemakers said about Paul, they had no good reason to criticize him.

i. When Paul claims he **defrauded no one**, remember that he was organizing a collection for poor Christians in Judea and had responsibility over a significant amount of money ([1 Corinthians 16:1-4](#)).



that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.

i. Paul *confronted* the Corinthian Christians, but he did not want to **condemn** them. It is possible to confront without condemning, though those who are being confronted rarely think so.

2. (4-7) Paul is encouraged by good news from the Corinthian Christians.

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. 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.

a. **Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf:** Yes, Paul has been bold in his criticism to the Corinthians, but he was also bold in his **boasting** about them.

b. **I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation... when he told us of your earnest desire, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more:** Despite the many trials Paul faced (from both within and without), he found joy, and part of that joy was good news from the Corinthian Christians.



us to endure tribulation with a blank, stoic face – the “stiff upper lip” – but God wants more from us than that. He wants us to super-abound in joy even **in all our tribulation**.

ii. God brought comfort to Paul by hearing about the work God did among the Corinthian Christians. “No circumstances of personal affliction can dim the gladness of seeing souls grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus.” (Morgan)

iii. When Paul speaks of **the coming of Titus**, he actually picks up where he left off in [2 Corinthians 2:13](#). In a sense, [2 Corinthians 2:14](#) to 7:4 is one long digression – led by God of course and containing some of the richest treasure of the New Testament.

c. **Our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side**: Paul had a hard time in Macedonia, but Titus came to Paul when he was in Macedonia and he brought a good report of how the Corinthian Christians were turning back to Jesus and to Paul.

i. In spite of all his frustrations with the Corinthians and in the midst of all his afflictions in ministry, Paul had real confidence and hope because Titus brought him a good report of how things were going in Corinth.

ii. In [2 Corinthians 1:3](#), Paul declared that God is the **God of all comfort**. Here, Paul experienced that comfort through the coming of Titus and the news from Corinth. Paul experienced the comfort of God through human instruments. Often when