

2 Corinthians Ch7v2-16 - Joy Filled Service

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[0 : 00] Turn in your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 7, verses 2-16, which is on page 1163 of the Church Bibles.

! So that's 2 Corinthians chapter 7, and starting in verse 2. Make room for us in your hearts. We have wronged no one. We have corrupted no one. We have exploited no one.

I do not say this to condemn you. I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you. I have spoken to you with great frankness. I take great pride in you. I am greatly encouraged in all our troubles. My joy knows no bounds.

For when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn, conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort that you had given him.

He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever. Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it, I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while.

[1 : 44] Yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended, and so were not harmed in any way by us.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret. But worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you.

What earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.

At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter. So even though I wrote to you, it was neither on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the injured party, but rather that before God you could see for yourselves how devoted to us you are.

By all this we are encouraged. In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted to see how happy Titus was, because his spirit had been refreshed by all of you.

[3 : 01] I had boasted to him about you, and you have not embarrassed me. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well.

And his affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient, receiving him with fear and trembling. I am glad I can have complete confidence in you.

Good morning everyone.

I'll try again. Good morning everyone. That's good. Somebody's out there. let's keep our Bibles open at 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and it's quite a long chunk but I hope as we go through it you'll see a connecting theme we're going to break next week from 2 Corinthians and we're going to be looking at Isaiah 42 so if you want to read up on what we're going to be looking at in the next few weeks you can read Isaiah 42 not now of course but let's pray together and ask for the Lord's help Jesus said as the Father has loved me so have I loved you I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete

Father our prayer is simple we come as needy people longing to experience your joy in our life and we pray that by your spirit you would enable us to experience that joy as we love one another and love the Lord Jesus amen well have you got that Christmas feeling that bubbling overflowing joy I don't mean the kind of happy vibe you get with putting up Christmas lights and listening to the music or that surface thrill as you meet with friends for Christmas drinks that's a manufactured circumstantial joy so that when you put all the decorations away and the music stops and it's back to January and back to work well in that moment our joy just evaporates now the joy that we're talking about today is a joy that is deep and foundational even when life can be hard and broken a

joy that can say look back at chapter 6 verse 10 chapter 6 verse 10 a joy that can say sorrowful yet always rejoicing now we don't usually put those two together sorrow and joy so how can we experience that kind of joy joy well up to now in our studies of second Corinthians we've seen that Christian life is hard Christian ministry Christian service is difficult serving Christ will involve weakness suffering and death which doesn't sound very joyful at all but as we turn to chapter 7 we discover that we can experience joy as we serve Christ think of a honeycomb and breaking open that honeycomb and all that honey just dripping down well as we open up chapter 7 as we open it up it drips with joy look at the text with me look at the end of verse 4 of chapter 7 he says I take great pride in you

[8 : 18] I'm greatly encouraged in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds or look at the end of verse 7 he talks about the deep sorrow the ardent concern for me so that my joy was greater than ever or verse 9 yet how I am happy or joyful down in verse 13 he says in addition to our own encouragement we were especially delighted the same word there is joy to see how joyful Titus was and verse 16 I rejoice or I am glad I can have complete confidence in you can you see how it just oozes with joy because as we serve Christ we experience joy now before we look at this joy through the text together we need to know what joy means so here's a simple definition of Christian joy with the help of John Piper

Christian joy is the experience of a deep happy emotion or feeling worked in us by the Holy Spirit as we serve Christ it's the experience of a deep happy emotion worked in us by the Spirit as we serve Christ so here we have four ways to experience joy this Christmas a joy that you won't hear of anywhere else here's the first one transparent love produces boundless joy look at how this love is expressed verse 2 Paul writing to the church in Corinth he says make room for us in your hearts of course Paul had already opened his heart to the church look back at chapter 6 verse 12 he says we are not withholding our affection from you but you are withholding your affection from us so as a fair exchange and I speak to you as to my children open wide your hearts also there's a deep transparent affection for Christ's people but not only that there's this sacrificial commitment this sacrificial love expressed to the people look at the middle of verse 3 this is chapter 7 verse 3 he said

I have said before that you have such a place in our hearts that we would live or die with you I'm here to serve your good to seek your best in living I am with you in dying I am with you can you see this open heartedness this transparent love for God's people it's saying I'm for you I'm holding nothing back I'm giving my all it's deep affection faithful service sacrificial love it's saying verse 4 I take great pride in you now isn't that the kind of love we all seek the kind of love we long to experience a love where it's opening up hearts a love that gives to the blessing of others well as we as God's people obey God's commands to love one another look at the results of such love transparent love produces boundless joy hope hope look at the end of verse 4

I am greatly encouraged in all our troubles my joy knows no bounds You see, transparent love removes all the obstacles to joy.

It breaks down all the barriers to experiencing joy. When we open wide our hearts to one another as we faithfully serve and sacrificially commit, look at the results.

[13 : 47] They are incalculable. We can say, end of verse 4, my joy knows no bounds. So this Christmas, the call to one another is to not, what am I getting?

But serve one another with transparent love. And as we do, we will experience a boundless happiness that wells up inside each one of us.

Transparent love brings boundless joy. Second, genuine care causes an increased joy.

Now some context will help us here as we look at verse 5. Let's go back to chapter 2 to start off with.

Back to chapter 2 and verse 12. You see, what's going on here is that Paul had sent his companion, his fellow worker Titus, to Corinth with a letter.

[15 : 06] And we're going to talk about that letter in just a minute. And the plan was that after Timothy had brought the letter to Corinth, Titus would then meet Paul back in a place called Troas.

So Corinth is in Greece and Troas was on the coast of Turkey. So there was a bit of travelling to take place to bring the letter all the way to Greece and then meet up again in Turkey.

So let's pick it up, chapter 2, verse 12. So Paul says, When I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, I still had no peace of mind.

Why? What's the matter? Because I did not find my brother Titus there. He was meant to come and join him, but he wasn't there.

So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia. Now this part of the story is picked up again for us in chapter 7, verse 5.

[16:16] Let's read verse 5. So when we came into Macedonia, we had no rest. But we were harassed at every turn. Conflicts on the outside and fears within.

Not only had he opposition to deal with, but there were those fears inside. He had no peace of mind. Where's Titus?

My brother, is he okay? Had something happened to him? He couldn't pick up the phone and ring him and see where he is or what's going on? And what about the church?

Is the church alright? Have they fallen apart? Have they stopped meeting together? His fearful concern led him to being, verse 6, downcast.

Literally, he was depressed. He was worried sick for his brother Titus and the church. He didn't know how they were.

[17:22] Now isn't that how we can often feel for Christ's people? Don't you fear for how your brother and sister are doing?

How is their faith? Why are they absent? How are they going to get through this trial? But yet God was at work through it all.

Two things. First, there was God's comfort. Verse 6. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

Oh, Titus, you're here. You could imagine that embrace as they hugged and wept. Titus, my friend, my companion, all is well.

He's okay. And the church? Oh, they're okay too. Look at the rest of verse 7. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow and your ardent concern for me.

[18:30] His spirits were lifted, no longer down, but now happy. You see, as we serve our brothers and sisters, as we have concern, look at the results.

Genuine concern causes increased joy. Isn't that what we see at the end of verse 7? That my joy was greater than ever.

Genuine concern can bring fears and worries. Concern for our brothers and sisters can make us lie awake at night.

But as God does his work through these trials, and as we find out how each other are doing, it leads to an increased joy.

As we invest in each other, as we carry the concerns of one another, as we are burdened for each other, and at times we feel downcast.

[19:42] Yet God is at work so we can also say, my joy is greater than ever. So this Christmas, let's encourage one another to continue on in the genuine care.

Because as we do, we will experience an increased happiness that wells up with inside of us and overflows.

So genuine care brings about an increased joy. Third, honest conversations foster spontaneous joy. Look at verse 8. For if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it.

This was the letter that Titus had brought. And well, gosh, it wasn't the easiest of letters to read. Look back at chapter 2 again with me.

[21:00] We get an insight into the difficulty in writing this letter and what was behind it. chapter 2, verse 3.

Paul says, I wrote as I did so that when I came I wouldn't be distressed by those who should have made me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you that you would all share my joy.

For I wrote to you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.

Go back to chapter 7. Paul was having to write a difficult letter to address some undealt-with sin in the life of the church.

You see, sin is never private and if it's not dealt with well, rather than foster spontaneous joy it will fester in the lives of the church and it will kill and destroy.

[22:22] So Paul had to have these honest conversations with the church. a conversation by way of a letter. Verse 8.

So even if I caused you sorrow by my letter I do not regret it. Though I did regret it because I see that my letter hurt you but only for a little while.

He's, he's, he's, you know, I wanted you to hear this but my heart aches because it's going to cause you some difficulty. Verse 9.

Yet now I am happy. Now I am joyful. What caused his joy in the midst of such sorrow in such a messy situation having to write about sin that all of he can, all of a sudden he can say, whoa, now I'm happy.

Well, three things we'll see lead to his joy. First, sin has been confronted. None of us like to confront sin.

[23 : 36] We don't want to lose each other's friendship or come across a superior. But you know what? If we love the church, if we love our brothers and sisters, we will do the hard things.

Just like Paul, we will have honest conversations and confront sin. So first, sin is confronted.

Second, repentance is practiced. Look at verse 10. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.

Now there's a huge difference between regretting our sin and repenting of our sin. regretting our sin means, well, you're sorrowful because your sin has been revealed.

You're not really sorry to God. I only feel sorry for myself. that's, at the end of verse 10, is worldly sorrow and it leads to death.

[24 : 55] You see, regret does not bring joy. Rather, it will destroy you. So, we don't want to regret our sin.

Rather, we want to repent of our sin. To have godly sorrow. That is, to grieve over our sin and see how it hurts others and how it is an offense to God.

Where we admit our sin, we don't excuse it, we own it and take responsibility and we confess it all to our Father God and we receive forgiveness and we seek change and transformation in our life. that's, verse 10, godly sorrow and it leads to salvation and no regrets. Emptying the tank before God will be a joy for you.

That's what we are to practice amongst each other. we confront our sin, repentance is practiced and then we see that change is seen.

[26 : 15] Look at verse 11. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you. It's taken effect in your life.

What earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.

They wanted to get right with God and with their brothers and sisters and to put everything right.

You see, confronting sin and practicing repentance leads to a transformed life.

a life that becomes more like Christ. So of course, Paul was rejoicing. You see, honest conversations with brothers and sisters fosters spontaneous joy.

Isn't that what we see in verse 9? As he had sorrow over the letter he wrote, verse 9, yet now I am happy.

[27 : 26] I'm happy because you have come to repentance. And so as the Spirit of God convicts us as we openly confess to one another, as we lead each other back to the Lord Jesus, there is joy in that journey.

We can also say, verse 9, now I am joyful. So this Christmas, don't avoid the elephant in the room. Let's have those honest conversations. And as we do, we will experience that spontaneous happiness that wells up within us.

So, honest conversations leads to spontaneous joy. Fourth, nurturing relationships promotes a confident joy.

You see, there's a wonderful, beautiful relationship in these verses, indeed throughout the whole letter, between the church in Corinth, Titus, who's bringing the letter, and Paul.

[28 : 49] A partnership where they work and invest in each other's lives. There's the encouragement of the church to Titus, verse 13.

In addition to our own encouragement, we were especially delighted, we were joyful to see how joyful Titus was. because by, because his spirit has been refreshed by all of you.

The church loved Titus. And Titus in turn loved the church. Verse 15. His affection for you is all the greater when he remembers that you were all obedient.

This mutual sharing of love between each other. but this love has all been nurtured and encouraged by Paul.

Look how he speaks to the church and to Titus about each other. Look at verse 14. I had boasted to Titus about you, that's the church, and you have not embarrassed me.

[30 : 04] Titus, the church in Corinth, yeah, they've got their flaws, yes, they're messy people, but they love the Lord.

And deep down they care and they will care for you. It's going to be okay, Titus. And look what he says to the church about Titus.

Verse, at the end of verse 14. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting about you to Titus has proved to be true as well.

The church in Corinth he's telling them, Titus is a good guy, he genuinely cares for you, he has deep affection for you. This mutual love, one for the other.

And Paul nurturing that love as he speaks well of each other. And look at the results of it all, verse 16. Nurturing relationships promotes confident joy.

[31 : 13] I am joyful that I can have complete confidence in you. There's this beautiful joy that comes as we nurture our relationships.

relationships. Yes, it takes effort. Yes, it can be hard work. Yes, it can be messy. But oh, isn't it worth it all?

To nurture the relationships that we have with each other builds for our future. It puts us on a good foundation. So this Christmas, treasure those relationships.

Nurture them. Speak well to one another. And as we do, we will experience a confident happiness that wells up within us and overflows.

those. So have you got that Christmas feeling? That overflowing joy?

[32 : 25] Well, before we head out the door this morning and think, all right, I've got to serve more, I've got to love more, and then I'm going to get more joy.

No. Let's be careful. We don't serve to receive joy. We experience joy as we serve.

We don't serve to receive joy. It's not something we earn to get. Rather, we experience joy as we serve.

You see, the joy comes in serving Christ, who loved us and served us. us. Just take a sneak peek at chapter 8, verse 9.

We'll come back to this after Christmas. But here's a well-known verse of the wonderful love of God who served us.

[33 : 28] For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Here is a true, transparent love, a saviour who opened wide his heart and held nothing back. In deep affection, Jesus loved us and he took our poverty, all our sin and all our mess, so that we might receive his riches and the forgiveness of all our sin.

In genuine concern, Jesus confronted us. By the Holy Spirit he caused us to turn in repentance.

Jesus saw our need and he reached out to save us and to change us.

and now we live with the comfort of Jesus who by his spirit nurtures that relationship as we listen to him and as we talk to him.

You see, we don't serve Christ to get the joy. We experience the joy as we serve Christ who loved us and who served us.

[34 : 57] So this Christmas, I pray, I pray for us all and can we pray for one another that we will have a truly joy filled Christmas as we look at the beauty of Christ who loved us and served us and as we in response serve one another in love.

Let's pray together. Our Father, will you please help us by your spirit to love one another well with a transparent love, that we would demonstrate genuine concern, that you would help us to have honest conversations, and that Father, you would help us to nurture the relationships we have with one another.

We pray all of this, that it might be to the glory of God, for the good of others, and for the overflow and experience of joy in our life.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you loved us, and you served us, and you continue to love and to serve us now.

Thank you, Jesus. Amen. We're going to respond in song.

[37:14] Thank you, up.