

Introduction

There are many sources of joy in our lives. In the springtime, when I see the trees blooming, I get excited and rejoice in God's magnificent creation. It is simply spectacular. When I see fruit forming on the bushes, vines, and trees that we planted, I am filled with joy. In Psalm 128, God tells us that when we eat of the fruit of our hands, we will be happy and it will be well for you. This is also true in the business world. When you win a major contract or get a new client, there is a natural joy. Proverbs 13 says that a desire fulfilled is a tree of life, so when you see your plans and the work of your hands come to fruition, there is a joy.

(Ps 128:2) "When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you."

(Pr 13:12) "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life."

God tells us in Psalm 127 that children are a gift of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is a reward. When a mother gives birth to a child, there is a tremendous joy in the home. We celebrate life because children are gifts from the Lord. When we train up a child in the way he should go, and they walk in truth, parents are filled with joy. John said, "I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in truth." John was brought a report about the welfare of this church, and it brought him great joy.

(Ps 127:3) "Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward."

(3 Jn 3-4) "For I was very glad when brethren came and testified to your truth, *that is*, how you are walking in truth. {4} I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

(Pr 17:21) "He who sires a fool *does so* to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy."

Karen and I love our children and grandchildren. We pray for them regularly. Children are a gift and a reward, and we have always regarded our children in that light. Today is Father's Day and many of our children are here or are coming here today to honor me as their father. When they honor me or honor Karen on Mother's Day, that brings us great joy.

One of the things that has brought me joy is to hear my children asking spiritual questions. When Chad and I walk, he often asks me about the meaning of a verse or tells me what he has been reading. I know that he is reading the word and meditating on what he has read, and this brings joy to my heart. When my daughter Julie was participating in our zoom meetings, she would ask great questions about the passage, and it brought me joy to see a hunger and thirst for the things of God. We have no greater joy than to hear of our children walking in truth.

Paul and his ministry had been attacked by someone in Corinth. Paul wrote a letter of sorrow to the church addressing the matter. He wrote that letter out of much affliction and anguish of heart. When a church does not walk in truth, the spiritual father of the church grieves over it, and Paul was the spiritual father to the church in Corinth. Proverbs 17:25 says that a foolish son is a grief to his father, and the actions by this person in Corinth certainly caused grief to Paul.

(Pr 17:25) "A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him."

Paul was very concerned about how the Corinthians were doing, and he sent Titus there to check on them. He did not want to go there again in sorrow, but he did want to know how they were doing. He was supposed to rendezvous with Titus in Troas, but Titus did not show up, so according to their predetermined contingency plan, Paul went to Macedonia to meet him. So, even though God had opened a door of ministry in Troas, Paul had no rest in his spirit. He was burdened with his concern for the Corinthians so he went to Macedonia looking for Titus. (See 2 Corinthians 2:12-13.) Paul was not just grieved and concerned; he was depressed. In our text today, Paul is filled with comfort and joy over a report that Titus brought him. He gives three reasons why he is filled with comfort and joy, and the first reason was Titus' report.

Paul's letter had produced in the Corinthians a godly sorrow, leading them to repentance. When Paul heard of their repentance, he was comforted and filled with joy. When children walk in truth, a father rejoices.

Paul's third reason for joy and comfort was in how the Corinthians had refreshed Titus. They received him with fear and trembling, refreshed his spirit, and showed their obedience in all things. This report brought much joy and comfort to Paul.

Paul's Joy and Comfort (2 Cor 7:2-16)

1. Paul's Joy and Comfort in Titus' Report (2 Cor 7:2-6)
2. Paul's Joy and Comfort in Their Repentance (2 Cor 7:7-12)
3. Paul's Joy and Comfort for Their Refreshment of Titus (2 Cor 7:13-16)

(2 Co 7:2-6) "Make room for us *in your hearts*; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. {3} I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. {4} Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction. {5} For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. {6} But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;"

(2 Cor 7:7-12) "and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. {8} For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—*for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— {9} I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. {10} For the sorrow that is according to *the will of* God produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. {11} For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. {12} So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God."

(2 Cor 7:13-16) "For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. {14} For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the* truth.

{15} His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. {16} I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.”

1. Paul's Joy and Comfort in Titus' Report (2 Cor 7:2-6)

Paul had just shared with the Corinthians how his heart had been opened wide towards them, and how he had spoken freely to them. He told them that they had been restrained in their affections, and he exhorted them to open wide to him also.

(2 Co 6:11–13) “Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. {12} You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. {13} Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide *to us* also.”

Now Paul tells them to make room for him and his team in their hearts. Paul said that they had wronged no one, corrupted no one, and took advantage of no one. Paul has been innocent and upright in his conduct towards the Corinthians. Paul has not spoken to condemn them. Paul was the one that brought correction to them, so it is important for the Corinthians to know these things. In Galatians 6:1, Paul said that those who bring correction should be spiritual, which means that they are in right standing with the Lord, and are innocent. He also said that we must bear one another's burdens, and fulfill the law of Christ, which is to love our neighbor. So, Paul declares his innocence, his motive, which was not to condemn them, but to restore them, and that he is bearing their burdens with them. He said that they are in his heart to die together and to live together. Paul is with them all the way. The Corinthians have to know that Paul is for them, with them, and is committed to them.

(2 Co 7:2–3) “Make room for us *in your hearts*; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. {3} I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.”

(Ga 6:1–2) “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; *each one* looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. {2} Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

Paul is also confident in them, and tells them that he has greatly boasted on their behalf. He was confident that they would respond properly to the correction that he gave them. Next, he told them that he is filled with comfort and overflowing with joy in all of their afflictions. His grieving and sorrow over them have now been replaced with comfort and joy.

(2 Cor 7:4-6) “Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction. {5} For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. {6} But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;”

When Paul went to Macedonia to find Titus, he encountered all kinds of afflictions. We do not know what kind of afflictions they were, only that they encountered afflictions. When Paul first preached to the Philippians, he had been arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. He had cast out a demon in a girl that was fortune-telling for her masters. They saw that their hope of profit was gone and seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the authorities, and accused them of

throwing the city into confusion. Then the crowds rose up against them, and the chief magistrates had them beaten and thrown into prison. While in prison, Paul led the jailer and his household to the Lord. When he was released, the Philippian chief magistrates begged him to leave, which he did. (See Acts 16.)

After leaving Philippi, Paul went to Thessalonica, which is also in Macedonia, and some of the Jews there stirred up the crowds against Paul. We do not know what the afflictions were, but it was the same zealous Jews there that probably stirred up people against Paul. He and his team had no rest for their flesh, and they were afflicted on every side, conflicts without and fears within. In spite of these afflictions, he was filled with comfort and joy. True joy is not circumstantial; it is a condition of the heart. Even in the midst of affliction, Paul had joy. (See Acts 17.)

2. Paul's Joy and Comfort in Their Repentance (2 Cor 7:7-12)

Paul's first joy and comfort was from seeing Titus and hearing the report that he gave. His second joy and comfort came from hearing how the Corinthians had repented. Paul's letter of sorrow, also known as the severe letter, had brought them to repentance. Titus gave Paul a report of how the Corinthians had longed, and mourned, and that they were zealous for Paul, and this caused Paul to rejoice even more. His integrity and ministry had been attacked to the point of wanting him to give a letter of commendation. Now they had a longing and a zeal for Paul. There had been quite a turnaround, and this repentance brought even more joy to Paul.

(2 Co 7:7) "and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more."

Paul's letter of confrontation had caused them sorrow. After he wrote it, he regretted writing it. He probably wondered if he was being too hard on them. He probably wondered if he was doing the right thing, or whether he should have let God deal directly with them. He probably wondered if a letter was the best way of dealing with the matter, or if he should have perhaps made yet another visit to them and confront them face to face. Some things are handled much better in person than in writing. Paul regretted writing the letter at first. I think we have all done things that we regretted doing. There have been times that I said something, and the minute I said it, I wished that I could have taken back my words. I knew it was the wrong thing or the wrong timing, and I regretted it. The good news is that Paul does not regret writing it now. He realizes that the letter caused them sorrow for a while, and that it made them sorrowful to the point of repentance. The Corinthians had been made sorrowful according to the will of God.

(2 Cor 7:8-9) "For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— {9} I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of* God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us."

There are some today that believe that once you receive Christ into your life, you will never experience pain, sorrow, or any other set backs in life. The truth is that sometimes it is God's will for you and I to be made sorrowful. God is a holy God and He wants us to be holy. He is Jehovah Qadosh (Strong's H6918), which means that He is the Lord God that Sanctifies us. He is working in our lives to make us holy, and sometimes He makes us sorrowful to the point that we

repent over what we have done. God wants us to repent so that we do not suffer any further loss. God will turn up the heat in our lives to bring us to a point of repentance. I have always told the Lord that I would rather Him whisper things to me than shout at me. I would rather be quick to respond to His nudgings rather than have Him bring out the rod. Paul felt the same way. He rejoiced that they repented and did not suffer loss in anything.

There are two types of sorrow that the Bible talks about: godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. This passage is the classic passage in Scripture that is used to teach about these two types of sorrow. Godly sorrow is an attitude of sorrow for having committed a deed that is contrary to God's will. It produces repentance without regret leading to salvation. This is the sorrow that produces a change in behavior. The Greek word for repentance is *metanoia* (Strong's G3341), which means to change your mind, resulting in a change of behavior. Some say that it is an about-face, where you are walking one way, and you stop and turn around and walk the other way. Paul said that the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces this repentance or change of mind and behavior.

(2 Cor 7:10) "For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death."

Worldly sorrow is simply being sorry for getting caught, but not being sorry for the actual crime committed. This is the sorrow that produces no change in behavior and results in death. When I was in prison ministry, I would ask many of the men why they were in prison. I could tell very quickly by their answers whether they were sorry that they got caught or whether they were sorry about what they had done. The ones with godly sorrow wanted to make changes in their life. The ones with worldly sorrow had excuses about why they were there, and had no intentions of making changes in their lives.

Sometimes it is difficult to know if there is a genuine, godly sorrow or not. While I was a prison chaplain, a man named Tommy said he wanted to make changes in his life, so I spent time every week working with him. After he had prayed to receive Christ, I taught him weekly for several months about how to have quiet times, pray, renew his mind, and many other fundamentals. When he was released, he told me that he wanted nothing to do with me or church. I told Karen that he would be calling me again, but on a pay phone. Sure enough, a few weeks later I got a collect call from Tommy in prison. He had been reincarcerated and wanted to see me again. I agreed to meet with him one time, and in that meeting, I told him that I was not there to baby sit; I was there to help people grow and become mature in Christ. I was there to see Christ formed in him, and if that was not what he wanted, then I was not going to work with him any longer. Tommy did repent, but it was that hard discussion with him that brought him to repentance.

Repentance brings about a change of mind, attitude, and behavior. Paul said, "Behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you; what vindication of yourself, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter." That is repentance in action.

(2 Cor 7:11) "For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter."

The Corinthians were earnest, or sincere about their repentance. The vindicated themselves, which means to free from blame. They dealt with the issue and were no longer guilty. They had indignation, which means they had an anger about the wrong that had been done. It showed that they now knew it was wrong, and were upset that it had happened. When someone has indignation, they will not continue to commit the same sin. They had a fear, which I believe was a healthy fear of the Lord.

Some today teach that we should not have a fear of the Lord, and that we should only be motivated only by love. I organized and led a men's conference a few years ago, and some of the pastors really struggled with that topic. I do not struggle with it; I believe the church needs a healthy fear of the Lord. The early church had a fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord keeps us from evil. The fear, reverence, and awe of the Lord is a good thing. I also believe that God disciplines His children, and when people have experienced the discipline of the Lord, they have a healthy fear of the Lord. The Corinthians had a longing and a zeal, and this shows repentance. When someone is in sin, their zeal and longing for the Lord suffers, but when they repent, God renews their passion and zeal. The Corinthians demonstrated that they had repented and this brought joy and comfort to Paul.

When I was growing up, I received a lot of spankings for teasing my little sister. Even though I kept getting spankings, my behavior did not change. I became more upset with my sister and my mother, but not at my behavior. I had a worldly sorrow that did not lead to repentance. That was a worldly sorrow that leads to death.

When I was working as the Head Professional at a golf club, we hosted a group outing. I did not know that the group was an adult entertainment business, and that their beverage cart drivers were not going to be properly attired. I did not know that they were going to have some inappropriate dancing at their lunch. Our restaurant manager came to my office and told me what they were doing in the restaurant, and I immediately shut it down. I was embarrassed and had righteous indignation. I fasted for three days in repentance for what had happened at our club under my management. I also changed our contracts and included dress codes among other things that would prevent these things from occurring in the future. I avenged myself and my actions demonstrated that I had godly sorrow that led to repentance.

Paul said that he had great confidence in the Corinthians and had boasted greatly about the Corinthians. Now he states that he had written to them so that their earnestness on his team's behalf might be made known to them in the sight of God. He did not write for the sake of the offender, the one that had attacked Paul. He did not write for his own sake, the one offended. Paul was not trying to draw sympathy from the Corinthians. He did want them to open up and begin to share their affection with Paul, but he was not looking for sympathy. Paul was wanting them to do what he was confident that they would do, and that was to have a godly sorrow and repent, and to avenge themselves of this matter. He wanted their earnestness known and to be done in the sight of God. Ultimately, any sin that we commit is against God, and our repentance should be done in the sight of God.

(2 Cor 7:12) "So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God."

3. Paul's Joy and Comfort for Their Refreshment of Titus (2 Cor 7:13-16)

Paul was filled with joy and comfort by Titus' report. It was not given at Troas, like their original plan, but in Macedonia. Paul was restless in spirit until he finally caught up with Titus, and then his report to Paul filled Paul with joy and comfort. Second, Paul was made even more joyful that they had been made sorrowful to the point of repentance. Third, Paul rejoiced even more because the Corinthians had refreshed Titus' spirit.

(2 Co 7:13) "For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all."

The Greek word for refreshed is *anapauo* (Strong's G373), and it means to be eased, put at rest, or refreshed. It is used twelve times and seven times it is translated as rest, take rest, or give rest. Titus probably did not know what he was getting into when he went to Corinth. He may have thought that he was going into a lion's den. Instead, he was put at ease, or at rest by the reception, attitude, and actions of the Corinthians. His spirit was refreshed by all of them. This in turn brought great comfort and joy to Paul, who had sent Titus.

Repentance brings about refreshing. In Peter's sermon at Pentecost, he exhorted the people to repent and return, so that their sins would be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Repentance brings about the presence of the Lord, and the presence of the Lord brings refreshing.

(Ac 3:19) "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;"

In Isaiah 66:2, God tells us that He looks at those who are humble, contrite in spirit and who tremble at His word. Contrite in spirit means to have a godly sorrow for doing something wrong. Webster defines it as a feeling or showing sorrow and remorse for improper or objectionable behavior, actions, etc. When people have a sorrow that leads to repentance, that gets God's attention.

(Is 66:2b) "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word."

In Psalm 51, a psalm about David's repentance, he said, "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." There are many sacrifices that get the attention of God, and a contrite heart is one of those. The Corinthians had a contrite heart and repented, bringing in the presence of the Lord and a time of refreshing for everyone. When Titus came, he was refreshed by the presence of the Lord. When Titus reported this to Paul, he was comforted and rejoiced even more.

(Ps 51:17) "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

Joe Warner ministers to churches all over the world. A few weeks ago, he was in Honduras, and when he got back I called him to see how things went. He had a fantastic trip and lots of people were saved, and many others were set free from things in their life. After he shared what he had experienced, I asked him what would refresh him when he goes to a church. He was very quick to say that it is the presence of the Lord in a congregation that refreshes him. When a church

takes time to worship and wait upon the Lord, and the presence of the Lord is there, he gets refreshed. I believe that the presence of the Lord was very strong at Corinth when they repented, and that is one reason that Titus was refreshed.

Here are the things that are refreshing to me when I go into a church. First, I am refreshed when I see people who are pressing in to know God. When I see people in love with Jesus, it is refreshing to me. It is not only refreshing, it is contagious. I get refreshed when people are transparent and real with one another, and talk about the things of the Lord. This generally happens in small group settings. I get refreshed when I see people faithfully serving the Lord and one another. I love to see the body of Christ working the way it is supposed to work. And, like my friend Joe, when the presence of the Lord is strong in the church, I get refreshed.

Paul had boasted to Titus about the Corinthians. He was confident that they would do what is right. Paul ends this section by stating that he was not put to shame in his boasting. All the things that he had spoken about them proved to be true. When Titus witnessed this, and how they received him with fear and trembling, his affection towards the Corinthians abounded even more. The final result was that Paul had more confidence in the Corinthians and rejoiced even more.

(2 Cor 7:14-16) "For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the* truth. {15} His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. {16} I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you."

Conclusion and Applications

I often hear about how tough the people in ministry have it, and how many people are leaving the ministry every year. I have been through some difficult times as a pastor, and I know these things are true. It is not often that we hear the other side of the story, how much joy and comfort a pastor can get from a congregation. Our passage today tells that side of the story. The Corinthians had a situation come up where Paul and his ministry were attacked. Paul responded by writing a severe letter and gave them some corrective steps of action to take. Then, he sent Titus to Corinth to check on things. When Paul met up with Titus, he rejoiced and took comfort because of the good report that Titus brought back. Second, he rejoiced and took comfort because the Corinthians had a godly sorrow that led to repentance, and they had repented. They had vindicated themselves, and were full of zeal and longing. Third, Paul rejoiced even more that Titus had been refreshed by the Corinthians.

There are lots of applications for us. As a church, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We want a strong presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Therefore, we need to be a church that worships the Lord and bring the sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise. We also need to be a church that has a contrite heart, and repents of sins. The sacrifices of a broken and contrite heart are precious to the Lord. All of us sin, and if anyone says that he does not sin, the truth is not in him. When we sin, we need to confess our sins, and repent. We want to be a humble church that has a contrite heart, and where God's presence is felt by all that come. Are there things in your life that you need to repent of? I encourage you to repent before the Lord, and offer that sacrifice to the Lord

We want to be a church where people get refreshed. It does not matter if someone is a Titus, or whether they are a visitor coming for the first time, we want them to experience the presence of

the Lord and be refreshed. The church is a community of believers who share their lives together, and for this community to have a strong presence of the Lord, we must all be pressing in to know the Lord. We must all be spending time with the Lord and worshiping privately. Then, when we assemble together, the presence of the Lord will be even stronger.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for this passage about how Paul was filled with comfort and joy. Thank You for giving us understanding about godly sorrow and worldly sorrow. When we sin, may we have a godly sorrow that leads to repentance. Help us to have a humble and contrite heart. Help us be quick to repent and make things right with you and others. Help us to be a church where Your presence is felt by all that come. May we be a church where others come and are refreshed. May we be a church that Paul or others would boast about because they are confident that we will be obedient to You. May we be a church that worships You and are continually filled with Your Spirit. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Paul's Joy and Comfort (2 Cor 7:2-16)

Introduction (Ps 128:2, Pr 13:12, Ps 127:3, 3 Jn 3-4, Pr 17:21, Pr 17:25, 2 Co 7:2-16)

1. **Paul's Joy and Comfort in Titus' Report** (2 Cor 7:2-6, 6:11-13, Ga 6:1-2, Acts 16-17)

2. **Paul's Joy and Comfort in Their Repentance** (2 Cor 7:7-12)

3. **Paul's Joy and Comfort for Their Refreshment of Titus** (2 Cor 7:13-16, Ac 3:19, Is 66:2b, Ps 51:17)

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