

2 Corinthians 7:1 – 13

¹ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. ² 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; 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.

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. 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.

Historical and Cultural Context

- *Paul*, the author of this letter, was a Jewish Christian missionary leader in the mid-first century. *Titus* was a younger Christian leader mentored by Paul, and a traveling companion. The recipients were the Christian community in Corinth, in modern day Greece. Paul had founded the Christian community in Corinth in 50 AD. The date of his writing is unknown but after he wrote 1 Corinthians, around 53 – 55 AD.
- ‘*For though I caused you sorrow by my letter*’ (2 Cor.7:8): Paul might be referring to his first letter to the Corinthians, in which he rebuked the community for not correcting one of their members for sleeping with his stepmother (1 Cor.5). However, it is also possible that the letter we now call 2 Corinthians is a composite of several letters in a series of correspondences. In which case, it is possible that the Corinthians temporarily rejected Paul’s authority as a Christian leader (2 Cor.1 – 6). Possibly the issues were related.
- *Jesus’ teaching*: Jesus had stressed that one of the appropriate emotional responses to sin (certainly one’s own, but also more broadly) was grieving, or mourning: ‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.’ (Matthew 5:4)

Questions

1. What emotions stand out to you in what the Corinthian Christians were experiencing?
2. How does Paul see their sorrow as appropriate?
3. What did their sorrow lead to? How is that different from feeling shame?
4. Does Paul regret or not regret his past confrontation with the Corinthians?
5. What is the 'sorrow of the world that leads to death' in 7:10?
 - a. Suicide
 - b. Addictions
6. Paul says in v.4 – 7 and v.13 that God comforted him through the Corinthians' positive response. Why was he comforted?