

2 Corinthians 7

The Blessing of
Christian Community



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“Who Am I?”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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What defines a Christian Life?

- **A Christian life is defined by the Word of God**

- “[A Christian] knows that God’s Word in Jesus Christ pronounces him guilty, even when he does not feel his guilt, and God’s Word in Jesus Christ pronounces him not guilty and righteous, even when he does not feel that he is righteous at all. The Christian no longer lives of himself, by his own claims and his own justification, but by God’s claims and God’s justification. He lives wholly by God’s Word pronounced upon him, whether that Word declares him guilty or innocent” (Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*)

- **“Since we have these promises...” (2 Cor 7:1)**

- There are promises that determine the Christian’s life

3

A Word of Promise

For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst,
and be separate from them, says the Lord,
and touch no unclean thing;
then I will welcome you,

¹⁸ and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,
says the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor 6:16–18)

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“Since we have these promises...”

- **How have these promises become ours?**
 - 2 Cor 1:20
 - “I *will* make my dwelling among them...” (Leviticus)
- **In Christ, this promise finds its Yes and Amen**
 - In Christ, God *does* dwell with his people and invites us to *remain* in Him (Jn 15)
 - In Christ, we receive adoption as sons and daughters in the family of God (Eph 1:4-5)
 - In Christ, we have received sanctification and are being sanctified (1 Cor 1:30)
- **Our relationship with God depends upon Christ**

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In Christ, we are united to one another

- **Christian Community**
 - Not formed by shared experiences
 - Not formed by shared philosophy
 - Not formed by shared loves
 - Christian community doesn't start *from us* but *from Christ* (Eph 2:14-15)
- **Our relationship with one another depends on Christ**

9

“Make Room in Your Hearts for Us”

- **Repeated appeal**
 - 1 Cor 6:13
 - Be reconciled to us
- **“We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one”**
 - Lots of theories about the issue
 - The bottom line: There is friction in the Corinthians' relationship with Paul
- **“I do not say this to condemn you, for you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together”**
 - Union forged by Christ
 - Paul's life is tied to the Corinthians

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Paul's Motives in Confrontation

³ I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. ⁴ I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy." (2 Cor 7:3–4)

- **Not to condemn**

- Wants their spiritual health
- Motivated by affection, not malice
- Disciplining children/students

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Paul's Experience of the Gift of Community

⁵ For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶ But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷ and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. (2 Cor 7:5–7)

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The Letter

- **2 Cor 7:8-10**
- **2 Cor 2:4**
 - “⁴For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you”
- **Paul did not want to hurt the Corinthians through his letter**
- **Motive: love → to bring sanctification to the Corinthians**
 - Paul doesn't regret the letter (2 Cor 7)
 - Godly grief led to repentance → suffered no loss

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Godly Grief vs Worldly Grief

What Causes the Grief?

- **Worldly**
 - Lack of something we want for ourselves
 - Self-centered
 - Rev 18:9-13
- **Godly**
 - Lack of something God wants for us
 - God-centered
 - John Newton's Amazing Grace

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Godly Grief vs Worldly Grief

What is the Result of the Grief?

• Worldly

- Bitterness, despair, paralysis, self pity
- Esau; Judas

• Godly

- Repentance (Prodigal Son returning)
- Grieving is not always bad → leads to godly action

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The Result

- “¹¹ For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. ¹² So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God. ¹³ Therefore we are comforted.” (2 Cor 7:11–13)

Purpose of the Letter

- Not primarily to condemn the wrong
- Not primarily to avenge the wronged
- To Restore and Increase Health in the Church

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