

Dr. Ayo Adewuya, 2 Corinthians, Session 8, 2 Corinthians 7, Urgent Appeal

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This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 8, 2 Corinthians 7, Urgent Appeals.

We're beginning to look at 2 Corinthians 7. In the last session, we ended with 2 Corinthians 6, and we looked at 6:14, but actually, that passage, that digression, runs up to 7:1. So, the new section would have started from 7:2. So, let's quickly talk about 7:1, where Paul talks about having these great promises: we need to cleanse ourselves from all defilement and pollution, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God. You see, that verse ends the digression that starts in 6:14. So Paul brings the digression to a close. So, he says, therefore, unfortunately, that therefore is omitted in the NIV, but it should be there.

Paul sums up all the preceding appeals. He said on the basis of these great promises, what are the promises? Where God says, you will be my sons, I will be your God, and you will be my sons, and you will be my daughters as well. And I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

He said, I will welcome you. So, Paul says, given these promises, we need to walk in a way that befits our calling. So, he calls them dear friends, and that's quite interesting.

Now, think about the people who oppose him, and Paul calls them dear friends. The Greek is *agapetoi*, beloved, which is something that is frequently used by Paul for those with whom he enjoys a close and congenial relationship. And yet Paul calls these people dear friends, beloved.

You see, Paul supports his opening and closing exhortations in 6:14 and 7:1 with arguments constructed very loosely from various passages of the scriptures. But now he calls for ethical living, and he says, let us purify ourselves. Such exhortations are less forceful than commands, but it's something we still need to do.

They invite the audience to join the author in pursuing the shared expectation. He said purify. It's very interesting that the word purify or cleanse here usually originated in what we call cultic settings, in the settings of worship.

It is used in the gospels, for example, for the healing of leprosy, when it talks about cleansing. But here, its scope is extended to include moral cleansing, and he says, let

us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit. The word used for defilement here in Greek is used only here in the New Testament, *molusmou*.

It is used here only once in the New Testament, and it refers to the moral and spiritual contamination that results from participation in pagan practices. And Paul uses flesh and spirit in the expression of every defilement of body and spirit. Paul is making a statement that there is no aspect of our lives that is not to be touched by the cleansing power of the blood, flesh, and spirit, which is what we call a circumlocution for the whole person.

In other words, you can say that while my heart and soul belong to God, I can do whatever I want to do with my body. In Romans chapter 12, he says exactly the same thing: you present your bodies as a living sacrifice unto God, only an acceptable one, which is your reasonable service, and do not conform to the world. You see, Paul is not using flesh and spirit here as opposing ethical principles, no.

Instead, he uses flesh and spirit here in a popular manner to comprehend the whole person, viewed physically and spiritually. Paul calls for a thorough moral cleansing that will affect the Corinthians' entire existence, all of our lives. In our Sunday schools, we sing with the children, my head, my shoulders, my knees, my toes, my head, my shoulders, my knees, my toes; they all belong to Jesus.

That's exactly what Paul is saying here. Every part of us is to be cleansed. I like the way John Wesley puts it; he calls sanctification cleansing from outward and inward sin in every aspect of our lives.

Now, lest you are wondering, is this kind of holiness possible? Let me just make a statement. Whatever God commands in his words, his spirit makes possible. If God commands us to do something, you can be sure he will empower us to do that thing.

God is not like Pharaoh, who would tell the children of Israel to go and mow the brigs and yet does not provide them with a straw. So, everything we need to be what God wants us to be, to be who God wants us to be, and to do what God wants us to do has been provided for us. I mean, it's provided for us the word, it's provided for us the spirit, it's provided for us the blood, it's provided everything for us.

So, lest you are wondering, is this possible? Is this a pie in the sky? It's not a pie in the sky. He says we do our part. Let us purify ourselves.

We purify ourselves, we do our part, and we let God do his own part. And he says, let us perfect holiness in the fear of God. That is, bringing about a result according to plan or objective.

That's what we need to do. You see, for Paul, perfecting holiness is the purpose of the Christian life. I like the way that great preacher Adam Clark puts it when he says, getting the whole mind of Christ brought into the soul.

This is a grand object of a genuine Christian pursuit. That is, bringing the whole mind of Christ into the soul. And he says, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

That's very important. Now we move from there, and we go to chapter 7, beginning from verse 2, where Paul renews his appeal for fellowship. There's a renewal of appeal.

So, these are urgent appeals. You see, at the time of writing, the Corinthians did not have confidence in Paul and were stealing straight from him, who brought them to Christ through the proclamation of the gospel. So, Paul was still doing his very best to restore their confidence, knowing full well that a lack of confidence in his person would result in a lack of confidence in his message.

After all, any message is only as credible as the messenger. Any message is only as credible as the messenger. I mean, if somebody says, don't steal, and you know him as a thief, you say, well, forget about it.

And you say, well, what's he telling us? We know it. I remember, a few years ago, somebody was preaching, and he was talking about how we should fast, do this, and consecrate. And yet, this person who was talking about fasting so much, you look at him. His stomach was covering his own belt.

And yet he's the one telling everybody to fast. All I'm trying to say is that Paul was trying to reconcile them because he knew the danger of not being reconciled with them if they doubted him as a person. Definitely, it will affect the message he preaches.

In this, Paul continues to act as an agent of reconciliation. Now, think about this for a minute. Paul takes the initiative, which is what love actually does.

Sometimes, we are waiting for somebody else to come and tell us he's sorry or to reconcile with us. But the love that Paul had for the Corinthians was so much that he could not bear the instigment, and he took the initiative. And today, we know there are many things that drive wedges among us and between us as believers, but the church must continue to be a community of reconciliation.

A communion of saints that is characterized by mutual love and shared trust. That's what the church needs to be. It's so sad that you can find within a denomination the same denomination, and you find in that denomination two or three churches a street down from one another, and they have nothing to do with each other.

And yet, they belong to the same denomination. A block away from each other. The pastors have nothing to do with each other.

The members don't have anything to do with each other. They view each other with suspicion. They can't have a joint meeting together.

Why? Because they are afraid our members will go to that other church, and they won't come back to us. We need to be a communion of saints that is characterized by mutual love and shared trust. Now, he goes on to talk in chapter 7 from verses 2 to 4. He returns to his call for renewed mutual confidence, which he began in chapter 6:11 to 13.

He said, make room for us in your hearts. Make room for us in your hearts. So, what you find in 6, 11 to 13 has its reprise in 7:2 to 4. Paul reiterates his plea in 6:13.

In 6:13, he already said, open wide your hearts also. And now he comes back to it in chapter 7, verse 2. Together, these verses constitute an affectionate appeal without any equality in the New Testament. This is an affectionate appeal.

Make room for us in your hearts. Now, remember we said at the beginning of the study of this series that this book is an opening into Paul's heart. It's a window into Paul's heart.

We said that. You can see it right here. What does 7:2 to 4, what does it really mean? Let's read it as a whole.

Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one. We've corrupted no one.

We've taken advantage of no one. 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. I often boast about you. I have great pride in you.

I am filled with consolation. I'm overjoyed in all our affliction as he told us of your longing and your mourning.

Your zeal for me so that I rejoined still more. You see, what 7: 2 to 4 means is made clear as Paul seeks to complete his reconciliation with the Corinthians. He appears to recognize questions in their minds about his conduct because he insists with a threefold statement that he did not mistreat anyone in Corinth.

That suggests to us that Paul knew that there were still some misgivings. This passage is pivotal. It looks both backward and forward.

2 Corinthians 7:2 to 4 concludes Paul's lengthy digression that started all the way from 2:14, and now it resumes the account of his meeting with Titus in Macedonia, which began in 2:12 to 2:13. So to the appeal, make room for us in your hearts. Most translations add the word in your hearts to make clear that Paul is speaking up from where he left off in 6.11. Our heart is wide open as the New Revised Standard Version translates it. The Corinthians must reciprocate if there is to be a reconciliation.

You see, genuine fellowship requires sharing and mutuality. For fellowship to exist between two people, between two churches, and between two bodies, it requires sharing and mutuality. And Paul is quite open to the display, this display of mutual affection.

So, he urges them to respond in kind. He insists that he has not at any time wronged anyone. That's what he said.

We've wronged no one. We've corrupted no one. You see, when Paul says we've wronged no one here, the word wrong here is a general term for wrongdoing.

We haven't done any wrong to anybody. That is a wrong that involves injury or unjust treatment. It is to do the exact opposite of what righteousness does.

And he says we have not. So, Paul never acted unjustly toward the Corinthians. He's treated them with respect, and he's treated them as a father in the gospel.

And then he says we've corrupted no one. Now, the word corruption has to do with morals or doctrine. Whereas the word we have wronged no one is talking about insults or injuries or unjust treatment; here, the word corrupt has to do with morals or doctrine.

Paul denies that he had ever corrupted the gospel by his preaching, which harks back to what he said: we're not like others who are peddlers of the gospel. His word is from God. And then he said we've not exploited anyone.

We have not exploited anyone. When he said we have not exploited one, that is talking about we've not defrauded anyone. It is interesting that Paul is going to use this same verb in chapter 12, verses 17 to 18, where he denies taking money from them financially.

Paul is saying we have not taken advantage of you. We haven't taken advantage of anyone. But he says we've not taken advantage of anyone, that is, we've not exploited you.

How I wish many ministers could boldly say that they've not exploited their congregations today. We've not outwitted you. We have not defrauded you.

We've not cheated you. That's how the dictionary defines it. Paul uses the verb again.

You see, the effect of these three verbs, no one, talking about no one, makes the denial general rather than specific. I haven't done anything wrong to anyone. It is quite possible that Paul is responding to particular charges made against him.

That's quite possible. But that remains purely speculative. He simply said no one.

He did not mention anybody's name. So, what Paul does is insist upon his innocence to make a plea for mutual trust. Now, think about this for a minute.

Jesus said in John chapter 8, which of you has convicted me of sin? Then, think about Samuel talking about calling the people together. He said whose ox have I taken? Whose property have I taken? Who am I with defrauded? So, Paul puts himself in the same level and says, look, I'm just as clean and as pure as that. He did not say it explicitly, but it's like Jesus saying, look, I've not, which one of you here can convict me of anything? And Paul will actually say in 1 Thessalonians, you know how holily and justly and unblameably we have behaved ourselves among you that believe.

And you remember what he says in Acts chapter 24, verse 16, where he says, herein do I exercise myself always that I may have a conscience that is always void of offense towards God and towards man. Look, this is Paul, and he provides us with an example of what a minister should look like in terms of integrity. Now, get this right.

Even though Jesus was sinless, people still accuse them. Even though Samuel lived right, of course, he had problems with his son, and people still rebelled against him. So, it doesn't mean that people are not going to find fault with you because people can always find fault with anybody.

They can find fault with angels, and they can find fault with anybody. But you can live your life right that by the grace of God, your conscience is clear. Now, Paul wants to avoid any possible misunderstanding with the Corinthians.

So, he assures them in verse 3, I do not say this to condemn you. I want you to get this right. I'm not condemning you.

On the contrary, what I have for you is mutual love and confidence that makes me able to say to you that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. That is the key to all that follows. You are in our hearts to die and to live together, as is translated by the New American Standard Bible.

That's exactly what it's saying. And then he goes on, we will live or die with you. That's the way the NIV puts it.

It is presumed by most interpreters that Paul is simply using a conventional expression of the bonds, inviolable bonds of loyalty between friends. You see, then, in verse 4, you find a transitional bridge to what follows. Look at Paul's word choices.

Those choices take us back to the early chapters of the letter and the point I had about the themes that will surface later in the letter. He uses the words comfort, joy, and troubles, which are particularly noteworthy. As in chapter 1, verses 3 to 8, the word and the theme of comfort permeate the paragraph that follows.

We'll see that as we move on. Rather than condemning the Corinthians, Paul asks for great confidence in them. He uses the same word that he used in chapter 3, verse 12 when he talks about boldness, *parousia*, which means frank speech and candor.

That's what it means. From his open heart and candid speech, he expresses his great pride for them. Now, coming of Titus in chapter 7, verses 5 to 7, for even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way, disputes without and fears within.

But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the consolation with which he has consoled you. So, in verses 5 to 7, Paul resumes the account of his travels in relation to the church in Corinth. These had occupied his mind in chapter 1, verse 12, to chapter 2, verse 13, but he did not complete that story.

Now, Paul goes back to complete that story. He turns to a lengthy parenthesis about his ministry from 2:14 to 7:4, and now he resumes the story. What exactly is the story? You see, after his painful visit, which we see in chapter 2, Paul did not return to Corinth.

Instead, he sent Titus from Ephesus to Corinth with a sorrowful letter. He hoped it would be well received, but he feared it would not be. So, Paul traveled to Troas, where the Lord opened a door for his ministry, and where he expected to meet Titus, who returned with news from the church.

Titus, however, was not there. So, Paul became restless, wondering what happened. So, restless, Paul had moved to Macedonia, anxiously awaiting the return of Titus.

So, that's where he left his readers in chapter 2. He broke off his travel narrative to yield to the irresistible urge to give praise to God for his apostolic ministry. Now, what made him break that? We really don't know. The digression is probably spontaneous.

I mean, like Paul would always do. This is not the only place Paul breaks. He broke in chapter 3 in Romans, and he doesn't get back onto chapter 9. He does it all the time.

Paul is Paul. Let's put it that way. But now, in verse 5, he introduces his explanation of what he has just done.

He said, for even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest. He continues to describe his restless flesh. Our bodies had no rest.

Now, think about the sufferings we talked about in chapter 1, verses 3 to 10. Now, he said we were restless, and in chapter 4, verse 8, he said we were afflicted in every way. But here now, he said our bodies had no rest.

But we were afflicted in every way. Disputes without and fears within. You know what? Paul is not superhuman.

He's just as human as we are. Tranquility was not always his portion. He said I was restless.

I was restless. You know, restless because of what? A genuine concern, such as Paul's for Titus and Corinthians, increases the capacity for suffering. You see, when we have a genuine concern, it increases our capacity for suffering.

We're able to bear it because we have love concerns. But Paul does not stop there. And I like this one.

He says, but God. He does not stop there. But God.

He begins with a very strong adversary. He says, but, which affirms the consolation of God in his life.

But God. And every time you see that but God, there's something that follows. His own experience taught him that God was the father of compassion and the God of all comfort.

That's what he said in chapter 1, verse 3. But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us with the arrival of Titus, the one who comforts the lonely. The literal

translation would be something like that. The one who comforts the lonely comfort, the lowly comforted.

God by the presence of Titus. God is defined as the comforter. Paul's combination with God reminds us of the significant contrast that he uses in his writings.

I mean, in Ephesians, but God. God turned Paul's restless despair into boundless joy. Isn't that wonderful? That's what God does.

God turned Paul's restless despair into a boundless joy. How did he do it? He consoled us by the coming of Titus. By the coming, the arrival and resulting presence of Titus brought joy to them.

And not only by his coming but also by the consolation with which he was consoled by you. Paul found Titus, and when he found him, he was greatly blessed. While he was searching for Titus in Macedonia, he was troubled on every side.

But now, Titus had come. God, who comforts those who are brought low, comforted his servant by the coming of Titus. What a happy reunion it was.

Titus was used by God to comfort Paul in a way that only a true friend and a faithful, sympathetic associate could do. Titus had news for the apostle. You know what Titus was anxious about? Paul's comfort came not only from his coming but from the comfort with which he was comforted because Titus himself did not know what he was going to meet.

Paul's colleague in the ministry shared in the apostle's joy. You know, it's always said that when you share a problem, the problem is reduced. When you share joy, the joy is multiplied.

It's a kind of mathematical formula, inverse variation. You share a problem, and the problem is reduced. You share joy, and the joy is multiplied.

And this is what happens between Paul and Titus. Titus comes. What a happy reunion. Both Paul and Titus were comforted by the news that Titus brought of the Corinthians.

So, it was not only the coming of Titus, the news he delivered, or the comfort of Titus that comforted him. As he writes, he refers emphatically to your longing. See what he says, not only by his coming but also by the consolation with which he was consoled by you, by your own longing.

You see, Paul understood all of this human activity from a theological perspective as ultimately the work of God. He saw everything as being orchestrated by God.

Whatever the ultimate and intermediate causes, all these caused Paul's joy to be greater than ever.

You see, what do we learn from these verses? We see clearly from these verses that human affairs had to depress the apostles. Human affairs, I mean, Paul was human. All that was happening brought a kind of depression to Paul.

But the second thing is that God has compassion for afflicted ones. That's what we see in Isaiah 49, verse 13. Then we see that in his sovereign power and human agency to lift the depression, he could say, praise be to God, the God of all comfort.

God uses the means. But at the end of the day, ultimately, it is God. Now, we move to verse 8. From verse 8, we're going to look at the repentance of the church as a result of godly sorrow.

From verse 8, for even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly. Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance.

For you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. For godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. For we see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment.

At every point, you have proved yourself guiltless in this matter. You proved yourself guiltless in this matter. You see, Paul sought to avoid personal confrontation with the Corinthians, not because he feared them, but because he believed that he could settle their differences, they could settle their differences among themselves.

Therefore, with regrets, and in verse 8, and with tears, he wrote his disciplinary letter. You see, Paul is trying to maintain a delicate balance here. He delicately attempts to complete his reconciliation with the church by recounting the events well known to the Corinthians.

If all the misunderstandings and suspicions are to be removed from their relationship, their past must be opened up, not covered over or swept over the rug. You see, you sweep it over the rug, or you cover it, it will rise again in some future quarrel, and sometimes that's where churches make mistakes. You see, just forget about it.

Let's forget about it. Don't forget about it. Talk about it.

Talk about it. If you talk about it, both of you can weep about it or cry about it, and then you can forgive one another, and once you talk about it, it's not there anymore. But if we just cover it and say, well, that's okay, I'm alright, don't talk about it.

Talk about it. Paul talked about it. Remember I told you that this is a pastoral epistle, and this is Paul, the pastor, saying, look, this is a way to deal with these issues.

So, what does he do? He commends them to begin with because they responded positively to his sorrowful letter, and then he assures them of their innocence in the matter, and then he establishes titles with the Corinthians as a reliable and effective partner and representative of both them and himself. So, in the process, Paul deals theologically with the pain and the sorrow that he caused them, in terms of their relation to God and personally in their relation to him. So, he proves to them that he does indeed have the Corinthians in his heart to die and to live together.

So, you see, from verse 8 to 9a, Paul says, because of this, because of his renewed and boundless joy, he wrote the letter that caused them sorrow out of great distress. That's what he says. He wrote the letter out of great distress.

He said, for even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it, I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly out of a great distress. He talks about anguish of heart.

Anguish of heart. You see, Paul does not mention or explain his canceled visit, which we see in 1.23, but he mentions only the letter. This letter had caused them pain and grief.

Paul assented with titles that the Corinthians might know the extent of his love for them but despite his best intentions. There was a moment before Titus' return that the apostle did regret sending the letter. So, Paul says, maybe I shouldn't have sent the letter.

But now that the letter has achieved his desired end, he said, I do not regret it. When the letter had gone, Paul was, maybe I shouldn't have sent it. More so, when Titus was not back on time, maybe I made a mistake in sending that letter.

But the letter yielded a positive result, and he says, I do not regret it because it has done its job. I may be sorry, but while the reception of the letter hung in the balance, he was regretting it. But now he said, no, I'm not regretting it.

Paul can now rejoice. Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, not because it made them sorrowful, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led you to repentance, led to a change of mind. You know what Paul was saying; I'm so

happy that the letter was used by God to bring sorrow and healing to the Corinthians, much to the joy of the apostle himself.

As to the nature of this sorrow, Paul distinguishes between his therapeutic sorrow and repentance. Repentance is a change of mind, totally and completely, the fruit of their sorrow. He uses the word repentance.

It's quite interesting. This is not a word Paul uses often. In fact, Paul talks about repentance and uses the word repentance only four times in all of his letters.

You find in Romans 9:10, Romans 2:4, and 2 Timothy 2:25, those are the only places where he uses repentance as a noun, and the verb occurs only once, that is 2 Corinthians 12:21. But he uses different words here, sorrow and repentance, but repentance means a change of mind. You see, when Paul talks about sorrow, the distinction between sorrow and repentance is that sorrow indicates a change of mood rather than a change of mind.

One is a change of mood, a change of feelings, a change of attitude, but repentance means a change of life altogether. Sorrow means remorse or regret. The second one means a change of heart, turning in attitude and behavior.

All of us know when little children misbehave, and they say, oh dad, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, and that's it. And then they go away. And then, two minutes later, they go and do the same thing.

I say, oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. That's not what Paul is saying. That's not godly sorrow.

I mean, some people are sorry because they are caught. But repentance means a change of attitude. Therefore, repentance is spiritual.

It's a spiritual more than an emotional change. When somebody changes totally and completely, rather than repentance, faith was Paul's preferred word to describe one's turning to God in the Gentile world. The early church, in its Jewish environment, favored the term repentance.

Paul favored faith. But both here and in 12:21, Paul uses the terminology of repentance to describe what Christians do to remedy their wrong choices. When Christians make wrong choices, when a person makes wrong choices, in Paul's usage, you repent.

You turn away from it totally and completely. But this is quite interesting. Please notice this.

In Paul's usage, repentance is for those in the church, not for unbelievers outside. Let me repeat myself. In Paul's usage, in the passages that I have dictated to you, you see that repentance is for those in the church, not for unbelievers outside.

That's not to suggest that unbelievers don't repent. We all repented, at least I would assume before we came to know the Lord. But here, Paul uses repentance for believers.

The Corinthian sorrows were toward God, as God intended. That is, as the New American Standard Bible puts it, it was according to the will of God. The sorrow of the Corinthians was according to the will of God.

And it was a godly grief. That's the way the NRSV puts it. The same expression reoccurs in verse 9, verse 10, and verse 11.

The Corinthians were not permanently harmed in any way by Paul's letter. No loss was suffered by them in the realm of grace. These phrases indicate that this kind of sorrow Paul is talking about is not only prompted by God but also causes people to see the abominable character of their choices and sin as an offense to God and in his heart to others and self. Therefore, you repent, you turn totally and completely.

The sorrow Paul is talking about is remarkably different from what the world experiences and which works out death in them. The great value of this is that it produces remarkable benefits. It effects a change of mind, which in turn leads to salvation for the believer.

This means that when we have godly sorrow for our choices and the wrong choices we make, we are led to change our minds about them and to take appropriate action of repudiating them and confessing them to God. This results in our deliverance from chastisement for them. So, Paul talks about that.

Then, in verse 10, he writes again that the pain was a godly sorrow; this is because it produced the kind of repentance that leads to salvation. So, we need to see that there is a huge difference between remorse, sorrow, regret, and repentance. One is a change of mood, and the other one is a change of mind.

And then, in verse 11, he says, for behold, see, behold, he says that, for see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you. What eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment. At every point, you have proved yourselves guiltless in this matter.

There you see Paul saying, look, it produced the same verb, this very thing. And it's very interesting that all the nouns that Paul uses here, look at it, what eagerness, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what punishment, I mean, what zeal, all

these nouns are repeated by what? And it simply means how great it's very intensive. I mean, you see, because Paul repeats it with adversity, but very powerful, what earnestness which is linked to produce.

The Corinthians are now eager to deal with the problems in their church. Indeed, Paul writes, you possess an eagerness to clear yourselves. What eagerness to clear yourselves.

They were now ready to do something about it. They were now ready. Here, you see Paul telling them you are ready to absolve yourself from blame.

And then he says, what indignation, what alarm, I mean, the unfortunate situation would affect their relation to Paul and the future of the church. But now they are ready to make it right. Now, moving forward to see what Paul is saying from verse 12 through verse 16, Paul talks about the vindication of his confidence in the Corinthians.

In verse 12, Paul explains why he wrote the sorrowful letter. Why and why not? Let's put it that way. So, although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did wrong, nor on account of the one who was wronged, but in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God.

In verse 12, Paul goes on to explain why he wrote. No doubt, the painful incident in Corinth was an occasion for writing a sorrowful letter, but Paul did not write to call attention to the wrongdoer or to protest the wrong he had done to himself. For Paul, there was something more important.

There was a more important issue underlying it all than just the one who did the wrong and the injured party. Paul speaks for himself and of himself. He had been wrong, no doubt about it.

But it was their spiritual integrity in the matter of their relation to the apostle that was at stake. There was something more at stake than just Paul being offended. The trouble in the church had already cast a cloud of disloyalty and disrespect over the Corinthians' attitude to their spiritual father.

As such, the Corinthians needed to be reminded that their relationship with God and their relationship with Paul were inseparable. So, something bigger was at stake. Their relationship with God and their relationship with Paul were intertwined, and that was at stake.

And that's why he wrote to them. So, it's not just about somebody offending Paul. So that's why he didn't mention the offender.

No, not at all. Because there was something greater at stake, and then in verse 13, he said, By all this we are encouraged.

In this, we find comfort. In this, we find comfort. In addition to our own consolation, we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus because his mind has been set at rest by all of you.

By this, we are encouraged. You see, Paul was now talking as their father in the faith. He's so concerned for their ultimate spiritual well-being that he does not hesitate to cause them pain, even though he's no less pained for doing so.

Such pain, when used by God, produces a kind of repentance that leads to salvation and the correction of the difficulties within the church. And then he now talks at the last part of verse 13, we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus. See, Titus definitely had a good experience.

And you find Paul talking about the visit of Titus now from the last part of verse 13 to the end of verse 16. Paul had already expressed his joy. You can also see his reaction to Titus's report.

That is in chapter 7, verses 5 to 9. And he has considered the Corinthian response to the sorrowful letter. That is in verses 9 to 12. But here, Paul picks up again the thought of verses 6 to 7. He gives renewed attention to the experience of Titus in Corinth.

You see, earlier on, Paul focused his attention on the comfort Titus had given him. Now, he goes on to describe the favorable effect Titus' positive reception in Corinth had on his delegate. So, Paul commends them for their behavior in the matter.

That's why he says we rejoice still more at the joy of Titus; his mind has been refreshed and set at rest by all of you. He's been encouraged. Paul was especially delighted to see how happy Titus was after his visit to Corinth.

Paul's joy increased when he learned that the spirit of Titus was refreshed by the whole church. So, Titus was happy because the church had set his mind completely at rest. The joy of the moment can explain what Paul says when he says, all of you.

He was conveniently ignoring the lingering problems in the Corinthian church. He now says, all of you. The lingering problems that were there in chapter 6, verses 14 to 7, were unequal.

He forgot all that. He said we've been refreshed by all of you. Paul was happy.

Then, in verse 14, Paul offers a further reason for his rejoicing. For if I had been somewhat boastful about you to him, I was not disgraced. But just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus has proved true as well.

The truth of Paul's spirit-inspired love for them had penetrated the genuineness of their care for him. Paul was never one to despair of the grace of God in his converts. Let me repeat myself.

God was never one to despair of the grace of God in his converts. He was optimistic and always hopeful. He believed his boast about them would continue to be vindicated.

Far from being shamed, on the contrary, Paul's boast about them proved to be true. You see, Paul's confidence in the Corinthians was vindicated by their reception of Titus. We can imagine Titus's apprehension as he traveled to Corinth.

Titus was assured by Paul that everything would go well. But I'm not sure Titus was certain. But whatever fears he had were dispelled, and he was confident and encouraged.

So, the Corinthians not only welcomed him but refreshed his spirit and proved themselves to be all that Paul had boasted of. Paul's prediction turned out to be as true as the words which he had spoken and written to them. Indeed, Titus also receives a great blessing from the Corinthians to the extent that his own love overflows toward them whenever he remembers the respect that they showed him and the obedience that they gave to Paul's letter.

Paul's confidence in his readers was justified. It produced the results it desired and brought him pleasure. However, his confidence was not in them alone.

Look at verse 15, when Titus remembers the Corinthians' obedience to Paul and to himself in their reception of him; his affection for them is all the more. You see that expressed very clearly in verse 15. Titus was very happy, and his heart goes out all the more to you as he remembers the obedience of all of you and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling.

It's interesting. I mean, this phrase, with fear and trembling, is used by Paul alone in the New Testament. It's only used by Paul.

In 1 Corinthians 2, verse 3. Philippians 2, verse 12, where tells the Corinthians together as a community to walk out their salvation with fear and trembling. Not individuals. It says, walk out your fear.

“Your” there is plural. The salvation there is singular. Walk out your salvation, collectively, their salvation, as a church, with fear and trembling.

And it's also used in Ephesians 6, verse 5. You see, this word is taken over by Paul from the Old Testament itself. It can refer to the proper human stance before divine majesty when you come before God with fear and trembling, as you read in Psalm 2, verse 11. Or it can refer to the human reaction to God's protective power.

Here is the reaction of the Corinthians to the presence of Titus in their midst as the delegate of the apostle. I mean, perhaps Paul was alluding to Isaiah chapter 19, verse 16, which refers to the terror of Egypt that Egypt would experience when it becomes aware of God's uplifted hand. But the Corinthians' fear and trembling were due ultimately to their recognition of Titus as not only the authentic and authoritative representative of the apostle but they recognized him as a divine messenger.

It's interesting that Paul began his ministry in Corinth with much fear and trembling. You see that in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 3, with more trembling because he seized his awesome responsibility before God. So, it was now appropriate that the hesitant congregation in Corinth should also experience fear and trembling when it faced up to its responsibility before God and its responsibility to those who proclaimed the will of God to them.

I mean, see what Paul says here. He had confidence, and his confidence was vindicated. So, Paul continues to have confidence in them.

In verse 16, I rejoice because I have complete confidence in you. Paul again resumes the theme of joy. I mean, in this verse, you already see him talk about joy in verse 4, in verse 7, and in verse 13.

To affirm that his reconciliation with the Corinthians is effective and satisfactory, I am glad. I can have complete confidence. He finds himself now able to depend on the Corinthians.

I mean, this is a very persuasive rhetoric. Paul has intentionally laid the groundwork for the requests that are going to follow in chapters 8 to 9. In chapters 8 to 9, Paul is going to talk about the collection and giving. So, in chapter 7, Paul ends in a powerful way with persuasive rhetoric, intentionally laying the ground for what is going to follow in 8 and 9. So perhaps again, he looks forward to a joyful visit instead of, in contrast to his previous painful visit.

But to what extent was Paul's complete confidence misplaced? Well, we probably will see in 2 Corinthians 10-13 that there were still problems to be faced. But at least at this point, he had complete confidence. Nevertheless, there are strong hints in

Romans which suggest that Corinthians actually rose to the occasion and supported Paul's collection.

So, Paul closes the first section of the epistle here on a very positive note. Very, very positive. We need to exercise more of this confidence in others.

However, people cannot be the grounds for such confidence. The ground is God's power and God's desire to answer those prayers that seek God's glory and the good of others. It is very, very important to see what Paul does here.

His sense of joy is intimately tied to the total well-being of those with whom he is lovingly concerned. Whether his fellow walker in verses 13-14 or his converts to the faith in verses 15-16, Paul's confidence in the Corinthians arises from the openness of his heart and life to them. As well as from the continued operation of the grace of God in the lives of the Corinthians.

He also has convictions about their real attitude toward him when undisturbed by sinister outside influences. They were now open to Paul. They opened their heart wide to Paul as Paul opened his heart to them as well.

This is Dr. Ayo Adewuya in his teaching on 2 Corinthians. This is session 8, 2 Corinthians 7, Urgent Appeals.