

**Introduction**

The title for this message reflects that there are two main ideas in this section. The first is Paul's utmost honesty and his care for the church at Corinth; the second is the comfort that he received at the good news from there.

**1. Appeal for Open Hearts, vv. 2-3**

A. Right off the bat, we see the command to open their hearts (show love that is unrestricted). "Make room in your hearts for us" is the point. He gives two reasons why they should do so:

B. **Why?** Because Paul has not done anything to restrain them from loving him. This is a declarative statement that Paul has not wronged, corrupted, or cheated any other person. His conduct with respect to others has been with integrity. This involves three areas:

1. To wrong – to do evil, injure, harm, hurt, damage, cause a loss. See Col. 3:25 and Matt. 20:13. Acts 7:24-27 uses the term of a physical struggle, and 2 Peter 2:13 regarding the evil of false teachers. 1 Cor. 6:7-8 refers to the virtue of taking a wrong instead of taking someone to court. It was actually someone in the Corinthian church who had done the wrong – 2 Cor. 7:12. Philemon shows it is possible for a wrong to be fixed by a substitute. In other words, the word is broad, somewhat more broad even than the verb "to wrong" is in our own English language since it can refer to physical or financial ill-doing or false teaching. Paul did not physical hurt anyone, he did not steal their money, he did not bring in any false teaching.
2. To corrupt – to ruin, spoil, destroy, lead astray. This term is used in 1 Cor. 3:17 of one who defiles or destroys the local church (the temple of God) and 1 Cor. 15:33 of the negative effect of bad company on good character. Rev. 19:2 speaks of the negative effects of immorality. Later in 2 Corinthians it refers to being led astray from Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). This seems to have mostly a spiritual kind of connotation (it's not graffiti we are talking about here). Paul did not defile the church or bring in immorality or corrupt their character.
3. To cheat – take advantage of, outwit, defraud. Satan delights to do this particularly with regard to lack of forgiveness in the assembly (2 Cor. 2:11). The word is used of cheating with someone else's spouse (1 Thess. 4:6). That amounts to cheating the person's spouse *and* one's own spouse. Paul certainly has not taken advantage of anyone in any sense of the word, not even through others whom he has sent there (2 Cor. 12:17-18).

The bottom line is that Paul was saying, "I did not bring about the moral or financial ruin of anyone." Their were some charging him with that. He avoided hurting others, and there was no Prov. 23:7 duplicity here as if he cheated them without them knowing it.

C. **Why?** Because Paul truly cares for them. He is not saying all that he said to condemn them. The entreaty to open their hearts is meant to be helpful, not condemnatory. When he says "you are in our hearts" he is saying he cares for them. When someone is in your heart, that means you love them. Are your fellow believers "in your heart" in the sense they should be?

**2. Reminder About Comfort and Joy, vv. 4-7**

You might be able to imagine yourself in the apostle's shoes. He is having problems in his work at the church in Corinth, besides all of the other problems along the way of his travels (for instance, Acts 19 and 1 Cor. 15:32 mentions problems in Ephesus). And he frankly mentions "all our tribulation" at the end of verse 4. But in the midst of that, he can still have four positive attitudes:

1. He maintains bold speech to the Corinthians, saying what is necessary to the assembly, even though it hurts to do so (see, for instance, 7:8).

2. He also boasts on their behalf to others (including Titus, 7:14). He has a great confidence that something good will happen in Corinth. This confidence is not misplaced, but rather it is placed in God, who can do wonderful work in the church.
3. He is filled with comfort. This seems strange in light of the difficult circumstances that he finds himself in, and the somewhat pathetic condition of the church in Corinth. We'll see why this in the next verse.
4. He is very joyful in the midst of tribulation. The next verses will tell us how.

**A. Explanation of the Tribulations, v. 5**

Recall the situation that Paul had been in Ephesus for a stretch of several years (Acts 20:31). During that time he had made the short "painful" visit to Corinth and returned to Ephesus. The difficulty there was one thing that made alterations to his travel plans necessary. He wrote them the "severe" letter from Ephesus, sent by the hand of Titus, and expected to hear back from Titus what happened as a result. Paul was to meet him in Troas. So in Acts 20:1 the Bible tells us that Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia. He went via Troas. 2 Cor. 2:12 tells us about his stay in Troas and he preached the gospel there briefly but did not find Titus. 2:13 goes on to say that he left for Macedonia to try to find Titus. Finally in 7:6 we find out that Paul finally did find Titus and heard news about the situation there.

Along the way of this long journey, Paul was weary (our bodies had no rest). On every side he experienced problems. No matter where he turned, there was persecution for his outer man, and distress for his inner man (2:13). 2 Cor. 11:28 tells us about this inner care—his burden for the churches that he planted.

**B. Explanation of Comfort and Joy, vv. 6-7**

Despite all of these problems, Paul tells us first, and unequivocally, that **God comforts the downcast**. The second thing Paul says is that God did his comforting work in this case by the coming of Titus. In other words, **God used some human means to convey his comfort** to the apostle. Notice that the connection between these two things points out a third truth, and that is that we should **see the hand of God behind things** even if they may not seem on the surface to be God's work. Many people would look at Titus coming to Paul and say, "Well, there is not much remarkable about that!" But Paul thought it was remarkable, in that he saw the hand of God comforting him through Titus. Paul's comfort came from a chain of three events:

1. Titus' arrival. Any fear that Paul may have had for Titus' traveling safety was allayed now that he saw Titus and found out he was well. His arrival also meant that Paul would shortly find out what was happening in Corinth.
2. Titus himself was consoled by the Corinthians.
3. This comfort in turn Titus passed on to Paul to comfort him.

Notice how the truth of 2 Cor. 1:3-4 comes to life: God comforts us, that we can comfort others with that same comfort. Here, Titus was comforted by God through the things happening in Corinth, and he passed that on to the apostle. And so the letter comes full circle from where it started. Actually we could say that the first 7 chapters of 2 Corinthians are all about this theme of divine comfort in the midst of strained relations and trials.

There were three things exhibited by the Corinthians that were positive:

1. Earnest desire. This probably refers to their desire to make things right. Some suggest that this was their desire to see the apostle Paul again.
2. Mourning. This word is very rare in the NT. It occurs in Mat. 2:18 about the lamentation and mourning that occurred in Bethlehem and the surrounding communities when Herod had the young children killed. This is a serious word, indicating a mourning for sin. They understood that they were wrong.
3. Zeal. An intense desire to follow Paul's instructions in order to make things right.

**Conclusion**

The Bible talks about sincere love in this passage. Paul's love and openness leads to a good response from the Corinthians. Thankfully, God's comfort then comes to Paul. MAP