



POWER IN WEAKNESS | GODLY GRIEF (9)

November 2, 2025

2 Corinthians 7:2-10

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Discussion Question

- What is your comfort food?

WORSHIP 10 MIN

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Psalm 24

The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,

The world and those who dwell therein,

For he has founded it upon the seas

And established it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?

And who shall stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

Who does not lift up his soul to what is false.

He will receive blessing from the LORD

And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Corinthians 7:2-10

²Make room in your hearts for us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. ³I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. ⁴I 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.

⁵For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. ⁶But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, ⁷and 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. ⁸For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

¹⁰For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

We are continuing our fall sermon series, *Power in Weakness*, during which we're looking at Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians, appropriately considered Paul's most painful, personal, and passionate letter. This week's passage opens with Paul's continued appeal to the Corinthians, reaffirming his deep affection and confidence in them (verses 2-4). His heart is open toward them, and out of his deep sense of pastoral love, he longs for their reconciliation. In recounting his recent trials in Macedonia, Paul describes being "afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within" (verse 5) yet finding comfort in God, "who comforts the downcast" (verse 6; cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-4). This comfort came through the arrival of Titus, who not only relieved Paul's anxiety but also brought joyful news of the Corinthians' repentance (verse 7).

Paul rejoices because the Corinthians' sorrow led to repentance and not despair (verse 8-9). Their grief was "godly," not "worldly." Godly grief leads to life, while worldly grief leads only to death (verse 10). Worldly grief is self-centered; it laments the loss of personal comfort, success, or reputation, as exemplified by those who mourn over fallen Babylon (Revelation 18:9-11). By contrast, godly grief is God-centered; it grieves sin because sin offends a holy God and dishonors his grace, as seen in the contrition of David (Psalm 51:4) or in Peter's weeping after his denial (Luke 22:62). As 17th-century Dutch theologian Johannes Hoornbeek exhorted, believers should "pay heed to your sins that grieve and oppress you," for that struggle serves as the very evidence of divine grace at work in your life.

This grief over sin is not something that only the Corinthians experienced; it is true for Christians as well. True repentance, as 17th-century English theologian John Owen notes, consists of two elements: *mortification*, or dying to sin, and *vivification*, or rising to new life. Mortification involves recognizing sin's offensiveness before God and being "displeased with ourselves," while vivification looks to God's mercy in Christ, restoring courage and joy through grace. This aligns with the Westminster Confession of Faith, which defines repentance as a saving grace, whereby the sinner, "upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ," grieves for and hates sin as contrary to God's holy nature, turning from it unto Him in obedience (WCF 15.1-2). True repentance, therefore, is not fear-based but joy-based. As Tim Keller puts it, "Fear-based repentance makes us hate ourselves. Joy-based repentance makes us hate the sin." Godly grief is therefore the doorway to gospel joy; it humbles the sinner but also lifts them into communion with Christ.

Paul's teaching here underscores that repentance is not a single act but a lifelong disposition of the renewed heart. J. I. Packer describes it as a pattern of: realistic recognition that we have wronged God, regretful remorse at dishonoring Him, reverent seeking of pardon, resolute renunciation of sin, and requisite restitution toward others. Such repentance flows from faith and leads to life (Acts 11:18). Through repentance, believers experience both mortification and vivification: the dying of the old self and the rising of the new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Thus, this passage reveals the rhythm of the Christian life: affliction and comfort, sorrow and joy, death and resurrection, all held together in the gracious work of God, who comforts the downcast and brings life through repentance.

1. Looking at the Bible

- From the passage, share with the group some key phrases or ideas that stood out to you.

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Every passage not only points to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- In verse 6, Paul says that God comforts the downcast through the coming of Titus. How has Jesus, the God of all comfort, brought comfort in your own life?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Paul describes earnestness, eagerness, and zeal as the fruits of true repentance (v. 11). Do you see these qualities in your life when you turn from sin?

4. Looking at our World

- When you are convicted of sin, what kind of sorrow usually arises in your heart? Sorrow over consequences or sorrow over grieving God and neighbor?

PRAYER 15 MIN

Pray for each other: Share any prayer requests you have.

Pray for the New York City mayoral election. Pray that the new leader would fear God and care for the people with godly wisdom. Praise that God in his providence establishes all authorities that exist, and that he is always in control.