

## CORINTHIANS - The MORE EXCELLENT WAY



### STUDY 24

# Earnest in sorrow, Excelling in all ways

See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness ... But just as you excel in everything -- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us -- see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

2 COR.7:11; 8:7 (NIV)

#### Study 24a: GODLY SORROW, DIVINE COMFORT (7:2-16)

##### 7:2-4 Though Paul had confidence in the Corinthians, in what area were they yet lacking?

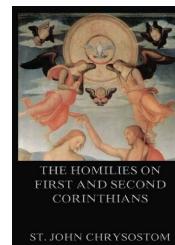
[7:2] This is clearly a resumption of the appeal of 6:11-13: "O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged ... Be ye also enlarged". [Hughes 260]

##### 7:5-7 What attributes of the Holy Spirit are apparently contagious?

[7:5] At this point the Apostle takes up again the account (which was interrupted at 2:14) of his movements and emotions prior to the writing of this letter, so that the section 2:14 to 7:4 may in this respect be regarded as an extensively developed parenthesis or digression. This digressive propensity is characteristic of his writing, and to it we owe, under God, some of the richest treasures of New Testament theology. The case in point is no exception; indeed, were the intervening four chapters missing from our Bible some of the mountain peaks of spiritual doctrine and consolation would be covered from our view. [Hughes 264]

##### 7:8-11 What is one role of sorrow and suffering in the Divine economy? (Isa.53:3-5; Heb.5:7-9)

[7:8,9] Both Chrysostom and Calvin liken the Apostle's feelings to those experienced by a father: the former to a father who finds regret, not pleasure, in seeing his son suffering pain under the surgeon's knife, but pleasure, not regret, in the cure that the operation is producing; the latter to a father who is grieved when he finds it necessary to punish his son severely, but none the less approves the action because it is directed towards his son's welfare. The aptness of this simile is attested by Paul's earlier



statement that his object in writing this stern letter to the Corinthians was that he might have proof of them, whether (like sons) they were obedient in all things (2:9; cf. 6:13). [Hughes 268-269]

[7:10] Besides godly sorrow, however, there is a different kind of sorrow which Paul calls "the sorrow of the world" ... The sorrow of the world, indeed, is not something distinct from sin; on the contrary, it partakes of the very essence of sin. It is not sorrow because of the heinousness of sin as rebellion against God, but sorrow because of the painful and unwelcome consequences of sin. Self is its central point; and self is also the central point of sin. Thus the sorrow of the world manifests itself in self-pity rather than in contrition and turning to God for mercy. The sorrow of the world may be very bitter and intense, like that of Esau who sorrowed with many tears over his lost birthright but found no place for repentance (Heb.12:16f.). [Hughes 272-273]

***“... the sorrow of the world manifests itself in self-pity rather than in contrition ...”***

##### 7:12-16 Let us never underestimate the ripple effect of a joyous, comforting spirit

#### Study 24b: EXCELLING in the GRACE of GIVING (8:1-15)

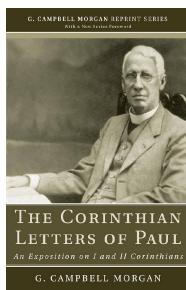
Now, the value of this whole section is the revelation of abiding principles, and the whole activity is described by the repeated use of the word "grace." It occurs seven times in the eighth chapter, and three times in chapter nine ... Let us look at this

## God's method of evaluating gifts of charity

The most genuine liberality is frequently displayed by those who have the least to give. Christian giving is estimated in terms not of quantity but of sacrifice. [Hughes 288]

Many of us talk a great deal about grace and show very little. God has manifested grace toward us, and how full of grace our lives ought to be. These Macedonians had been saved by grace, and now the rich grace of giving is bestowed upon them. Giving is a grace. "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Notice four expressions here: "Great trial of affliction," "abundance of joy," "deep poverty," "riches of liberality." Is it not remarkable to find all four of these expressions brought into such an intimate relationship? They were going through a great trial ... But out of "the abundance of their joy," yet coupled with "their deep poverty," they gave, and it "abounded unto the riches of their liberality." I do not think that means that they gave large sums. They probably did not have large sums to give, but the little was regarded by God as a larger gift than if very much more had come from people far more wealthy than the Macedonians. God's way of estimating gifts is different from ours. He estimates our gifts, not by the amount we give, but by the amount we have left. [Ironside 194-195]

word, the Greek word for grace, *charis*. It underwent a change of meaning, or of different application in the Greek language and literature. Then it gathered a new meaning when the Christian writers took hold of it. It first meant everything in the realm of beauty, as against ugliness, of strength as against weakness, of health as against sickness, of love as against hate. The whole aesthetic realm, the realm of beauty and glory and health and strength, all that is high, as opposed to all that is low ... Then in later writings it took on a new meaning, and it was the desire to impart these things to other people. I am referring still to Greek literature. Then these New Testament writers took hold of it, and lifted it into a higher realm, and it became a word standing for the activity that fulfils the desire to impart the things of health and beauty and glory, instead of shame, to other people. [Morgan 250-251]



In this section Paul returns, after the lapse of a year (more or less), to the subject of the collection for Jerusalem, previously mentioned in 1 C.16.1-4. On that earlier occasion he gave directions for the gathering and transmission of the money, but in the intervening period of tension between him and part at least of the Corinthian church their interest in the matter would have waned, and he would have judged it inexpedient to remind them of it. But now, with the restoration of happier relations, the subject could be raised again, and Paul raises it, with all the delicacy and tact at his command. He wanted the Corinthians' contribution to be generous, but at the same time he wanted it to be completely voluntary. The whole purpose of the exercise, as Paul conceived it, would be vitiated if at any stage he appeared to be requiring their participation in the scheme by apostolic authority or by anything that savoured of pressure. [Bruce 219-220]

#### 8:1-5 What miracle of grace was manifest in Macedonia? (Luke 21:1-4)

[8:5] Tyrannical coercion or extortion may, of course, bring it about that people give contrary to their ability. But there was no question (however much his adversaries might have insinuated it) of the Apostle having in any way exerted pressure upon the Macedonian churches in order to extract money from them. On the contrary, they had given spontaneously, "of their own accord". Indeed, what is more, it is apparent that Paul had actually forborne to ask them for any contribution to the collection, no doubt having concluded that churches so poverty-stricken as those in Macedonia could not be expected to spare of their meagre goods for others – for they had *besought* him "with much entreaty" to grant them the favour of a share in this ministration to the saints at Jerusalem. As Chrysostom remarks, it was they, not Paul, who did the begging. [Hughes 291]

**Who did the  
begging?**

#### 8:6-8 How could the Corinthians now demonstrate their earnestness?

Notice, Paul never asked for money for himself. Even when he was laboring in Corinth he said, "I robbed other churches ... to do you service" (11:8). Other churches sent their missionary money to him, but now that they are Christians he does not want them to forget their responsibilities. He never asks anything for himself, and the true servant of Christ is not going to try to stir people up to do for him, but he will be concerned for the needs of others. Paul would never beg for himself, but he had no shame about pleading most earnestly for others when occasion arose. [Ironside 198]

#### 8:9-15 As we did with suffering, in what way do we again see the model in Christ?

\* \* \*

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barrett, C.K. *A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Black's NTC, 1973)
- Bruce, F.F. *1 and 2 Corinthians* (New Century Bible Commentary, 1971)
- Hodge, Charles *1 and 2 Corinthians* (1857 and 1859)
- Hughes, Philip Edgcumbe *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (NIC, 1962)
- Ironside, Harry *Addresses on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (1939)
- Morgan, G. Campbell *The Corinthian Letters of Paul* (1946)
- Plummer, Alfred *The Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC, 1915)