

Study 8: Chapter 7

Introduction

Finally, Paul hears some news from Corinth after finally meeting up with Titus. The news is good, and Paul rejoices at the outcome. The Corinthians had changed their behaviour just as Paul had hoped that they would.

Body of the Study

The changes required

Paul's appeal for acceptance

Paul's concern for the situation in Corinth

The results from Corinth

Conclusions on the matter

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *In what ways do we (and you as an individual) exhibit Godly sorrow in your own lives?*
- *Paul was encouraged with the news from Titus. What are some examples of encouragement that you have had of good news from other churches? How do these circumstances compare to the one in Corinth?*
- Read the notes as a review of the study.
- Read chapter 8 and 9 together in preparation for the next study.

Notes for study 8: Chapter 7

Introduction

Chapter 7 concludes the line of argument from the previous chapters. Finally, Paul hears some news from Corinth after finally meeting up with Titus. The news is good, and Paul rejoices at the outcome.

Body of the Study

The changes required

The chapter begins with the bridge “...therefore...” as Paul links the conclusion of verse 1 to his argument of the previous chapter. Therefore – because – we have these promises – then – this is what our behaviour ought to be.

Implicit in the behaviour that Paul calls for is to remove ourselves from “...all filthiness of the flesh and spirit...” It is not just the physical changes that are required, but also spiritual changes in our lives.

Paul is probably implying that the Corinthians have become defiled, perhaps by occasionally sharing meals at idol-shrines or by continuing to attend festivals or ceremonies in pagan temples (cf. [1Co 8:10](#); [10:14-22](#)), or even by maintaining membership in a local pagan cult. If they make a clean break with pagan life in any and every form, they will be bringing their holiness nearer completion by this proof of their reverence for God. (NIVBC)

The changes need to lead us towards God “...perfecting holiness in the fear of God...” (2:7:1 NKJV). Holiness means *separate* – we need to be different than those in the world around us. But that complete relationship is not something that we will ever achieve completely. Paul uses a verb to describe our holiness as *perfecting* – that is that we continually move towards achieving that complete holiness. The motivation for our actions is *the fear (respect) of God*, as we have previously discussed.

Paul’s appeal for acceptance

Over the last few chapters, Paul has revealed his motivation, and the reason that he has had to be so stern in dealing with them. He now appeals directly to them “...open your hearts to us...” (2:7:2). In contrast to the Judaisers (his “enemies”), Paul had wished no one any wrong. He had simply taught the truth, and had not taken advantage of anyone. He had not dealt with them in an unjust way. Further, there was nothing that the Judaisers had taught which should have shaken the Corinthian’s confidence in Paul.

Contrary to what the Judaisers were (apparently) saying about Paul, he in fact felt a very strong bond to them. With the constant threat of death in everything that he did, Paul felt a bond with them that he would *die together* with them, and yet in his continued life, he was able *to live together* with them to encourage and support them.

He had “...boasted about them greatly...” (2:7:4) and they ought to have been proud that he felt that way, rather than giving in to the disdain of the Judaisers. His boasting about them resulted from the change that had been brought about in their lives, and the report of such that Paul had from Titus.

Paul’s concern for the situation in Corinth

Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to try to straighten out some of the problems there. Titus was to come to back to Ephesus (most likely) to give Paul the news of how things were going there.

However, the riot that erupted in Ephesus caused Paul to leave unexpectedly, and so he came to Troas, hoping to find Titus there.

He was most disappointed when he couldn't find him, and so he came across to Macedonia (most likely Philippi, or Thessalonica) looking for him (2:2:12-13).

The journey to Macedonia was filled with fear and trepidation as to what he might find. Would Titus bring positive or negative response from Corinth? "*...we were troubled on every side. Outside were conflicts, inside were fears...*" (2:7:5 NKJV)

Titus was apparently not there when he arrived, but came whilst Paul was there. The news that he brought was good news, and Paul was comforted not only by the news, but also by Titus' arrival. (2:7:7).

The results from Corinth

The news that Titus brought was good. Whilst Paul was fearful that the Corinthians might have rejected him because of his firm response to them, yet they had embraced the things that he taught. They had mourned for their actions which had grieved God, and repented. They had an earnest desire to do what was right, which caused Paul to "*...rejoice even more...*" (2:7:7)

The earlier letter that Paul had written (some would say the lost letter, but it could have been the first letter) had made them sorrow over the situation. Whilst Paul was sorry that he had to write such a letter, it brought about the changes that he had desired, and so he was not sorry of the outcome. Their "*...sorrow led to repentance...*" (2:7:9). Paul was glad of the outcome, but was aware that speaking the truth does not always result in an outcome of people doing what is right (Jn 6:60-68).

However, the Corinthians expressed Godly sorrow. It was not a worldly sorrow that brings about despair and helplessness, but it brings about genuine sorrow for their actions, and a determination to repent so that they might be made right in the sight of God "*...For Godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation...*" (2:7:10)

Paul says, that by this action they have "*...been vindicated ... in all things they had proved themselves to be clear in the matter...*" (2:7:11)

The specific example that Paul has in mind is that concerning the incestuous person (1:5:1; 2:7:12) Paul was concerned to see that the Corinthians acted diligently in carrying out the discipline, as indeed they had. The point wasn't to do harm to the man, but to bring about Godly repentance.

Conclusions on the matter

Whilst Paul had dealt harshly with the Corinthians, he had achieved the outcome that he had desired. His firmness had brought about Godly repentance, and he was delighted to hear the news with the arrival of Titus.

When Titus came to Corinth (having been sent by Paul to try to straighten things out), he came in "*...fear and trembling...*" (2:7:15) scared of how he might be received. However he was very well received, and he was impressed because of the *obedience* of the Corinthians, and their desire to do the things that are right in God's sight.

Paul's conclusion is that he has confidence in them in everything. By implication, he is forward casting his anticipation of the response that they will implement towards the Judaisers.