

CHAPTER 7

This chapter begins with an exhortation to progressive holiness and a due regard to the ministers of the gospel (v. 1-4). Then the apostle returns from a long digression to speak further of the affair concerning the incestuous person, and tells them what comfort he received in his distress about that matter, upon his meeting with Titus (v. 5-7), and how he rejoiced in their repentance, with the evidences thereof (v. 8-11). And, lastly, he concludes with endeavouring to comfort the Corinthians, upon whom his admonitions had had so good an effect (v. 12-16).

2 CORINTHIANS 7:1-4

PROGRESSIVE HOLINESS

These verses contain a double exhortation:

- I.** To make a progress in holiness, or *to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, v. 1. This exhortation is given with most tender affection to those who were dearly beloved, and enforced by strong arguments, even the consideration of those exceedingly great and precious promises which were mentioned in the former chapter, and which the Corinthians had an interest in and a title to. The promises of God are strong inducements to sanctification, in both the branches thereof; namely,
 - 1.** The dying unto sin, or mortifying our lusts and corruptions: we must *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*. Sin is filthiness, and there are defilements of body and mind. There are sins of the flesh, that are committed with the body, and sins of the spirit, spiritual wickednesses; and we must cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of both, for God is to be glorified both with body and soul.
 - 2.** The living unto righteousness and holiness. If we hope God is our Father, we must endeavour to be *partakers of his holiness*, to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. We must be still perfecting holiness, and not be contented with sincerity (which is our gospel perfection), without aiming at sinless perfection, though we shall

always come short of it while we are in this world; and this we must do in the *fear of God*, which is the root and principle of all religion, and there is no holiness without it. Note, Faith and hope in the promises of God must not destroy our fear of God, *who taketh pleasure in those that fear him and hope in his mercy.*

II. To show a due regard to the ministers of the gospel: *Receive us*, v. 2. Those who labour in the word and doctrine should *be had in reputation*, and *be highly esteemed for their work's sake*: and this would be a help to making progress in holiness. If the ministers of the gospel are thought contemptible because of their office, there is danger lest the gospel itself be contemned also. The apostle did not think it any disparagement to court the favour of the Corinthians; and, though we must flatter none, yet we must be gentle towards all. He tells them,

1. He had done nothing to forfeit their esteem and good-will, but was cautious not to do any thing to deserve their ill-will (v. 2): “*We have wronged no man*: we have done you no harm, but always designed your good.” *I have coveted no man's silver, nor gold, nor apparel*, said he to the elders of Ephesus, ~~40B~~ Acts 20:33. “*We have corrupted no man*, by false doctrines or flattering speeches. *We have defrauded no man*; we have not sought ourselves, nor to promote our own secular interests by crafty and greedy measures, to the damage of any persons.” This is an appeal like that of Samuel, 1 Samuel 12. Note, Then may ministers the more confidently expect esteem and favour from the people when they can safely appeal to them that they are guilty of nothing that deserves disesteem or displeasure.

2. He did not herein reflect upon them for want of affection to him, v. 3, 4. So tenderly and cautiously did the apostle deal with the Corinthians, among whom there were some who would be glad of any occasion to reproach him, and prejudice the minds of others against him. To prevent any insinuations against him on account of what he had said, as if he intended to charge them with wronging him, or unjust accusations of him for having wronged them, he assures them again of his great affection to them, insomuch that he could spend his last breath at Corinth, and *live and die with them*, if his business with other churches, and his work as an apostle (which was not to be confined to one place only), would permit him to do so. An he adds it was his great affection to them that made him use such *boldness* or freedom of *speech towards them*, and caused him to

glory, or make his boast of them, in all places, and upon all occasions, being *filled with comfort, and exceedingly joyful in all their tribulations.*

~~4015~~ 2 CORINTHIANS 7:5-11

VARIOUS EXHORTATIONS

There seems to be a connection between ~~4013~~ 2 Corinthians 2:13 (where the apostle said he had no rest in his spirit when he found not Titus at Troas) and the fifth verse of this chapter: and so great was his affection to the Corinthians, and his concern about their behaviour in relation to the incestuous person, that, in his further travels, he still had no rest till he heard from them. And now he tells them,

I. How he was distressed, v. 5. He was troubled when he did not meet with Titus at Troas, and afterwards when for some time he did not meet with him in Macedonia: this was a grief to him, because he could not hear what reception he met with at Corinth, nor how their affairs went forward. And, besides this, they met with other troubles, with incessant storms of persecutions; there were *fightings without*, or continual contentions with, and opposition from, Jews and Gentiles; and there were *fears within*, and great concern for such as had embraced the Christian faith, lest they should be corrupted or seduced, and give scandal to others, or be scandalized.

II. How he was comforted, v. 6, 7. Here observe,

1. The very coming of Titus was some comfort to him. It was matter of joy to see him, whom he long desired and expected to meet with. The very coming of Titus and his company, who was dear to him as his *own son in the common faith* (~~5018~~ Titus 1:4), was a great comfort to the apostle in his travels and troubles. But,

2. The good news which Titus brought concerning the Corinthians was matter of greater consolation. He found Titus to be comforted in them; and this filled the apostle with comfort, especially when he acquainted him with their earnest desire to give good satisfaction in the things about which the apostle had written to them; and of their mourning for the scandal that was found among them and the great grief they had caused to others, and

their fervent mind or great affection towards the apostle, who had dealt so faithfully with them in reproofing their faults: so true is the observation of Solomon (~~103~~ Proverbs 28:23), *He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue.*

3. He ascribes all his comfort to God as the author. It was God who comforted him by the coming of Titus, even the God of all comfort: *God, who comforteth those that are cast down*, v. 6. Note, We should look above and beyond all means and instruments, unto God, as the author of all the consolation and the good that we enjoy.

III. How greatly he rejoiced at their repentance, and the evidences thereof. The apostle was sorry that he had grieved them, that some pious persons among them laid to heart very greatly what he said in his former epistle, or that it was needful he should make those sorry whom he would rather have made glad, v. 8. But now he rejoiced, when he found they had *sorrowed to repentance*, v. 9. Their sorrow in itself was not the cause of his rejoicing; but the nature of it, and the effect of it (*repentance unto salvation*, v. 10), made him rejoice; for now it appeared that they had received damage by him in nothing. Their sorrow was *but for a season*; it was turned into joy, and that joy was durable. Observe here,

1. The antecedent of true repentance is godly sorrow; this worketh repentance. It is not repentance itself, but it is a good preparative to repentance, and in some sense the cause that produces repentance. The offender had great sorrow, he was in danger of being *swallowed up with overmuch sorrow*; and the society was greatly sorrowful which before was puffed up: and this sorrow of theirs was after a godly manner, or according to God (as it is in the original), that is, it was according to the will of God, tended to the glory of God, and was wrought by the Spirit of God. It was a godly sorrow, because a sorrow for sin, as an offence against God, an instance of ingratitude, and a forfeiture of God's favour. There is a great difference between this sorrow of a godly sort and the sorrow of this world. Godly sorrow produces repentance and reformation, and will end in salvation; but worldly sorrow worketh death. The sorrows of worldly men for worldly things will bring down gray hairs the sooner to the grave, and such a sorrow even for sin as Judas had will have fatal consequences, as his had, which wrought death. Note,

(1.) Repentance will be attended with salvation. Therefore,

(2.) True penitents will never repent that they have repented, nor of any thing that was conducive thereto.

(3.) Humiliation and godly sorrow are previously necessary in order to repentance, and both of them are from God, the giver of all grace.

2. The happy fruits and consequences of true repentance are mentioned (v. 11); and those *fruits that are meet for repentance* are the best evidences of it. Where the heart is changed, the life and actions will be changed too.

The Corinthians made it evident that their sorrow was a godly sorrow, and such as wrought repentance, because it wrought in them great carefulness about their souls, and to avoid sin, and please God; it wrought also a clearing of themselves, not by insisting upon their own justification before God, especially while they persisted in their sin, but by endeavours to put away the accursed thing, and so free themselves from the just imputation of approving the evil that had been done. It wrought indignation at sin, at themselves, at the tempter and his instruments; it wrought fear, a fear of reverence, a fear of watchfulness, and a fear of distrust, not a distrust of God, but of themselves; an awful fear of God, a cautious fear of sin, and a jealous fear of themselves. It wrought vehement desires after a thorough reformation of what had been amiss, and of reconciliation with God whom they had offended. It wrought zeal, a mixture of love and anger, a zeal for duty, and against sin. It wrought, lastly, revenge against sin and their own folly, by endeavours to make all due satisfaction for injuries that might be done thereby. And thus *in all things had they approved themselves to be clear in that matter*. Not that they were innocent, but that they were penitent, and therefore clear of guilt before God, who would pardon and not punish them; and they ought no longer to be reproved, much less to be reproached, by men, for what they had truly repented of.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:12-16

CASE OF THE INCESTUOUS PERSON

In these verses the apostle endeavours to comfort the Corinthians, upon whom his admonitions had had such good effect. And in order thereto, 1. He tells them he had a good design in his former epistle, which might be thought severe, v. 12. It was not chiefly *for his cause that did the wrong*, not only for his benefit, much less merely that he should be punished; nor

was it merely *for his cause that suffered wrong*, namely, the injured father, and that he might have what satisfaction could be given him; but it was also to manifest his great and sincere concern and *care for them*, for the whole church, lest that should suffer by letting such a crime, and the scandal thereof, remain among them without due remark and resentment.

2. He acquaints them with the joy of Titus as well as of himself upon the account of their repentance and good behaviour. Titus was rejoiced, and his spirit refreshed, with their comfort, and this comforted and rejoiced the apostle also (v. 13); and, as Titus was comforted while he was with them, so when he remembered his reception among them, expressing their obedience to the apostolical directions, and their fear and trembling at the reproofs that were given them, the thoughts of these things inflamed and increased his affections to them, v. 15. Note, Great comfort and joy follow upon godly sorrow. As sin occasions general grief, so repentance and reformation occasion general joy. Paul was glad, and Titus was glad, and the Corinthians were comforted, and the penitent ought to be comforted; and well may all this joy be on earth, when there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.

3. He concludes this whole matter with expressing the entire confidence he had in them: He was not ashamed of his boasting concerning them to Titus (v. 14); for he was not disappointed in his expectation concerning them, which he signified to Titus, and he could now with great joy declare what confidence he still had in them as to all things, that he did not doubt of their good behaviour for the time to come. Note, It is a great comfort and joy to a faithful minister to have to do with a people whom he can confide in, and who he has reason to hope will comply with every thing he proposes to them that is for the glory of God, the credit of the gospel, and their advantage.