

## Handout: 2 Corinthians Lesson 4

*Paul has been comforted by the fact that those whom he rebuked wished to mend their ways. But on learning from Titus that they were experiencing pain on account of their error, he was consoled even more and filled with joy, because their resolve had been confirmed by their behavior.*

Ambrosiaster, *Commentary on Paul's Epistles*

The collection of alms for the Christians in Jerusalem recalls the praising of almsgiving in the Old Testament:

- *Prayer and fasting are good, but better than either is almsgiving accompanied by righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than abundance with wickedness. It is better to give alms than to store up gold; for almsgiving saves one from death and expiates every sin...* (Tob 12:8-9a).
- *Water quenches a flaming fire, and alms atone for sins* (Sir 3:29).
- *Store up almsgiving in your treasure house, and it will save you from every evil* (Sir 29:12).

In 8:7, Paul praises the Corinthian Christians in five ways: they excel in faith, discourse, knowledge, earnestness, and love.

The keyword in Chapters 8-9 is *charis*, the divine gift of God's favor that is usually translated "grace" that Paul uses eight times in 8:1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 19; 9:8, 14). In 8:1-9:15, in his call to raise money for the Jerusalem church, Paul used the word *charis* (grace) eight times in five different but interrelated ways that highlight St. Paul's theology of grace that begins with God and returns to Him in thanksgiving and praise:

1. Foremost in St Paul's theology of grace he refers to the *charis* of God's self-giving love manifested in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (8:9).
2. Paul refers to God's *charis* infused in human hearts by the Holy Spirit to guide and empower righteous human actions (8:1; 9:14).
3. Paul uses the word *charis* to signify the favor granted to those who participate in good works that extends God's saving love to others (8:4, 6-7, 19).
4. Paul calls the material resources God provides to those who cooperate in His plan to provide for those in need as a *charis* (9:8).
5. Paul uses the word *charis* for the thanksgiving given to God for the blessings received through the works of those inspired by God (8:16).

Chapter 10 can be divided into three parts in which Paul contrasts himself with the trouble-making missionaries:

1. Paul compares himself to a soldier in God's army whose authority is from Jesus Christ and whose mission is to bring about Christ-like obedience within the Corinthian community (verses 1-6).
2. Paul's God-given authority is for building up the community (verses 7-11).
3. Paul defines what constitutes proper missionary "boasting" (verses 12-18).

Paul uses a series of contrasts in 10:1-6:

1. presence versus absence
2. gentleness, clemency, and humility versus boldness, confidence, and bravery
3. obedience versus disobedience

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Paul brings up the subject of Jesus' character in 10:1a for three reasons:

1. Paul seeks to emulate Jesus' gentleness and clemency in his role as the "father" of the Corinthian community.
2. Jesus' gentle behavior toward others is in contrast to the values and behavior of those attempting to disrupt the community and to challenge Paul's leadership.
3. He wants the Corinthians to emulate Christ's gentleness and clemency in peaceful relationships with each other and with Paul and his team, even when Paul must correct their behavior.

In 10:4-6, Paul uses the battle metaphor in a three-part progression of siege warfare:

1. The first stage in siege warfare is to destroy the enemy's fortifications. As a warrior for Christ, Paul is *capable of destroying fortresses* of his enemies by destroying their *arguments and every pretension raising itself against the knowledge of God...* The "knowledge of God" refers to the Gospel.
2. The second stage of siege warfare is to take captives. Therefore, Paul and his team *take every thought captive in obedience to Christ*. Paul sees his work in spreading the Gospel a kind of rescue operation in which he and his team save those taken captive by sin.
3. The third stage of siege warfare is *to punish every disobedience once your obedience is complete*. Paul wants the obedience of the community to be complete by punishing the trouble-makers by banishing them and their misrepresentation of the Gospel.

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