

## Slow Food Bible Studies: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-13:14 (27 studies)

This set of studies picks up from where we left off in TNV 45 (2008). In fact Paul has just given us a long digression on his ministry in 2:14-7:4 (well worth re-reading!) so it really takes up from 2:13. For an outline of events leading up to the writing of 2 Corinthians, see the companion *Slow Paul: 2 Corinthians* which can be found on the TISCA website under 'Downloads – Slow Food'.

The argument about the compositional unity of 2 Corinthians has never been laid to rest. Even some evangelical scholars have concluded that chapters 10-13 were originally a separate letter. However, the book has come down to us as a single unit; so for the purposes of study we shall ignore the apparent break between chapters 9 and 10, since no major issue of interpretation hangs on it. (See Carson, below, pp 10-16.)

We can assume, then, that 2 Corinthians was composed in Macedonia (Northern Greece) in about AD 55-56. Paul was acutely concerned about things that had been happening in the church, resulting in an undermining of his own authority, and even more vitally, in a distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A measure of its success is indicated by the fact that Paul was able to pay the Corinthians a third visit towards the end of AD 56, which lasted three months and which seems to have calmed things down at least for a time.

Sometimes our work for Christ goes pear-shaped; or at least it isn't having the results we had hoped. This isn't a sign that we have fallen out of favour with the Lord; it may in fact be his way of getting us to work painstakingly through the issues rather than vaguely hoping things will eventually get better. Paul is at his most self-revealing in the latter part of this letter and that if nothing else makes the study worthwhile.

Commentaries and books: Colin Kruse (Tyndale 1987), Paul Barnett (IVP BST 1988), Linda Belleville (IVP 1996), Tom Wright (SPCK 2003), Donald Carson *From Triumphalism to Maturity* (on chs 10-13, Baker 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 1996) and Kruse in the *New Bible Commentary* 4<sup>th</sup> ed (IVP 1994) are all useful and approachable.

### **7:2-4 Where do I find my greatest Christian 'solidarity'? Is it a source of grief or joy?**

*Ps 122; Lk 22:28; 2 Cor 1:11. This study acts as a link to the previous section.*

### **7:5-9 Have I a right to expect peace of mind in my Christian life and service?**

*Isa 26:3; Isa 30:15; 2 Thess 3:16.*

### **7:10-16 When there is disharmony in a community, what are the pros and cons of complete openness?**

*Num 12; 2 Tim 2:14-26.*

### **8:1-7 What can I learn from the Macedonian churches' attitude to giving?**

*Mk 12:41-44; Phil 4:15-16; Heb 10:34.*

### **8:8-15 How does Christ's example challenge me in relation to our generosity?**

*Exod 16:17-18; Phil 2:6-7; Jas 2:14-16; 1 Jn 3:16-18.*

### **8:16-24 Should I pay attention to other people's criticism? *Prov 28:23; 1 Cor 4:2-5; Tit 2:7-8.***

### **9:1-5 If I need to ginger up folk who may be resistant, is Paul's approach the best way to go about it?**

*Prov 25:15; Lk 18:1-5; 1 Pet 3:15*

### **9:6-8 In the light of God's promises, am I still reluctant to contribute to the relief of need?**

*Prov 11:24-25; Gal 5:9.*

### **9:9-11 How recklessly generous can I afford to be? *Ps 112:5, 9; Hos 10:12; Lk 6:38; 1 Tim 6:17-18.***

**9:12-15 Does my lifestyle encourage others to praise and thank God for his blessing?**

*1 Chr 28:14-18; Ps 107:8-9; Jas 3:13, 17-18.*

**10:1-6 What kind of battles am I fighting? How am I planning to win them?**

*Mt 26:41; 2 Cor 6:4-7; Eph 6:10-20.*

**10:7-12 Do I mind if other people don't find me particularly impressive?**

*1 Sam 16:7; Isa 53:2-3; 1 Cor 2:1-5.*

**10:13-18 Am I where the Lord wants me to be, doing the work he wants me to do?**

*Jer 9:23-24; 1 Cor 3:13-15; Jn 15:14-16.*

**11:1-6 Am I, or are those I am trying to lead, being brainwashed by 'other gospels'? Do I mind?**

*Mt 23:13; Gal 1:6-9; 2 Cor 4:1-6.*

**11:7-11 Is there any way in which I am imposing on those I serve, e.g. by requiring financial incentives? Eccl 5:10; Lk 16:13-14; Phil 4:17-19.**

**11:12-15 How can I be sure that I'm serving Christ and not the enemy?**

*Mt 7:21-23; Jn 10:4-5; Rev 12:10-11.*

**11:16-21 Am I prepared to be a fool for Christ?**

*Hos 9:7-8; 1 Cor 1:18, 2:14, 4:9-10; Eph 5:15.*

**11:22-27 How much have I suffered for Christ? Was Paul special? Ps 55; Ps 66:12; Acts 9:16.**

**11:28-33 If I have a responsibility for young or growing Christians, am I exercised in prayer for them?**

*Dt 9:18-19; 1 Sam 12:23; Col 4:12-13.*

**12:1-7a Why is Paul so cagey about his experiences of God's intimate presence? Is it helpful for others to know about my personal feelings of closeness to Christ? Isa 6:1-8; Dan 10; Rev 1:12-18.**

**12:7b-10 What methods has Christ used to keep me humble? What lessons have they taught me? Dt 8:2-5; Heb 12:1-11.**

**12:11-13 Has God used me to do great things for him? Do I consider myself a cut above other more humdrum workers for Christ? Lk 10:1-23.**

**12:14-18 What are my motives for engaging in Christian service? Do I exploit people for my own ends? Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:3-6; Rev 2:20-23.**

**12:19-21 What habits still need dealing with in my life? 1 Cor 6:18-20; Gal 5:16-26.**

**13:1-4 What reminders do I need about weakness and strength in my dealings with others? 1 Cor 1:25; 2 Cor 4:7, 10:3-6, 12:9; Heb 4:15-16.**

**13:5-10 How would I respond to Paul's challenge to test myself on the genuineness of my faith? Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 2:20.**

**13:11-14 If God in three Persons is with me, what confidence can I rightly have?**

*Mt 28:20; Rom 8:35-39; Heb 13:5-6.*