



## Parish of Finchampstead and California

# THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

12 - 17 JULY 2021

## INTRODUCTION

This week we continue our readings from Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth. As usual the text in bold type gives a focus for the day's Thought.

### MONDAY - 2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1

<sup>1</sup> As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. <sup>2</sup> For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.'

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation. <sup>3</sup> We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, <sup>4</sup> but **as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, <sup>5</sup> beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger; <sup>6</sup> by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, <sup>7</sup> truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; <sup>8</sup> in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; <sup>9</sup> as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; <sup>10</sup> as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.**

<sup>11</sup> We have spoken frankly to you Corinthians; our heart is wide open to you. <sup>12</sup> There is no restriction in our affections, but only in yours. <sup>13</sup> In return—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also. <sup>14</sup> Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? <sup>15</sup> What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup> What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>17</sup> Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, <sup>18</sup> and I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.'

<sup>7:1</sup> Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and of spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God.

### ***Thought for the day***

*Most of us are probably glad that we don't experience the extreme contrasts of life that Paul recalls here. But we ought never to forget that some of our fellow-Christians, in more places than we perhaps realise, are still persecuted and treated harshly for their faith. If we were confronted by their harsh treatment in the ways Paul describes in verses 4 & 5, would we be able to respond with the virtues he describes in verse 6, confident in God's power and the 'weapons of righteousness' (v7)? Could we honestly claim to have nothing, but to possess everything (v10)? The danger with such elegantly balanced writing is that we appreciate its beauty, but ignore the implications of its content; but if our minds only are affected, not our hearts, Paul's appeal to us will have failed (v13).*

### TUESDAY - 2 Corinthians 7:2-16

<sup>2</sup> **Make room in your hearts for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one. <sup>3</sup> I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together. <sup>4</sup> I often boast about you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with consolation; I am overjoyed in all our affliction.**

<sup>5</sup> For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way—disputes without and fears within. <sup>6</sup> But God, who consoles the downcast, consoled us by the arrival of Titus, <sup>7</sup> and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was consoled about you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. <sup>8</sup> For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it (though I did regret it, for I see that I grieved you with that letter, though only briefly). <sup>9</sup> Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance; for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. <sup>10</sup> For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death. <sup>11</sup> For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment. At every point you have proved yourselves guiltless in the matter. <sup>12</sup> So although I wrote to you, it was not on account of the one who did the wrong, nor on account of the one who was wronged, but in order that your zeal for us might be made known to you before God. <sup>13</sup> In this we find comfort.

In addition to our own consolation, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his mind has been set at rest by all of you. <sup>14</sup> For if I have been somewhat boastful about you to him, I was not disgraced; but just as everything we said to you was true, so our boasting to Titus has proved true as well. <sup>15</sup> And his heart goes out all the more to you, as he remembers the obedience of all of you, and how you welcomed him with fear and trembling. <sup>16</sup> I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.

### ***Thought for the day***

*Paul continues with his appeal to the hearts of the Christians at Corinth (v2-3): he praises them for so much (v4) and apologises for his frankness (as 6:11 yesterday and here in his lost letter - v8). He seems satisfied that this letter had the effect he hoped for (v9-11). We might wonder whether things were quite that simple, especially if we reflect on our own attitude to criticism offered by others to us, however well-intended or justified. Humility is never easy.*

## **WEDNESDAY - 2 Corinthians 8:1-15**

<sup>1</sup> We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup> for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup> **For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, <sup>4</sup> begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints— <sup>5</sup> and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us,** <sup>6</sup> so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. <sup>7</sup> Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

<sup>8</sup> I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup> For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. <sup>10</sup> And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— <sup>11</sup> now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. <sup>12</sup> For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. <sup>13</sup> I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between <sup>14</sup> your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. <sup>15</sup> As it is written, 'The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.'

### ***Thought for the day***

*The project of making a collection from the new mainly Gentile churches for the benefit of the Jerusalem church was very significant for Paul. While his personal relationship with the leaders of the church was a difficult one, he was anxious to emphasise mutual support within the growing Christian community as much as within individual churches. He commends the generosity of the Macedonian churches (v3-5) and flatters the Corinthians (v7) to contribute in the same way. The idea of Christians giving themselves 'first to the Lord' relates not only to money but to our entire scale of values. To what extent do you have this attitude as our guiding principle in life?*

## **THURSDAY - 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5**

<sup>16</sup> But thanks be to God who put in the heart of Titus the same eagerness for you that I myself have. <sup>17</sup> For he not only accepted our appeal, but since he is more eager than ever, he is going to you of his own accord. <sup>18</sup> **With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming of the good news; <sup>19</sup> and not only that, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking for the glory of the Lord himself and to show our goodwill.** <sup>20</sup> We intend that no one should blame us about this generous gift that we are administering, <sup>21</sup> for we intend to do what is right not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of others. <sup>22</sup> And with them we are sending our brother whom we have often tested and found eager in many matters, but who is now more eager than ever because of his great confidence in you. <sup>23</sup> As for Titus, he is my partner and co-worker in your service; as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

<sup>9:1</sup> Now it is not necessary for me to write to you about the ministry to the saints, <sup>2</sup> for I know your eagerness, which is the subject of my boasting about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year; and your zeal has stirred up most of them. <sup>3</sup> But I am sending the brothers in order that our boasting about you may not prove to have been empty in this case, so that you may be ready, as I said you would be; <sup>4</sup> otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated—to say nothing of you—in this undertaking. <sup>5</sup> So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you, and arrange in advance for this bountiful gift that you have promised, so that it may be ready as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion.

### ***Thought for the day***

*Unfortunately it is not always the best or most persuasive preachers who are also the best administrators or handlers of money. So Paul stresses that the unnamed brother who will visit Corinth with Titus on his behalf is competent in both aspects of his work (v18-19). Others too will help ensure that everything will be done properly (v22-23). Are we ever tempted to accept lower standards in church life than we would elsewhere in our lives? Are we right to do so?*

## **FRIDAY - 2 Corinthians 9:6-15**

<sup>6</sup> **The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup> Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.** <sup>8</sup> And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. <sup>9</sup> As it is written, 'He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures for ever.'

<sup>10</sup> He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. <sup>11</sup> You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; <sup>12</sup> for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup> Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, <sup>14</sup> while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. <sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.

### ***Thought for the day***

*In this final push for generosity towards the collection, Paul makes three points: generosity begets bounty (v6); the decision about whether and how much to contribute is up to each person to decide (v7); and that God not only loves cheerful givers, but will ensure they don't suffer as a result of their generosity (v8-9). These ideas are still relevant when we think about the way we handle our own money. As a parish we have, over many years, tried to explain our needs in terms that are true to what the Bible tells us - here and elsewhere. And time after time we have been blessed in abundance (v8), often as recently beyond any reasonable expectation. Thanks indeed be to God (v15).*

## **SATURDAY - 2 Corinthians 10:1-18**

<sup>1</sup> I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold towards you when I am away!— <sup>2</sup> I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards. <sup>3</sup> **Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards;** <sup>4</sup> **for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments** <sup>5</sup> **and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.** <sup>6</sup> We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

<sup>7</sup> Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we. <sup>8</sup> Now, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. <sup>9</sup> I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters. <sup>10</sup> For they say, 'His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.' <sup>11</sup> Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present.

<sup>12</sup> We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense. <sup>13</sup> We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you. <sup>14</sup> For we were not overstepping our limits when we reached you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the good news of Christ. <sup>15</sup> We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labours of others; but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, <sup>16</sup> so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in someone else's sphere of action. <sup>17</sup> 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.' <sup>18</sup> For it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends.

### ***Thought for the day***

*In Monday's reading Paul wrote of 'the weapons of righteousness' (6:7). He returns to this military imagery today as he writes about waging war, weapons of divine origin, and taking even thoughts captive in the service of Christ (v3-5). We may find this kind of reasoning rather hard to accept, but the main thing it tells us is how seriously Paul took the spiritual struggle against sin, evil and willful ignorance. Against this background you might find it helpful to (re-)read Ephesians 6:10-17 below) with its comprehensive description of the Christian armoury, both offensive and defensive. Perhaps one element in particular will speak to your needs today and provide the basis for prayer.*

Ephesians 6: <sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. <sup>15</sup> As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.