

2 Corinthians 2:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

Analysis

Ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him—Paul employs two imperatives: charisasthai (χαρίσασθαι, "to forgive, show grace") and parakalesai (παρακαλέσαι, "to comfort, encourage"). The verb charizomai shares its root with charis (grace), indicating forgiveness is a gracious gift, not earned merit. Having disciplined, the church must now actively restore—forgiveness requires intentional comfort, not merely ceasing hostility.

Lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow—The verb katapothē (καταποθῆ, "to swallow up, overwhelm") suggests drowning or complete engulfment. The phrase perissotera lupē (περισσοτέρᾳ λύπῃ, "excessive sorrow") warns of despair leading to spiritual destruction. Unrelenting discipline can drive the repentant to abandon faith entirely. Satan's goal (v. 11) is accomplished whether through unrepentant sin or through excessive grief that destroys the penitent. Paul's pastoral wisdom recognizes both dangers.

Historical Context

Roman legal practice often demanded perpetual shame for certain offenses. Paul's insistence on restoration after repentance reflects Hebrew concepts of restoration (as in Psalm 51) rather than Greco-Roman honor codes. The church operates by grace, not shame-based social control.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does ongoing punishment of the repentant contradict the Gospel of grace?
2. What practical steps should accompany verbal forgiveness in restoration?
3. How can churches guard against both laxness in discipline and harshness in restoration?

Interlinear Text

ώστε τούναντίον μᾶλλον ύμᾶς χαρίσασθαι καὶ
So that contrariwise ought rather ye to forgive him and
G5620 G5121 G3123 G5209 G5483 G2532

παρακαλέσαι μήπως τῇ περισσοτέρᾳ λύπῃ
comfort him lest G3588 G4053 sorrow
G3870 G3381 G3077

καταποθῇ ὁ τοιοῦτος
should be swallowed up G3588 such a one
G2666 G5108

Additional Cross-References

Ephesians 4:32 (Parallel theme): And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Isaiah 28:7 (Parallel theme): But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

Proverbs 17:22 (Parallel theme): A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Colossians 3:13 (Parallel theme): Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Psalms 124:3 (Parallel theme): Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:

Psalms 21:9 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

Proverbs 1:12 (Parallel theme): Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:

1 Corinthians 15:54 (Parallel theme): So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

2 Corinthians 5:4 (Parallel theme): For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

2 Corinthians 7:10 (Parallel theme): For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.