

EXCEL IN FAITH

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But since you excel in everything in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you see that you also excel in this grace of giving. (2 Corinthians 8:7, NIVUK)

The City of Corinth

A bustling, predominantly Roman, port second in importance to Athens. A cosmopolitan city with Greeks, Jews and Romans founded on Roman law. Wealthy through business, there was little evidence of landed aristocracy Pagan, worshipped the Gods of Greece and Rome including:

- Poseidon – god of the sea
- Aphrodite – goddess of love (there was a temple that housed 2000 priestesses aka prostitutes)

“To Corinthianize” became a Greek verb, meaning to have promiscuous sex.

But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, CSB)

The Church in Corinth

Had it's problems; division, immorality, litigation, idolatry etc.

Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, CSB)

Body and Soul

Why did they have these problems? Greek Philosophy emphasise the separation of body and the soul and spirit. Only what happens to the soul is important from an eternal perspective. The Greeks either indulged their desires, ignored them or idolized them!

If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus as a mere man, what good did that do me? If the dead are not raised, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. (1 Corinthians 15:32, CSB)

The Bible shows us that our bodies are important in a different way.

Don't you yourselves know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him for God's temple is holy, and that is what you are. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, CSB)

Flee sexual immorality! Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20, CSB)

Faith Demonstrated

Real faith will be seen by others, our bodies are involved!

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can such faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself. (James 2:14-17, CSB)

The Situation

Paul wanted the Corinthians to demonstrate their faith and make good on their promise to provide famine relief. Despite their problems Paul commended the Corinthians in several areas of their lives encouraging them to be generous like the churches in Macedonia.

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Excel – surplus, abound, overflow or to increase, to amplify, to make abundant

Another way of thinking about excelling is moving forward!

Forward Faith means

We focus on God before the situation

For we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7, CSB)

Understands that it is God who brings _____

Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:24, CSB)

So that your faith might not be based on human wisdom but on God's power. (1 Corinthians 2:5, CSB)

For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. (2 Corinthians 10:3-4, CSB)

We stand _____ through the storms of life

I do not mean that we lord it over your faith, but we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in your faith. (2 Corinthians 1:24, CSB)

We make good _____ and avoid bad ones!

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." (1 Corinthians 15:33, CSB)

I wrote to you in a letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. I did not mean the immoral people of this world or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters; otherwise you would have to leave the world. But actually, I wrote you not to associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister and is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or verbally abusive, a drunkard or a swindler. Do not even eat with such a person. (1 Corinthians 5:9-11, CSB)

We focus on _____

So also you since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church. (1 Corinthians 14:12, CSB)

The Corinthian's were not perfect, they lived in a pagan city but they were increasing (excelling) in their walk with God they were going forward in their faith. Let each one of us be determined to demonstrate the same by going forward in our faith.

FORWARD FAITH