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Straitened in Our Own Bowels

A Brief Look at this Troublesome Ailment:
Including Its Cause and Cure

At first glance it may seem as if the ailment in question pertains to our physical health. Specifically it may seem that I am referring to some kind of gastro-intestinal problem or disorder. And indeed there is such a thing as being straitened in our physical bowels, as anyone who has such an affliction knows. However the ailment in question is not physical, so it does not pertain to the bowels of our body. Instead it is spiritual in nature, which means that it pertains to something not being right, or not functioning properly, *in the bowels of our inner man*.

A Troublesome Ailment

Now even though this ailment is not physical, it can be even more serious and troublesome to us than its physical counterpart. For just as the health and proper functioning of our physical bowels are vital to the welfare of our physical lives, so the health and proper functioning of *the bowels of our inner man* are vital to the welfare of our sonship lives and to our godly edifying in this present dispensation of God's grace. Moreover since the welfare of our sonship lives exceeds in importance that of our physical lives, an ailment which causes trouble in our sonship lives is far more serious to us than one which only affects us physically.

What's more, if this ailment is left untreated and not cured, it can do more to interfere with our sonship lives, and can do more to wreck havoc with the success of our godly edification, than just about any other affliction we can experience.

In fact this is exactly what Paul knew was happening to the Corinthians, when he told them that they had the ailment.

- 11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.
12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.
13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my children*,) be ye also enlarged. (II Corinthians 6:11-13)

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As Paul states, many of the saints in Corinth had this ailment. What's more he knew that they had had it for a while and it had already caused them some problems, as a number of matters that he deals with in I Corinthians show. However in view of the more serious kind of damage that it was now doing to their godly edifying, Paul knew that it was getting worse and they could no longer afford to leave it untreated. For it was now greatly straining their relationship with him, just as he says. In doing this it was causing them to strongly balk at participating in some highly important and very necessary aspects of their sonship edification. As such it was causing them to pull back from following Paul's own sonship example and pattern for us, with the result that the progress of their own sonship edification and lives was effectively being brought to a halt.

Therefore Paul knew that the time had come when they absolutely had to face up to the fact that they had this ailment, and they had to deal with it. More to the point, they had to be cured of it. Otherwise they would not be able to make full progress in their sonship edification, or in living their sonship lives.

Wherefore this is not a trifling ailment for any of us to have. For it truly can wreck havoc with our sonship lives.


So just what is this ailment? What does it mean for us to be *straitened in our own bowels*? And most important of all, if we have this ailment, what's the cure for it?

Let's begin by taking a simple look at the function of the bowels of our inner man.

The Bowels of Our Inner Man

Generally speaking the bowels of our inner man are described as 'the seat of our sensitivity, affection, and emo-

From EBM To You


 In recent articles we have looked at some issues that have a significant bearing upon our ability to succeed with our godly edifying and to achieve the goals of our sonship lives. For example we looked at the kind of positive and proper response we should have to our sonship status and to our sonship education, as well as the importance of being suitably impressed with what impresses our Father and unimpressed with what does not impress Him.

But sadly some of us prefer other things to that of getting our sonship education, or we avoid things that are part of conforming us to the image of Christ.

This prompted the desire for a closer look at (1) why it is that we do not always want to respond like we should to our Father and to His desires for us as His “sons”; and (2) what can be done about our reluctance.

One likely cause for our reluctance is an ailment that often afflicts many of us. An ailment pertaining to the bowels of our inner man, and to their important role and function in our sonship lives.

So this edition’s article briefly looks at this ailment and how it adversely affects us. Then in the next *Quarterly* we will look at the cure for it.

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tional response to what we face in life, based upon our personal likes and dislikes.’ They figuratively parallel how our physical bowels are very sensitive to our affections and emotions, and are expressive of them. So our inner bowels refer to our sensitivity to things we encounter in our lives, and to our response to them, based upon whether or not we like what we encounter, or agree with them, or find pleasure in them, or are touched by them, etc.

In view of this the Bible makes mention of the bowels of the inner man in different ways and also in a number of different contexts. Among these we are probably most familiar with references to “bowels and mercies,” as in Philippians 2:2, and “bowels of compassion,” as in I John 3:17. Which we find in contexts that are dealing with proper godly affection for other saints, along with sensitivity and responsiveness to their needs.

However for our purpose we are concerned with another issue to which our bowels are sensitive and emotionally responsive, which is the issue of their sensitivity to the will, or wishes, or desires that another person might have for us. And indeed there is a direct relationship between the two. For since we have our own personal ‘likes and dislikes,’ we are particularly sensitive to things that do not conform to them; especially when they are the ‘likes and dislikes’ of others. But we are even more sensitive to any attempts that another person might make to alter or change our own personal ‘likes and dislikes’ in order to conform them to his.

So our inner bowels are very responsive to the expressed will, wishes, or desires that another person might have for us. And depending upon whether or not the other person’s will or desire for us conforms to our own personal ‘likes and dislikes,’ this is what determines whether or not we become *straitened in our own bowels* towards him. Or in other words, this is the cause of this ailment.

Now though it is possible for us to be straitened in our own bowels towards someone in a good sense, (for example if his desire for us is unrighteous or sinful), we are not concerned with this possibility since we are dealing with God our Father’s desires for us.

So very simply put, if we are straitened in our own bowels, then we are not receptive to

something that another person desires for us, and we are not willing to go along with it because it is not agreeable to us. We object to bringing ourselves into line with his expressed desire or will for us because we take exception to what he is exhorting us to do, or to partake of, or to participate in, or the like. And we object because it does not agree with what we like, or what we want, or what we desire. Wherefore we resist complying with his desire for us and so we become straitened, or constricted, in our fellowship or dealings with him, choosing to limit or confine our fellowship and dealings with him to those things with which we do agree.

But on the other hand if we are not straitened in our own bowels, then we are receptive to his desire, and we are willing to go along with it, because it does not disagree with us. We do not take any exception to what he exhorts us to do, or to partake of, or to participate in, and so we do not decide to limit our fellowship with him.

Now even though this is a very simple description of the bowels of our inner man, it is sufficient to enable us to understand their basic function. Likewise it is sufficient to enable us to look at their role in our sonship lives, and also to perceive what happens when our inner bowels do not conform to those of God our Father. As we do this we will also be able to diagnose whether or not we, (like many of the Corinthians), suffer with the ailment of being straitened in our own bowels when it comes to aspects of our Father’s will and desires for us as His “sons.”

Our Bowels and Sonship

It is particularly once we are taught about our sonship status in this present dispensation, and are taught how to begin to live in accordance with it, that we can ‘come down’ this ailment, so to speak, and it can start to cause us problems. This is because from the time that God our Father teaches us that He has given us “the adoption of sons” He specifically begins working to conform the various components and operations of our inner man to that of His and to that of the Lord Jesus Christ’s.

Our Father does this first by means of the effectual working of the doctrines for our sonship establishment contained in Romans

8:14–39. Through them He makes the most fundamental and ‘first-things-first’ type adjustments in our inner man so that our heart, and our reins, and the eyes of our understanding, and even our bowels, can begin to function in conformity to His. But this is only the beginning. For He continues to make further and even more thorough adjustments in our inner man on a progressively increasing and developing basis as He takes us through His curriculum for our sonship education and edification.

But more to the point, in accordance with producing godliness in us our Father works to get us to ‘see eye-to-eye’ with Him on what His general will and purpose is for us as His sons, and then especially on how it is that He desires us to fulfill His will and purpose as we make our way through the curriculum for our sonship edification. In doing this He specifically works to make it so that *we like what He likes*, and so that *we dislike what He dislikes*. Or in other words, He works to make our ‘likes and dislikes,’ (which govern our bowels), to be the very same as His own ‘likes and dislikes.’

In short, in accordance with His purpose of conforming us to the image of His Son, our Father works to make it so that we have “the bowels of Jesus Christ.” He therefore works to give us the Lord Jesus Christ’s ‘likes and dislikes,’ and thereby cause us to have the same bowels of sensitivity, affection, and emotional responsiveness to His will and desires for us in our sonship lives as that which belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ in His sonship.

However as our Father does this, we might object to bringing some aspect of our lives into conformity to the image of Christ. For based upon our own *unadjusted* ‘likes and dislikes’ we might find some aspect of conforming us to the image of Christ to be embarrassing to us, or to be intimidating. Or we might find that something makes us fearful, or we might consider it to be too costly, or to be distasteful, or to

be disagreeable to us for some other reason.

Now what we need to understand is this: Whenever we find some aspect about our conformity to the image of Christ to be unpleasant to us, or offensive, or disagreeable; or when we are disinterested in it, or are less-than-enthusiastic about it; and we decide to resist it, or ignore it, or some how avoid it; then we have become straitened in our own bowels towards our Father’s expressed will and desire for us. Our own ‘likes and dislikes’ cause us to object to some aspect of our Father’s expressed desire for us, and so we straiten our dealings with Him because of it; limiting or confining our cooperation with Him to those things with which we have no objection.

This, once again, is the gist of what it means for us to be *straitened in our own bowels*. And from this brief description we also can see that it is a *self-induced ailment*. Hence as Paul said to the Corinthians...

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. (II Corinthians 6:12)

Moreover once again we can also see that this is not some innocuous or harmless ailment. Instead it truly does have the potential of causing us serious problems in our sonship lives, even to the point of effectively bringing the progress of our sonship edification to a halt; just as was the case with many of the Corinthians.

Diagnosing The Ailment

In much the same way that a physician goes about diagnosing some physical ailment we might have, so too can we diagnosis whether or not we have this ailment.

For as it is with many ailments, being straitened in our own bowels has a definite history to it, as well as a typical pattern of development. As already noted, this ailment tends to begin at a certain time, i.e. at the time when God teaches us about our sonship status and

begins to teach us to live in accordance with it. It also tends to begin in a certain way, with there being typical indicators that give reason to suspect that it exists. Then later on it usually unmistakably manifests itself at particular points along the way in the course and progress of our sonship edification.

But when it comes to diagnosing this ailment we also need to know that it often begins ‘silently,’ with symptoms that are very mild. Which means that they either can go undetected by us or are easily ignored, or else we might not consider them to be all that significant at the time. Consequently by the time we actually know that we have this ailment it may already have become established within us. In fact it is often when the progress of our sonship education and edification comes to the point when it begins to make some significant demands upon us, that this ailment first ‘shows up,’ so to speak.

Yet the truth of the matter is that it existed in us long before it ‘showed up.’ It just went undetected at first, and for a while it more or less lay dormant. Or as is often the tendency with us, though there were early indications that we had a problem, we simply chose to ignore them, or to deny the onset-type symptoms. For some times we are not completely honest with ourselves when God’s word ‘reads us,’ especially when it does this for the purpose of diagnosing if we have a problem. This in turn makes it so that we are not very willing to admit that we even have this ailment at the time when its earliest symptoms appear.

So we need to be honest with ourselves and come to grips with this ailment, if it is evident that we have it. Otherwise it will just interfere more and more with our godly edifying and take its toll on our sonship lives.

So let’s take a look at how this ailment typically begins, and start to diagnose ourselves.

The Onset Stage and Symptoms

Though God our Father makes preliminary adjustments to our ‘table of likes and dislikes’ from the moment He begins to teach us about our sanctification “in Christ” in Romans 6, the majority of the work gets underway as soon as He tells us that He has given us “the adoption of sons.” For our sonship status not only comes with great liberties, privileges, and honours, but it also comes with great responsibilities which require solid commitments on our part.

Wherefore when we learn about our sonship status, our Father does not only want us to *like* and rejoice in our sonship liberties and privileges, but He also wants us to *like* and rejoice in the responsibilities and needed commitments from us that go along with them. [Note: For a review of the basics of our sonship status, and of our sonship responsibilities and commitments, see for example the First Quarter 2002 and the Third and Fourth Quarter 2006 editions of *The Quarterly*.]

Wherefore when we doctrinally arrive at Romans 8:14–15 and we hear the apostle Paul tell us...

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Romans 8:14–15)

...and then we learn and come to know what this means, we should “cry, Abba, Father” in ecstatic appreciation for being given “the adoption of sons,” just as Paul says. However we should do so because we genuinely *like* both our sonship liberties and our sonship responsibilities, and we exult and rejoice in *both of them*.

Now we should genuinely *like* both our sonship liberties and our sonship responsibilities, (and *like* them in preference to other *likes* we might have),

because the things that God teaches us about our sonship status are designed to effectually work within us to cause us to *like* them most of all, even to value and esteem them to the very same degree that God our Father does.

In other words, through the doctrine of what our sonship is all about and what it entails God goes to work in our inner man and He works on our ‘table of likes and dislikes.’ In so doing He works to effectually displace any of our ‘likes’ that might initially compete with the great value that He wants us to place upon our sonship. Likewise He works to displace any of our ‘dislikes’ which might tend to make us less-than-enthusiastic about our responsibilities

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ties and commitments. Then He replaces them with His own ‘likes’ pertaining to our sonship status, and also with His own ‘dislike’ for things that oppose it.

This then provides for us to “cry, Abba, Father” out of a *godly heart* that genuinely values and esteems our sonship status like God our Father does, and also to do so from *godly bowels* that genuinely want to fully cooperate with Him in obtaining our sonship education and in living our sonship lives. And indeed our “crying, Abba, Father” comes from *both our heart and our bowels*, for it is the product of our inner man intelligently and emotionally responding to the glory and grandeur of “the adoption of sons.”

Now with this being so, this is when the first symptoms of the ailment of being straitened in our own bowels of-

ten occur. And very simply put, the first symptoms are a lack of appropriately “crying, Abba, Father.”

Making The Diagnosis

If you will permit me to speak to you as a father to his sons, this will facilitate the diagnosis. And I will do this in accordance with the ‘fatherly’ functions that Paul refers to, for example, in I Thessalonians 2:10–12.

10 Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe:

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father *doth* his children,
12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. (I Thessalonians 2:10–12)

As Paul says, a father ‘exhorts and comforts and charges’ his children in connection with living their sonship lives. Wherefore a father deals frankly with his son about his sonship status and life. Through intelligent and insightful ‘exhorting, comforting, and charging,’ he purposely probes his son’s inner man and deals with what is there.

A father does this especially at the outset, in order to deal with his son’s personal ‘likes and dislikes,’ and to expose the vanity of any which would cause him to be straitened in his own bowels. He then exhorts and charges his son not to foolishly operate upon such incompatible ‘likes and dislikes,’ strongly admonishing him to discard them in favour of what his sonship is all about and what it offers him.

Wherefore as Paul says, this is what he did with the Thessalonian saints. After having taught them about “the adoption of sons,” he too knew that they naturally had acquired many worldly ‘likes and dislikes’ that were not in harmony with those of God their Father. And like a father he knew that if these were not displaced and replaced, they would cause these sons

to become straitened in their own bowels towards the demands of sonship living, and so towards Him ‘who had called them unto his kingdom and glory.’

Now in connection with functioning as a father to you, it is clearly not possible for me to either ‘exhort, comfort, or charge’ you in a full and appropriate fatherly manner; especially in such a brief and simple article as this, and also not being present with you. Nevertheless I can ask you some simple, yet typical fatherly questions in connection with your sonship, by which you can gauge the measure of your appreciation for being God’s “son,” and also diagnose whether or not you are straitened in your own bowels, and if so to what degree.

Some Fatherly Questions

Obviously the most fundamental question with which to begin is this, Do you “cry, Abba, Father”? I do not mean only with regards to the great liberties and privileges of sonship, (for it is easy for us to *like* these, and to be receptive of them in our bowels), but more so in connection with your sonship responsibilities and commitments.

Therefore do you “cry, Abba, Father” regarding obtaining your sonship education and edification, knowing that it is your vocational education and training for the glorious eternal vocation your Father has for you in His business? And since this is so, are you pursuing your “godly edifying” with earnest zeal, esteeming it to be your most worthwhile and needful pursuit, and cherishing its incomparable rewards and benefits more than what this world can offer you?

Or in other words, is the following fundamental sonship realization, (which we have looked at in previous articles), *genuinely* true of you?

13 Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom, and the man *that* getteth understanding.

14 For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchan-

dise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

15 She *is* more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. (Proverbs 3:13–15)

Are your bowels receptive to this? Does this *truly* constitute part of the ‘table of likes and dislikes’ of your heart? Or are you more happy ‘finding’ and ‘getting’ things in your life other than your sonship education, or in preference to it? Do you prefer “the merchandise of silver” and ‘the gain of gold’ to the merchandise and gain that your Father has designed for you to purchase by means of your sonship education? Does the value you place upon getting your sonship education testify

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that the saying “all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her” is true of you?

In view of the great value that our Father places upon us getting our sonship education and living our sonship lives, these few questions ask you to determine whether you value your sonship as much as He does. Or whether you might value some other things more, and so might have the early symptoms of being straitened in your own bowels.

And indeed these usually are the earliest symptoms that we have the ailment of being straitened in our own bowels. Yet we do not always acknowledge them at this time, and so treat the ailment right away. Or some times we conclude that our maladjusted heart and bowels really will not cause

us all that many problems, either at the outset of our edification or later on ‘down the road.’

Yet when this ailment is not treated in its early stages, it does not cure itself, or just go away. And though the damage it can cause to our sonship lives may seem to be minor at first, or not even apparent to us, eventually the demands of our sonship education will not only show that the ailment still exists, but also that it is becoming troublesome.

Worsening Symptoms

Once our sonship education and edification gets well underway, (with the result that our conformity to the image of Christ starts to become manifest and evident in our walk), we begin to encounter more and more occasions to become straitened in our own bowels. For as our conformity to the image of Christ becomes manifest in our walk, this naturally provokes a negative reaction from the ungodliness and unrighteousness of this world as it registers its disdain for our godliness.

This especially happens when in accordance with Romans 13:12–14 we ‘cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light,’ and purposely start ‘walking honestly as in the day.’ For in so doing we go on the offensive, so to speak, in our sonship living. We start to directly repudiate the mainstays of this world’s iniquities and ungodliness, and thereby also purposely provoke the Adversary to respond.

This therefore makes us subject to numerous forms of rejection and opposition, including such intimidating things as ridicule, mockery, scorning, ostracizing, defaming, cursing, despising, and the like. As well as persecution, abuse, hatred, and other expressions of this world’s disdain for godliness. All of which are things we naturally would not find pleasant, but unpleasant; and would not like, but dislike; and so would not want to experience. Unless we possess “the bowels of Jesus Christ.”

So when we experience such unpleasant things, we can easily become straitened in our own bowels in connection with them, and so towards our Father, who has designed that we experience such things as part of our conformity to the image of His Son.

Now this is the very thing that happened to many of the Corinthians when they began to receive such tribulations and persecutions. Being straitened in their own bowels they decided that they had had enough, and they chose not to participate any longer in those aspects of their conformity to the image of Christ that provoked such unpleasant things. Therefore Paul strongly reproved them, as a father would his sons, saying...

8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

9 For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men.

10 We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but ye *are* wise in Christ; we *are* weak, but ye *are* strong; ye *are* honourable, but we *are* despised.

11 Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace;

12 And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

13 Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and are* the offscouring of all things unto this day. (I Corinthians 4:8–13)

Once again, being straitened in their own bowels the Corinthians chose to court the world's approval and to be accepted in its sight, instead of suffering the consequences of manifesting conformity to Christ. Wherefore they preferred and chose to be "wise in Christ" in the eyes of the world by doing such things as making God's word subservient to the wisdom of this world, instead of being "fools for Christ's sake" by denouncing "the wisdom of this world" and ignoring it. They preferred and chose to be "strong" in the world's midst by operating upon its own sources of strength, instead of being looked upon as "weak" by operating upon God's. And they liked and desired to be "honourable" in men's eyes, which they did by adjusting their Christian lives to "the course of this world," instead of being willing to be "despised" by men for repudiating the iniquity of the world's ungodliness.

These saints shunned suffering for godliness' sake primarily because at the time of their sonship establishment, and at the beginning of their sonship education, they failed to adequately conform their own bowels to "the bowels of Jesus Christ." Hence they wanted nothing to do with being "made as the filth of the world" and with being "the offscouring of all things unto this day"; even though they had been taught and knew that it was an integral part of

their sonship education and of their conformity to the image of Christ.

Wherefore after reproving them, Paul gave them a firm, but loving fatherly admonition and charge.

14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn *you*.

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church. (I Corinthians 4:14–17)

Now to resume the fatherly questions, Do you have any of these same symptoms? For example, Do you avoid being 'a fool for Christ's sake,' preferring rather to be approved by the world? Or do you take exception to being "a spectacle unto the world," not wanting to be the object of any of its disdain for God and for the truth of His word. If so, then it should be evident to you that you show symptoms of being straitened in your own bowels.

Even More Serious Complications

Once again, if we leave this ailment untreated it will not go away. In fact it will not only continue to interfere with our "godly edifying," but it will worsen even more, causing us serious complications. For we will also become straitened in our own bowels when it comes to "the sufferings of Christ." And this is serious. For partaking of "the sufferings of Christ" is also an integral part of our conformity to the image of God's Son.

Unfortunately this also happened to some in Corinth. For though some of the saints did respond positively to Paul's fatherly reproof, admonition, and charge in I Corinthians 4, and so ceased being straitened in their own bowels at being "made as the filth of the world," others did not. And for those that did not, they certainly did encounter serious complications later on in connection with "the sufferings of Christ." In fact they even took offense at partaking of a number of those privileged sufferings, siding with the contrary opinions and carnal criticisms of unbelievers and false brethren, who based upon their own ungodly 'likes and dislikes' found fault with the notion that God would, or even could, desire that His people experience such sufferings.

Wherefore, for example, these in Corinth balked at partaking of the following 'suffering of Christ.'

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

8 We *are* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we *are* perplexed, but not in despair;

9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

11 For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

12 So then death worketh in us, but life in you. (II Corinthians 4:7–12)

Again, many of the Corinthians did not want anything to do with the “life” Paul speaks about here. For in order to be a partaker of this “life” they needed to ‘bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.’ But unfortunately they had little, or no taste for this. For their heart’s ‘table of likes and dislikes’ was not only out of alignment with God’s, but it was now also at odds with His. For they had come to espouse the criticisms and objections of unbelievers regarding this ‘suffering of Christ,’ which now had them not only strongly disliking it, but even questioning its validity.

Wherefore after teaching the Corinthians about this privileged ‘suffering of Christ,’ (and also after dealing with some additional matters to which they took offense and at which they balked because of their ‘less-than-godly likes and dislikes’), Paul boldly asserted that there was nothing for them to take offense at whatsoever, saying...

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

4 But in all *things* approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

5 In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;... (II Corinthians 6:3–5)

Therefore the Corinthians had no real reason to take offense either at Paul and his own partaking of any of “the sufferings of Christ,” or at his ministry of teaching them to be partakers of these sufferings as well. Instead they should have counted it a privilege of God’s grace to be a partaker of these particular sufferings. Not only because they are “the sufferings of Christ,” but also because they are a necessary part of our vocational education and training, and as such are a vital part of our conformity to the image of Christ.

But sadly this was not the case. They did take exception to partaking of this ‘suffering of Christ,’ and also of partaking of others, which made it so that Paul had to go on and say...

11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

12 Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. (II Corinthians 6:11–12)

Are You Straitened in Your Own Bowels?

Though the foregoing has only been a very simple look at this troublesome ailment, along with its cause and general symptoms, it has been sufficiently described to enable you to diagnose whether you might be straitened in your own bowels to some degree.

Now if you have this ailment, you should not want to ‘just live with it.’ For it does interfere with your “godly edifying” and it will wreck havoc with your sonship living. But the good news is that you do not have to ‘live with it.’ For there is a cure — a cure that not only can rid us of this ailment, but that also can provide for repairing the damage that it has caused.

Wherefore as Paul said to the ailing Corinthians...

13 Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto *my* children,) be ye also enlarged. (II Corinthians 6:13)

Therefore the ‘straitening’ can be replaced with *enlargement*. And when it is, not only are we cured of the ailment, but its damage can then begin to be repaired.

— K. R. Blades

Note: The cure for being straitened in our own bowels will be looked at in the next edition of *The Quarterly*.

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Our toll-free number is an unattended voice-mail system, since we are only able to have our office open when one of our volunteers is able to work. Because of this, using our toll-free number is not the best way to place an order for any of our materials. For unlike our secure web site, or our P.O. Box, we are not able to regularly monitor our toll-free number, which results in delays when receiving orders. Nor does our toll-free number automatically provide us with an easy-to-read and complete written record of an order, as our web site does.

So to help us be more efficient we ask that from now on all orders for any of our materials be placed through our secure web site, or by regular mail to our P.O. Box, whenever possible. This will help our volunteers to receive orders more readily and accurately, and thereby process them more efficiently.

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“rightly dividing the word of truth” II Timothy 2:15

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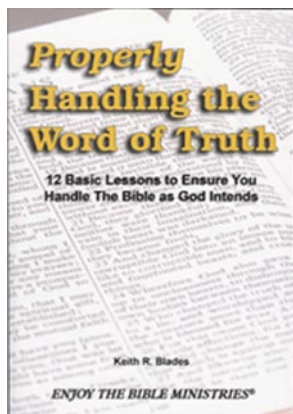
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