

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

I. Paul's Relationship With The Church, 2 Corinthians 1-7

I. The Divinely Transformed Relationships Of Believers (2 Corinthians 5:16-6:2)

I. Introduction

- A. False teachers, claiming to be apostles, had entered the Church at Corinth, and they had tried to promote their own views while discrediting the person and message of the Apostle Paul. (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 552)
- B. This was a difficult situation for Paul: his readers were immature believers who had been saved out of corrupt backgrounds in a city known for its vice, so they were easy prey for false teachers, and Paul had to be careful how he handled the situation lest his readers think he was being unjustly defensive and thus discredit himself.
- C. 2 Corinthians 1-7 deals with Paul's relationship with the church, and 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:2 shows believers are changed at salvation to function very differently in relationships. We view this passage for our insight:

II. The Divinely Transformed Relationships Of Believers, 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:2.

- A. A special characteristic of one who is saved by faith in Christ and lives by the Holy Spirit's power is that he relates to others at the inner man level, not by externals, 1 Cor. 5:16a. Indeed, had Paul and his team known Jesus as unbelievers, what was likely so in Paul's case, after their conversion to Christ and living by means of the Holy Spirit, they no longer knew Him the way that they knew him before their salvation, 1 Cor. 5:16b.
- B. Paul explained that the cause (*hoste*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 631; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 908) of this change in relationships was God's miraculous transformation in a believer at salvation: if any man is in Christ, he is a new "creature, creation" (*ktisis*, *Ibid.*, p. 456-457) – the old is gone and behold, the new is come, 2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV.
- C. All of this is from God, and He had reconciled Paul in his ministry team to Himself and had given them the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Corinthians 5:18. Paul then explained this ministry in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21:
 - 1. When Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world (cf. 1 John 2:2), God in Christ was graciously reconciling the world to Himself so that He no longer holds their trespasses against them, 2 Corinthians 5:19a. The only sin God holds against the world is not believing in Christ, cf. John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9.
 - 2. God then entrusted Paul and his ministry team with the message of God's reconciliation, the Gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:19b.
 - 3. Accordingly, Paul and his team were ambassadors for Christ, representatives of God in the "foreign" world of unsaved mankind to appeal for the unsaved to believe in Christ for salvation, 2 Corinthians 5:20a.
 - 4. For this reason, Paul voiced his appeal to his readers on behalf of Christ that they themselves be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20b), for God had made Jesus on the cross to be sin for sinful man, He Who had committed no sin, that the world might be made the righteousness of God by faith Christ, 2 Cor. 5:21.
- D. Paul then explained that his ministry team worked with God to appeal to his readers not to receive the grace of God in vain by believing a false gospel taught by false teachers, 2 Cor. 6:1; *Ibid.*, B. K. C., N. T., p. 568.
- E. Quoting Isaiah 49:6 that "underscored the fact that salvation is God's initiative," Paul gave the Gospel to his readers, claiming that the "day of salvation is the present Age of Grace" that the readers not reject it for the false teachings of false teachers who denied Christ's Gospel of grace, 2 Corinthians 6:2.

Lesson: When Paul and his ministry team believed in Christ for salvation, their way of relating to others was radically changed from relating externally to others like unsaved people, false teachers and ungodly believers did to relating through the spirit to the hearts of others, for they were new creatures unlike the old, unsaved creatures of their pre-salvation days. Thus, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul's ministry team had been given the ministry of reconciliation, to urge a lost world to believe in Christ to be reconciled to God as God in Christ had already reconciled the world to Himself by grace.

Application: (1) A believer who relies on the Holy Spirit relates to others on the spiritual plane to the inner man in others versus ungodly believers and the unsaved who relate externally to others. [(2) Also, 1 Corinthians 2:14-16 reveals that a godly believer who functions on the spiritual plane will then have the discernment of knowing the spiritual state of others around him, be they godly or ungodly, where the ungodly believer and the unsaved will neither understand nor know how to relate to the godly believer, 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.] (3) If we function by the Holy Spirit, we will relate to others on the spiritual plane and see the need to be preoccupied with the ministry of calling others to be reconciled to God. (4) May we then rely on the Holy Spirit to relate to others at the heart level.