

II CORINTHIANS: MINISTERING TO BELIEVERS FACING FALSE TEACHERS

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

K. God's Call For Ecclesiastical Separation (2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1)

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 6:11-7:1 presents the call for believers at Corinth to practice ecclesiastical separation. We view the passage for insight and application:

II. God's Call For Ecclesiastical Separation, 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1.

- A. The Apostle Paul called for the Corinthian believers to reciprocate the candidness and affection that he and his ministry team had expressed toward the Corinthians as God's true messengers, 2 Corinthians 6:11-13:
 - 1. Paul stated that he and his ministry team had spoken freely to them and opened wide their hearts to them, not being at all deceptive or dishonest, 2 Corinthians 6:11 NIV.
 - 2. Though Paul's team had not withheld their affection from his readers, the readers were withholding their affection from them, a condition that had likely been caused by the influence of the false teachers who had slandered Paul and his coworkers, 2 Corinthians 6:12 NIV.
 - 3. Thus, Paul sought that his readers, his spiritual children whom he had led to Christ as their spiritual father, might open wide their hearts to Paul and his ministry team, 2 Corinthians 6:13 NIV.
- B. Since the apparent problem behind this strain in relationship was the influence of the false teachers who were not even true believers in Christ, at 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Paul called for "ecclesiastical" or religious or church separation from such unbelieving ministers by his readers:
 - 1. Using the present imperative of *ginomai* ("become") with a *me* negative particle in the original Greek text, Paul called his readers to "stop becoming" (*Me ginesthe*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 632; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon), 1972, p. 78) "unequally yoked or matched" (*heterozugeo*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 315) with unbelievers, the unbelieving false teachers who were creating the tension between Paul's ministry team and his readers, 2 Corinthians 6:14a.
 - 2. This command did not mean that believers were not to have any contact with unbelievers, for Paul had argued that such a practice was absurd back in 1 Corinthians 5:9-10. However, "religious unbelievers might lead believers astray from 'sincere and pure devotion to Christ' (2 Cor. 11:3)," and a "believer can be rightly yoked only with Christ (Matt. 11:29-30)," Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 570.
 - 3. Paul gave reasons for this directive by use of a series of rhetorical questions in 2 Corinthians 6:14b-16:
 - a. Those who are in the spiritual light of God cannot have fellowship with those in spiritual darkness, v. 14b.
 - b. There is no harmony between Christ and "Belial," a derogatory term for Satan, who is the spiritual father of all unbelievers, including unsaved false teachers, 2 Corinthians 6:15a with John 8:44; Ibid., p. 571.
 - c. A believer in Christ has nothing in common with an unbeliever on the spiritual level, 2 Cor. 6:15b NIV.
 - d. There is no agreement between the temple of God – the collection of believers who comprise the true spiritual abode of God – and idols, 2 Corinthians 6:16 NIV.
 - 4. Citing "a portion of Isaiah 52:11 and Ezekiel 20:41, passages that speak of Israel's redemption," Paul noted that Christians today should likewise separate from unsaved religious people to enjoy fellowship with the Lord in the family of God, 2 Corinthians 6:17-18; Ibid., p. 571.
 - 5. Paul then applied these directives with their promises to his readers, that they might purify themselves from everything that contaminates the body and spirit, perfecting separation ("holiness") in reverence for the Lord by practicing ecclesiastical (religious, church) separation from unsaved ministers, 2 Cor. 7:1.

Lesson: *For our own spiritual welfare and fellowship with the Lord, God calls us to practice ecclesiastical separation, parting fellowship with unsaved religious ministers in order to be blessed by the Lord.*

Application: *(1) May we practice ecclesiastical separation from unsaved ministers and religious groups. [(2) This call also applies to other "unequal yoking" alliances like business partnerships or forming new marital unions.]*