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A1345 – November 10, 2013 – 2 Corinthians 6:11-17
Separate For Fellowship

In 2 Cor 6:1 we said Paul is a co-worker with God in the gospel ministry but there are a group of believers at Corinth that were receiving the grace of God to no effect in their lives. It was to no effect because they were at enmity with Paul. Anytime a believer has enmity against another believer it has nullified the grace of God in that believer's life and given justified cause for rejecting Jesus Christ. He urges them strongly to not receive the grace of God to no effect. Verse 2, now is the time to receive the grace of God, to depend upon His infinite provisions that bring about salvation. Verse 3, giving no cause for offense in anything so that the ministry will not be discredited. The enmity was evidently giving the world justified cause for criticizing the ministry and rejecting Christ.

Instead, verse 4, Paul says, in everything commending ourselves or demonstrating ourselves to be servants of God and then he gives a number of circumstances that he found himself in in the ministry; in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in labors, etc...in all these things we ought to conduct ourselves in purity, in practical knowledge, in patience, in kindness, all fruit of the Holy Spirit who directs us to respond in the word of truth and in the power of God. Such conflicts in the ministry are overcome by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left and as a result we are beheld in glory by some and dishonor by others, by evil report by some and good report by others; regarded by the world as deceivers and yet by God as true, as unknown to the world and yet well-known to God, etc...and so forth and so on.

Paul's point is that he conducted his ministry by grace, depending upon God. His attitude was not my will be done but Your will be done. And when that is our attitude in ministry then God's infinite provisions give us victory and

commend us to God as His servants. Now if only the Corinthians would avail themselves of God's grace then they could be reconciled with Paul, his very appeal to them in verse 11. And note his openness, his candidness, his affection toward them. **Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. 12You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. 13Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide to us also.** His desire is for them to open their hearts wide to him as his heart was opened wide to them. He's calling on them to reciprocate. But they are restrained by their own affections which lie elsewhere.

Literally in verse 11 Paul says, **The mouth of us has been and is open toward you**, that is, we have spoken candidly and we continue to speak candidly, we have held nothing back. One commentator thought that Paul's openness in this book is so strong that it is the distinctive note of the entire epistle. As such he titled his commentary, *A Heart Open Wide*. His appeal to them as **O Corinthians** is powerful and rare. Paul only mentions his recipients by name in two other letters (Galatians and Philippians). Only when a strong appeal is being made does he mention his recipients by name. So this is a strong appeal. He then says **our heart is open wide**. Literally, **The heart of us has been and is open wide**, that is, we have had our hearts open wide and we continue to have our hearts open wide. Seeing that Jesus taught that out of the mouth comes that which fills the heart we see the parallelism between the mouth and heart. From Paul's side he has had both open and both remain open. Paul has revealed his heart to them through what he has spoken. And seeing that James says that if a man can tame the tongue he can control every other part of his body we see that Paul had tamed the tongue, or rather, the grace of God with Paul had tamed his tongue. Because the only way Paul could maintain this attitude of openness and candid affection toward the Corinthians was by depending upon God's grace. They had committed hostility toward Paul. And yet Paul had not responded with hostility. He responded with openness to them. He had laid his heart bare before them such that they could trample it if they wished. He had exposed himself. By application how do you handle believers that are hostile to you? Do you have this attitude of openness and candid affection toward them? Do you open your heart wide to them and give them an opportunity to trample you? You can't do this without the grace of God. It is impossible to return enmity with good, humanly speaking.

Now verse 12, **You are not restrained by us**, but the Greek says, “we are not being restrained in ourselves,” that is, there were no restraints in Paul’s heart” to love them. The Greek for **restrained** means “to confine, to box off, to restrict to a narrow space.” Paul is saying there is nothing in my heart which is limiting my affection for you. **But you are restrained in your own affections.** They were **restrained** to having an open heart toward Paul and they were restrained by their own **affections.** The Greek *splagchnon* means “deep devotion, love” for another. He means their hearts were committed to others and therefore their hearts were restrained toward Paul. As the BKC notes, “What hampered the Corinthians’ open, loving response, which Paul called for? (v. 13) Answer: rival suitors vied for their affections and allegiance.” Who were these suitors? Who were they devoted to? Some argue that they are pagan idolaters, others suggest untrustworthy persons, others suggest the immoral within the church, still others suggest they are Gentile Christians who did not observe the Mosaic Law and still others suggest they are false apostles. Frankly, we don’t know exactly who this group is but there are possibly up to seven characteristics of this group hinted at in 2 Corinthians. First, they were false apostles, deceitful workers. 2 Cor 11:13, “Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.” Second, they were unbelievers. 2 Cor 11:15, “it is not surprising if his servants [Satan’s] also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.” Also 2 Cor 6:14, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers;” another reference to this group whom they were devoted to. Third, they were Jewish. 2 Cor 11:22, “Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.” Fourth, they proclaimed a false gospel. 2 Cor 11:4, “For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you tolerate this splendidly.” Fifth, they were impressive outwardly. 2 Cor 10:7 he chides the Corinthians for “looking at things as they are outwardly.” Sixth, they commended themselves by comparing themselves with others. 2 Cor 10:12, “For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.” Seventh, they asserted their authority. 2 Cor 10:8, “For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up,” it seems by

implication that this other group asserted their own authority. These are all strategies of the flesh that had won over the hearts of some of the Corinthians and which closed them off from Paul. *From these passages there's a good chance these were unbelieving Judaizers who posed as apostles, asserted their authority and emphasized externals.*

The problem was that some of the Corinthians were devoted to them and their teaching and it closed them off to Paul. So in 6:13 Paul asks them to reciprocate his open heart toward them by opening wide to him. **Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide to us also.** The Greek word **exchange** means “requital based on what one deserves.” In other words pay me back for my open heart with an open heart. Isn't this what we tell children? Treat others as you would have them treat you. It's a childlike way of speaking but it's a basic principle and to meet that principle they're going to have to dismiss their devotion to the group of unbelieving Judaizers.

Now that is chiefly what verse 14 is all about. People typically read verse 14 as a marriage verse and say believers can only marry believers. But in the context **Do not be bound together with unbelievers** refers to not being bound to these unbelieving Judaizers. The word **bound together** means “be unevenly yoked, be mismated.” The picture of unevenly yoked comes from agriculture. When hooking up your team to plow the field you should not yoke two different animals together such as a donkey and an ox. That was a poor agricultural practice because it was an inevitable disaster. The two animals were different species and could not plow together. They could perhaps share the same pen together but they could not share the same yoke. Paul's principle is this - *do not establish a relationship with an unbeliever that requires you to walk together.* Walking together assumes a common course and a devotion to that course. Believers and unbelievers are not on the same course so if we hitch ourselves together then we will inevitably veer off course. Now what it does not mean is that we can't interact with unbelievers. Paul already taught in 1 Cor 5 that if we could not interact with unbelievers then we would have to go out of this world. He also does not mean that if you are married to an unbeliever then you should divorce. Paul already taught in 1 Cor 7 that if you are married to an unbeliever remain with them. But what he is saying is do not establish a relationship with an unbeliever that requires you to be devoted to them. And in chief, the main interpretation is that they should not be bound to these unbelieving Judaizers because it is

going to bring about spiritual disaster. They should therefore separate. Now it's true that the principle can be applied to other areas of life, like marriage. A believer should not marry an unbeliever. That is also taught in 1 Cor 7:39. However, as I mentioned before, Paul taught that if you married when you were an unbeliever and then later became a believer and your spouse did not, then remain married because you may be the vessel that God uses to bring them to Christ. However, this principle would confirm the truth of 1 Cor 7:39 that a believer should never marry an unbeliever. If you do, that unbeliever could draw you aside. The principle has also been applied to business relationships and you see how such a relationship could make for trouble. For example, if the family that owns Hobby Lobby happened to be in business with another family, and the Government Health and Human Services Mandate came about requiring that the company provide abortion inducing drugs in the health plan of their employees, there may be undue pressure for the Hobby Lobby family to give in to the government health plan and this would have negative repercussions for their spiritual lives. So I can see how this principle could apply to business relationships. However, its first and chief interpretation is that you should not establish a relationship with an unbeliever that requires you to be devoted to their teaching. Some of the Corinthians had committed themselves to this group of unbelieving Judaizers and it was destroying their spiritual lives even to the point that they were opposing Paul who first preached the gospel to them and they believed. By application we shouldn't commit ourselves to false teachers because it limits our affections for the truth. Pagan teaching is spiritual poison. Subjecting yourself or others under your authority to it will to some degree ruin your and their spiritual life. By application, I would consider strongly whether this passage is telling a Christian they should not subject themselves or their children to the current public education system or themselves to the university. Personally I think it is teaching that. I do not see how enrolling your children in the public education system is not binding them to unbelievers or how enrolling at the secular university is not also binding yourself to unbelievers. The teaching of the government authorized curriculum is overtly pagan. I do not think that it is possible to not negatively impact your children's affections for the truth or your own by subjecting them or yourself to pagan teaching. As far as I can tell the results are already in. In Ken Ham's book *Already Gone*, statistical analysis by Brit Beemer show beyond a shadow of a doubt that the public education system and the pagan universities in this country are destroying Christian's faith.

Let me say, as a side note, that there are Christian teachers in these institutions, they may be good Christians, but that is not the issue. The issue is what is taught and they have no say in the curriculum that is taught. They can't even talk about Christianity and the Bible or their own beliefs unless a student asks them about it. And even then they are walking on thin ice. This is just the facts. Public education is now a pagan institution. Its goal is to socialize children; its vehicle is evolution. The university is also a pagan institution. Woodrow Wilson, in 1914 said, "I have often said that the use of a university is to make young gentlemen as unlike their fathers as possible." In 2002, president of Dartmouth College, James Freedman said, "The purpose of a college education is to question your father's values."

Let me also say, as a side note, this has not always been the case. Public school was started by Christians but it was hijacked by pagans. The same is true of the university. Christians began these institutions but Satan took them over. There are alternatives. Private and home school as well as an option I have mentioned to you before called College Plus where you can get the same degrees for a lot less money. You do not have to follow the worldly model.

Now as I go back to the text let me remind you precisely of the problem. Some of the Corinthians had devoted themselves to the teachings of the unbelieving Judaizers and this was leading them away from Paul. His instruction in verse 17 is quite clear - separate. But before we get there Paul asks five rhetorical questions in vv 14-16 that support his contention that we should not be bound to unbelievers. First, verse 14, **For what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness?** Righteousness and lawlessness are diametric opposites. They share nothing in common. How can the two go together? Second, also verse 14, **or what fellowship has light with darkness?** As far as I can tell light and darkness are diametric opposites. Darkness is the absence of light. The two have nothing to do with one another. So how can you as a believer bind yourself to an unbeliever and walk with them? Third, verse 15, **Or what harmony has Christ with Belial?** Belial is Satan. What common interest does Christ have with Satan? Well, I think that Christ came to destroy the work of the devil, not to be a co-laborer with Satan. The two are diametrically opposed to one another. Fourth, also verse 15, **or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?** The

word **common** means “share, part” and refers to destiny. In that respect what do we have in common with them? Unbelievers are going to hell, believers are going to heaven. We share nothing in common. Our destinies are diametrically opposite of one another. And therefore our paths are entirely different. Fifth, verse 16, **Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?** The two do not fit together. There is but one **temple of God** but there are many **idols**. The two are diametrically opposed to one another. They have no unity, no admixture, no confusion. And with these five questions it should be obvious that we can have no truck with unbelievers since that would require us to be dedicated to the same interests, destiny and unity.

Now he gives explanation that comes to His mind in light of his mention of the **temple of God**. He says, **For we are the temple of the living God**. Now he’s speaking of the Church corporate as the body of Christ, as the building that is being built up to be a dwelling of the Spirit. The Church is **the temple of the living God, living** to contrast with idols that are dead. Idols are nothing more than men’s vain imagination. But God is living and we are the temple of the living God. God has taken up residence in His Church. The Greek word for **temple** is *naos* which refers to the Most Holy Place and not the Greek word *ieron* which referred to the entire Temple complex. What this word applied to us means is that we are the inner sanctum where God dwells, the Most Holy Place where no defilement was to enter.

Then he quotes several OT passages in a compilation, this is not one single OT passage but several passages strung together; Exod 29:45; Jer 24:7; Jer 31:33; Ezek 37:27; Lev 26:12. **“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE**. His point is not to say that these passages are fulfilled in the Church because these passages will be fulfilled to Israel in the Kingdom. His point is to show, however, that the Church is a temple and he is able to lift the language from the OT passages that refer to Israel and make an application to the Church. I think that has confused a lot of people who think this must be fulfillment. But these passages in their original contexts refers to Israel in the Kingdom; so Paul’s lifting the language and using it in a fresh context that refers to the Church as an application only, not fulfillment. The fulfillment to Israel will come when Jesus in His resurrection body will dwell

among them and walk among them in the Kingdom. Then He will be their God and they will be His people. The application to the Church is that we are a spiritual temple in whom God dwells and lives in the present.

Verse 17 is the central command and it too a compilation of quotations from the OT including Num 16:21 and Isa 52:11. Again, in the original contexts these deal with Israel but because of points of similarity Paul makes an application to the Church. The point is clear, **“Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.** The Christian is to separate from unbelievers in the terms spoke of here, that is, joining with them in a common goal, purpose, interest and destiny. It is command to **come out from their midst** if you are involved with unbelievers in your pursuits and there is an abiding command to **be separate**. Also there is a command not to **touch what is unclean** and that shows you this is a holiness issue. You are to be holy and that means to be set apart from the world; it does not mean to go out of the world. It means to be in the world but not of the world and not united with the world in common purposes, interests and goals. You can’t walk together with the world and with God.

Now if you do separate from the world then at the end of verse 17 God says, **And I will welcome you.** He’s not going to welcome you if you continue to remain in the midst of the world and not be separate. He will only welcome you if you come out from the world and separate. John says the same thing to believers in his 1st epistle, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” John is not contrasting believers and unbelievers, he is contrasting believers who love the world and thus do the will of the world vs believers who do the will of God. These are expressions of fellowship.

In verse 18 he uses the expression, **And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,**” These are expressions of close fellowship, of intimacy. So if you will come out from the world and be separate and not bind yourself to them in close associations that require you to walk together, then God will welcome you and be a father to you and have intimacy with you. So you have these promises as Paul says in 7:1, to avail

yourself of, but there is an initiative we must take of separating in 6:17 and of cleansing ourselves from all defilement in 7:1. This is not automatic, it is an enjoyment of intimacy entered into only when we initiate with Him by separating from our false affections that are really lusts of our flesh and striving toward the goal of putting God first in everything.

In summary, Paul has said in verse 11 that his mouth has spoken openly to them as out of the mouth comes that which fills the heart. In verse 12 the Corinthians were not restrained by Paul but by their own affections toward the unbelieving Judaizers who asserted their authority and emphasized externals. Verse 13, in a like exchange or act of reciprocity, they should open wide to Paul as he was open to them. Their affections for this group they had aligned themselves with had closed off their hearts to the truth and those who spoke the truth. It was an inevitable path of spiritual destruction. Verse 14, the principle command, do not be bound together with unbelievers, that is, do not establish a relationship with unbelievers that requires you to walk together with a unity of purpose, interest and goals. The applications here are many but the five rhetorical questions show you that it is not possible to walk together with them without compromise; the two are utterly opposed to one another at every point; righteousness and lawlessness are totally opposite as are light and darkness, Christ and Satan, believers and unbelievers, the temple of God and idols. For the Church is the temple of the living God, and lifting OT language used of Israel he makes application to the Church; He dwells among us and He is our God and we are His people. How can we have any close association with the world? Verse 17, Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate and do not touch what is unclean. It is a matter of holiness before the Lord. He commands us to come out from these relationships and separate from the world. It's a matter of obedience and disobedience, it's a matter of being in fellowship and being out of fellowship. And if we do the Lord says, I will welcome you And I will be a father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to Me. These are expressions of fellowship, intimacy, closeness with God. And this is the word of the Lord Almighty. That is His title for omnipotence.

In conclusion, will you come out from the world today? Will you be separate and trust God for the results or will you continue to trust your alliances? Is your desire for fellowship with God greater than your lusts for the world? How you answer these questions is a serious matter in this life for temporal

loss of fellowship and discipline and eternal repercussions at the judgment seat of cross for loss of rewards. But you have the promises of God to you and if you will take the first step of separating and cleansing yourself from all defilement with the world then you will enjoy a closeness and intimacy with Him that will surpass anything the world offers.

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