

J. KYLE PAISLEY MEMORIAL FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Lord's Day Morning Sermon Notes

14th May 2006

Read: 2 Corinthians 6

Text: v.17

Christ's People – A Separated People

From its inception our denomination has sought to pursue the path of separation unto Christ, believing it to be the will and the command of the Lord for His people.

It must be clearly understood that the separatist position with regard to spiritual things is but the outworking of God's great eternal purpose for His people. Separation is not a philosophy invented and pursued by certain groups within the professing church of Christ. Rather, separation is the inevitable consequence of the Lord's eternal decree to have a people for Himself among whom He will dwell and whom He will bless eternally. See Eph 1: 4 – and note that the Lord has chosen a people whom He purposes to make a *holy* people. The original Greek word translated *holy* comes from a root that literally signifies *no earth* – the point being that in the final analysis the Lord's people will be a people completely purged from all that is earthly; all that is according to this world; which is essentially to say that they will be a separated people.

The doctrine of separation is therefore a most positive truth for it is really God fulfilling His own eternal and covenant purposes in the lives of His people. Moreover, separation occurs in every genuine believer, in that in nature separation is essentially sanctification. Whatever the area or aspect of separation we consider -- whether at a personal level in terms of the believer's separation from sin or at an ecclesiastical level with respect to church association and fellowship – separation is the believer experiencing the work of sanctification. In Scripture the verb *to sanctify* basically means “to set apart” or “to separate”; and since sanctification is the will of God for the believer, He sanctifies every one of His children. Every true child of God, therefore, experiences separation from sin, so that the separatist stand & position is nothing more than the pursuit of the will of God concerning holiness.

Most certainly therefore, it is the Lord's will that His people pursue the path of separation at the level of fellowship and spiritual association. The whole spectrum of Scripture is such as to show that it has always been the Lord's will for His Church to separate from evil in whatever form it may appear. Whether the evil ways of the world of the ungodly or the wickedness of false religion and compromised religion, it is the Lord's will that His people separate themselves from it all. As our text instructs us we are to “*come out from among them, and be...separate.*” The word “separate” denotes that which is marked off by bounds and is a very strong word. See Acts 19: 9 – in Ephesus, Paul, finding that the Jews were set against the Gospel, brought the disciples out of the synagogue. He separated them from the unbelieving Jews and pursued his ministry with them and among them on the principle of separation, forming them into a distinct NT church.

In using this particular word here in 2 Cor 6: 17, Paul is presenting to the Corinthians their need to come away from any association with false & pagan religion. But in issuing this call to the Corinthian Church for separation the Apostle sets forth a principle that the Lord's people must recognise and pursue in every generation, including our own, hence the separatist stand that has been one of the salient features of the life & witness of the Free Presbyterian Church. Knowing that Scripture calls on God's people to come out and be separate, our founding fathers took this matter seriously and against tremendous odds and in the midst of great difficulties took their stand for Christ against liberalism and ecumenism. That initial separatist stand must be maintained, necessitating that we remind ourselves of what the Scriptures of truth present on this matter.

I. NOTICE FIRST THE ARGUMENT

In our text where Paul commands separation he intensifies his call in the words “*touch not the unclean thing.*” These words are quoted from Isaiah 52: 11 – the reference is to the OT saints being called to depart from Babylon & break all association with the unclean; i.e. the heathen & idolatrous religion of Babylon.

Here in 2 Cor 6 this same call to break all contact with false religion is in view in v.14a. Note the term that Paul uses – *unequally yoked*, which signifies being yoked with another of a different kind. The teaching here is based on Moses' instruction in the law, see Deut 22: 10 where animals of different kinds were not to be yoked together because they had different natures & temperaments. Hence, Paul is emphasising that there cannot be a true spiritual union between true religion & false religion because they are opposites in nature.

This then, is the argument for the separation of God's people from liberal & ecumenical religion. Union between those who follow Christ and those who do not is impossible because it would be union between those who are of totally diverse natures -- believers who love and follow Christ in contrast with those who pursue a religion or belief that is a rejection of Christ. There just cannot be any true Scriptural union or fellowship in that situation.

Thus, down through this passage Paul develops his argument for separation by showing the contrasts between false & true religion; proving that they are spiritually incompatible and that no genuine union between them is possible. To prove his point the Apostle asks a series of five questions in order to highlight the great contrast that there is between true & false religion.

1. It is a contrast of principles.

V.14, “*What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?*” Notice that Paul does not speak of “the righteous” or “the unrighteous” but the principles of righteousness & unrighteousness. The believer has the principle of righteousness in his soul, while the unbeliever has the opposite. These are opposing principles between which there is no compatibility.

Note in this question the word *fellowship* – the word denotes the matter of partnership; & the point is that there cannot be any partnership between the two classes in whom these principles are formed, namely the believer and the unbeliever. See Acts 13: 10 and note that Paul’s stand against Elymas was based on the fact that the false prophet represented a system of unrighteousness.

2. It is a contrast of properties.

V.14 again – “*What communion hath light with darkness?*” Here, light is that spiritual property which dwells in the believer. It is the Scriptural emblem of knowledge, holiness, & blessedness. Thus, believers are said to be children of light, in that light has entered their hearts, 2 Cor 4: 6; so that they are children of light, 1 Thess 5: 5; and they are such because this is the nature of their heavenly Father, 1 John 1: 5.

But darkness is the spiritual property of the unbeliever – there is no light in him, only darkness, which is the emblem of error, sin & misery. Satan’s kingdom is the kingdom of darkness; the wicked are the children of darkness; and their ultimate end is outer darkness. Hence, these two properties of light & darkness are incongruous & mutually exclusive, so that between them there can be no communion, which essentially means *to have something in common*.

3. It is a contrast of personalities.

V.15, “*What concord hath Christ with Belial?*” The word “Belial” signifies *wickedness*; and is used here as a pronoun, as a title for the Wicked One, the Devil. What Paul is underlining in this question is that Christ & Belial are the two dominating personalities in this world, with all men following one or the other of the two. Christ is God manifest in the flesh; Satan is the prince of darkness. They stand in absolute contrast to each other, and so do their followers – Christ’s seed on one hand and Satan’s on the other.

Thus, again there is a great contrast between these two personalities, denoted by the word *concord*. The word signifies *harmony of voice*; thus, Paul’s question indicates that between Christ & Belial there is no “harmony of voice”. From these two dominant personalities there are two totally different messages – the messages of the truth & the lie, John 8: 44; 1 John 2: 21.

4. It is a contrast of profession.

V.15, “*What part hath he that believeth with an infidel (unbeliever)?*” The one who believes professes saving faith in Christ; the unbeliever does not make any such profession but actually rejects Christ. Therefore, the person who professes & possesses saving faith moves in an entirely different sphere from the one who makes no such profession.

Thus, there is no union between them and no basis for it. The word “part” denotes this matter of union; see John 13: 8 where it is used by Christ of the union or relationship between Him and His people. Thus, only when there is a true saving union with Christ can there be union & participation between men. Hence, between an unbeliever & a believer there can be no union. To the believer Christ means everything; but to the unbeliever Christ is nothing – thus the two are essentially opposed to each other.

5. It is a contrast of purpose.

V.16, “*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?*” God’s temple is the company of truly redeemed souls. But Satan’s temple is comprised of the company of the lost, Eph 2: 2.

Thus, the redeemed & the lost have two entirely different spiritual purposes. In God’s temple He is honoured & glorified, whereas among the unregenerate Satan is glorified – for example, through the idolatrous practices of the lost. Therefore, there can be no “agreement” between the true Church and the idolatrous system of whatever brand it might be. The word for *agreement* literally signifies *to vote for*, see Luke 23: 50 & 51 – Joseph did not cast his vote to crucify Christ. Thus, the temple of God cannot vote for or support the idolatrous system.

II. NOTICE THEN THE ALIGNMENT

Note only does this text and its context present the argument for separation from spiritual wickedness, it also calls presents an alignment that God’s people are to adopt. Note the words – “*I will receive you.*” These words make it very clear that the Lord stand separate from that out of which He calls His people; and therefore in separating from all that is spiritually & morally unclean, they are to align themselves with Him.

This is an important point: it shows that the primary purpose of separation is to have believers align themselves with God and with Christ. Separation is unto the Lord in the first instance – it is not unto man or denomination. It is not an end in itself – rather, it is for the purpose of aligning ourselves with God our Father & Christ our Saviour; and with the true message of the Gospel. See Heb 13: 12 & 13 – note that the reason for going without the camp is that we align ourselves with Christ & His once-for-all sacrifice. This is the test of knowing where you should be in fellowship – within a company where Christ & His blessed Gospel are central and upheld.

See Josh 5: 13 & 14 – the captain or prince of the Lord’s host is Christ. Note Joshua’s question in v.13 – “*Art thou for us or for our adversaries?*” The question essentially was – “*Whose side are you on?*” The Lord’s response is effectively that He is on no group’s side but that those who will serve Him & worship Him aright must align themselves with Him. It is Christ in is person and His work that is the central issue – He must be upheld and He must have all the glory, with His blessed cross work the basis of all. With all that He is and all that He has done we are to align ourselves – which means that we must separate from the unclean thing. May the Lord help us to do so for His glory.