

## Lesson 12: 2 Corinthians 6:11-18

### • I. The Controversy Over 2 Corinthians 6:11 - 7:1

- A. One commentator calls this section an enigma: "neither its origin nor its place in the context being entirely clear."
  - 1. These verses leave off the warm emotional affirmation of Paul's love for the Corinthians and his appeal for them to open their hearts to him and launch an unexpected (to some) exhortation to separate themselves from unbelievers and to purify themselves.
  - 2. In 7:2, Paul will point back to his pledge of love for them and his appeal for them to show him the same affection. The transition in 6:14 is so abrupt that some argue that 7:2-3 follows naturally from 6:11-13.
  - 3. Some believe that this intervening section with its Old Testament citations clearly digresses from Paul's discussion, and some consider it a foreign body somehow inserted into the text, although there is no existing manuscript of this letter that omits it.
- B. The text does contains a high percentage of unique vocabulary.
  - 1. Some also argue that the way the Old Testament are introduced differs from how Paul cites the Old Testament elsewhere.
  - 2. The text also shares similarities with writings from the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly with its use of the contrasting phrases "righteousness and lawlessness," "light and darkness," and "Christ and Belial."
    - a. One commentator colorfully described this section as "a meteor fallen from the heaven of Qumran into Paul's epistle."
    - b. But the similarity between these verses and the Dead Sea Scrolls really proves nothing because both point back to the Old Testament. Further, Qumran was a closed community. It is extremely unlikely the ideas from there would have penetrated Jewish life far from Jerusalem.
- C. These problems have led scholars in last century to the conclusion that the passage is extraneous to the letter and they have postulated many theories concerning its origin.
  - 1. Some propose that it does not come from Paul's hand, but was composed by an unknown Christian who reworked an Essene paragraph or composed it himself and introduced it when he was editing the letter.
  - 2. Some argue that Paul himself inserted a text from another source to address a particular issue.
  - 3. Others claim more reasonably that the passage does come from Paul but that it did not originally belong to this book. They suggest that it was a fragment from a previous letter perhaps the letter of tears or the first letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians, neither of which were preserved.
    - a. Paul alludes to his first letter in 1 Corinthians 5:9-10. There he says that in that letter he warned them not to associate with sexually immoral people. This description of the contents of his first letter seems to some to match the verses here in Chapter 6.
    - b. But that correlation does not prove that these verses were originally part of that first letter. All it may show is that such problems were widespread in the church at Corinth and that Paul continually needed to address them.
  - 4. Others imagine that this fragment was originally part of First Corinthians and somehow was inserted here.
- D. All of these theories present more problems than they pretend to solve and most commentators who adopt them generally skip the basic task of explaining the mechanics of

how such an interpolation would have been carried out or why it would have been undertaken.

- 1. What were the motives behind such a peculiar interpolation that, according to these interpreters, fits so badly with its context?
- 2. One commentator writes that "the early editors of what is now the second letter did a skillful job of mending the seams because verses 11-13 constitute an appropriate transition."
  - a. But apparently, it was not skillful enough to fool the expert detection of modern scholars and that same commentator does not even offer a guess as to the purpose of such editing.
  - b. And on the other hand, if this is an "appropriate transition," why could it not be from Paul?
- 3. In short, these critical commentators offer no clues about why this so-called fragment was inserted here with such a supposedly jarring effect.
  
- E. One commentator writes that the tide may be turning regarding the authenticity of these verses as a growing list of scholars now argue from a variety of perspectives that Paul wrote this passage and that it fits into the logical flow of Paul's argument.
  - 1. The objections to Pauline authorship do not withstand close scrutiny.
  - 2. Other passages by Paul have rare vocabulary. All agree that the presence of unique terms can never be the sole factor in determining authorship.
  - 3. Plus a similar chain of Old Testament quotations appears in Roman 3.
  - 4. Also, the presumed shift in Paul's argument can be dismissed as imaginary.
    - a. One commentator wrote "Paul not infrequently allows himself to wonder from his point, and then bring himself back to it with something of a jerk."
    - b. Perhaps, but I do not think that is what is happening here at all. In the immediate context Paul appeals to the Corinthians to repent (5:20). This chapter opened with Paul urging them not to receive God's grace in vain.
    - c. In verse 13, Paul told them to open wide their hearts to him. In 7:2 he resumes the thought from verse 13 but in verse 3 he introduces the statement "I have said before" and repeats the statement from 6:11. That would be a strange choice of words if verse 3 followed immediately from verse 11. It makes more sense as a deliberate reference back to 6:11-13 after the interruption.
    - d. Other commentators have shown that Paul uses a very similar structure in his arguments in 1 Corinthians 4-6 and here in 2 Corinthians 5-7.
  
- F. The real question for us is not whether this passage belongs here in this letter, because it does, but is rather how does this passage fit in with the flow of Paul's discussion?
  - 1. Far from flying off on some tangent here at the end of Chapter 6, I think this passage marks the climax of his argument which began in Chapter 2.
  - 2. Its main topic is the problem of association with idolatry, which was one of the major problems in Corinth.
  - 3. Chapters 2-7 are a defense of Paul's frank criticism of the Corinthians in his earlier letter. That defense ends here in Chapter 6 with Paul summarizing the contents of his earlier letter in order to reinforce the seriousness of the problem.
  - 4. These verses are sandwiched between his defense of his frank criticism and his joyous affirmation of them for responding favorably to his letter and to his emissary.

- 5. After boldly reiterating the same ultimatum he issued in his severe letter, he will next move on to praise them for their Godly sorrow and repentance in chapter 7.
- G. There is a strong overlap between these verses and the discussion in First Corinthians 8 and 10 regarding the eating of meat offered to idols.
  - 1. We find the same contrast between God and idols and between Christ and demons.
  - 2. The extremely rare word for defilement found in 7:2 appears in verb form in First Corinthians 8:7 with reference to the weak person whose conscience is defiled.
  - 3. The admonitions in First Corinthians "do not become idolaters," "flee from idolatry," and "do not eat it" match the commands here in Chapter 6 to "come out from among them," to "be separate," to "touch no unclean thing."
  - 4. The most reasonable conclusion to draw from this overlapping vocabulary is that the idol-meat question had not gone away.
  - 5. Since many new converts came from a background of idol worship, they may not have understood or accepted the need for strict boundaries regarding other gods. In their religious background no deity demanded exclusive worship. People could choose from a cafeteria line of deities to worship, and they usually chose those gods whom they hoped would offer the greatest assistance in helping them to lead successful lives. The more gods the merrier as long as the gods served the needs of the worshipper.
  - 6. We can only surmise what happened, but here's a possibility:
    - a. When Paul was present, he denounced anything associated with idols.
    - b. After he left, the more prominent members of the congregation were strongly tempted to eat idol food because of social pressure.
    - c. They buckled under this pressure and justified it with an "enlightened" view of Christian freedom.
    - d. They were seeking their own social good and then justifying it theologically, unconcerned about what effect it might have on others.
    - e. This controversy may have even been behind the confrontation that prompted Paul's retreat and the tearful, severe letter.
  - 7. Thus, far from being an interruption, these verses are the climax of an argument that started back in Chapter 2. They reiterate Paul's admonitions in his severe letter, and they are placed between a defense of Paul's frank criticisms in that severe letter and his discussion of their response to that severe letter.
- **II. Verses 11-12: 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.**
  - A. Paul uses a Hebrew idiom for speaking when says "our mouth stands opened to you."
    - 1. He means that he has spoken freely and frankly to them.
    - 2. He cannot stay silent when they stand on a dangerous precipice where one false step will lead to their spiritual ruin. They are children playing with fire, and this is no time for a parent to remain silent.
    - 3. Paul is not interested in restoring good relations with those who lives are not right with God simply for the sake of peace and harmony. He will not back down in proclaiming God's absolute demand for ethical purity.
  - B. This is the only place in Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians that he addresses them as Corinthians.

- 1. One commentator compared it to the other instances where Paul directly addressed his readers and determined that Paul did so only when his emotions were deeply stirred.
- C. The perfect tense ("we have opened wide our hearts to you") implies that he continues to love them now as he loved them before.
  - 1. The implication is that if there is a breach in their relationship, it was not caused by Paul.
  - 2. Paul may have disapproved of their conduct and may have been very frank in voicing that disapproval, but that does not mean he had abandoned his affection for them.
  - 3. On the contrary, it is proof of Paul's affection for them. Why would Paul put himself through all of this anguish and turmoil for people he cared nothing about?
- D. There is no restraint on Paul's affection for them, but he frankly accuses them of closing their hearts to him.
  - 1. Verse 12 literally reads "you are not constricted by us, but you are constricted in your bowels," which I think we all agree makes for a very strange reading in the KJV for a modern reader.
  - 2. The bowels, as we all know, were considered the seat of emotion and compassion.
    - a. (1 John 3:17) But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?
  - 3. The verb translated "straiten" or "constrict" means to narrow or to crimp.
  - 4. We have the expression "narrow minded" in our language, but not the expression "narrow hearted." But it is that latter expression that best expresses the thought here.
  - 5. Their love for Paul had grown cold while Paul's love for them was as fervent as ever. He had opened his heart to them, but they had closed their hearts to him. They had squeezed him out of their hearts by treating him with distrust and suspicion.
- **III. Verse 13: Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.**
  - A. The Greek word translated "recompense" could also be translated "as a fair exchange," "in return," "in fair understanding," "as a fair return," or "in recompense in kind."
    - 1. Paul is asking them to show some reciprocity, which one commentator described as "the key element of friendship in the ancient world."
    - 2. Seneca wrote that it was a disgrace to have received something that is greatly prized yet not acknowledge it so that one does not accept the debt incurred.
    - 3. Ingratitude is not an attractive quality in any century, but the daily give and take of social debts was much more important in Paul's day than it is today.
    - 4. It is possible that the Corinthians had trouble accepting the fact that they had received anything of value through the ministrations of one so lowly.
      - a. (1 Corinthians 4:7) For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?
    - 5. Yet they cannot deny that they owe their new spiritual life to Paul's ministry of reconciliation.
  - B. Paul's appeal for them to reciprocate in kind would normally be a delicate issue.

- 1. Seneca also said: "It is not easy to say whether it is more shameful to repudiate a benefit or to ask for the repayment of it."
- 2. An analogy today would be to ask which is worse, not writing a thank you note for a wedding gift, or later asking the bride what happened to your thank you note?
- 3. Paul escapes the social embarrassment here by reminding them that he is their father.
- 4. They are his children in the faith and he brings up this filial relationship because it permits him to speak as he does -- demanding a return from children for parental affection.
- C. At the end of Chapter 5 Paul calls on them to be reconciled to God, and here he calls on them to open their hearts to him. For Paul the two are intertwined.
  - 1. This interconnection makes sense if the issue at the bottom of the dispute concerns their continued association with idolatry.
  - 2. There is a connection in the Old Testament between enlarged hearts and warnings against the worship of false gods.
    - a. (Deuteronomy 11:16) Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them.
    - b. The Septuagint translates that phrase as "do not broaden your hearts."
    - c. Their hearts were wide enough to include idols, but not wide enough to include Paul? Paul is being very subtle, but I think that is the question he is posing for them.
    - d. There are some things a child of God must hate. And one of those things is idolatry. If we enlarge our hearts to include something that God hates, then our hearts have gotten much too big.
    - e. We all need to enlarge our hearts, but we need to enlarge our hearts to the right things.
- **IV. Verse 14: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?**
  - A. The verb translated "unequally yoked together" is difficult to render in English.
    - 1. It literally means "other yoked."
    - 2. Deuteronomy 22:10 "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together."
    - 3. In Leviticus 19:19, the adjective form occurs in the Septuagint to describe the prohibition of mating different species of cattle.
    - 4. This may explain why some translations render it "mismatched," which could suggest it applies only to marriages. But in the context here, the image should not be limited to marriage and almost certainly has a broader meaning.
  - B. A good paraphrase might be "you must not get into a double harness with an unbeliever" or "you must not harness yourself in an uneven team."
    - 1. Paul has in mind here an alliance with spiritual opposites, and in fact Plutarch used the word to mean "ally," which may be very close to the meaning Paul has in mind here.
    - 2. We are not to ally ourselves with someone who is spiritually incompatible, and while that could include marriage, we should not limit it to marriage.
    - 3. Those who bear Christ's yoke cannot share it with those who deny Christ.
    - 4. Those who harness themselves together with unbelievers will soon find themselves plowing Satan's fields!

- 5. One can be a true yokefellow only with a fellow Christian.
  - a. (Philippians 4:3) And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.
  
- C. By "unbelievers" Paul refers to non-Christians.
  - 1. He refers to those who espouse values, beliefs, and practices that are totally at odds with the Christian faith. He refers to those unconverted souls who inhabit the dark world of idolatry and immorality such as surrounded the body of believers in Corinth.
  
- D. For Paul it was an either/or situation.
  - 1. Fellowship with God excludes all fellowships apart from God, and particularly excludes those associated with idolatry.
  - 2. The Corinthians were surrounded by pagan values and practices (as we are today).
  - 3. Just because they had been baptized into Christ did not mean that they could then be careless about their relationships and associations with the world.
  
- E. Paul's clarification in 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 makes it clear he is not asking them to shun pagans altogether.
  - 1. "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."
  - 2. He assumes that they will shop in the market, and he even encourages them to go to dinner in a pagan's home if they are invited and disposed to go.
  - 3. But he wants them to form a spiritual identity different from the pagan society that surrounds them.
  - 4. The church of Christ will be different and will be distinguishable from this world or it is not the church of Christ.
    - a. The Sermon on the Mount can be summarized by a single word -- different. Jesus wants his followers to be different from the world. And those who follow Christ will be different; they will be very different.
  - 5. Christians hold values dear that others reject. We base our lives on a book that others disregard. We pray to a God that others ignore. We worship a Savior that others disdain. We center our lives around a cross that others consider foolish.
  - 6. For a Christian the one supremely important thing in the world is that which the unbeliever denies.
  - 7. How can we form a spiritual alliance with those who reject God and turn their back on his Son? How can we align ourselves spiritually with those who cast the word of God behind their backs?
  - 8. How can become yoked with those that pervert the gospel and then spread that perversion from their pulpits and over the airwaves? How is enlarging our hearts to include that any different from enlarging our hearts to include idolatry?
  
- F. We have been speaking in general terms, but we should pause and consider for a moment whether Paul had something more specific in mind.
  - 1. One commentator says no. He says that these verses should not be particularized, but instead are simply general admonitions similar to James' admonition in 1:27 that we keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

- 2. But others suggest that Paul must have had a particular problem in mind, and there have been numerous suggestions, some mentioned in his letters and others not.
  - a. Maintaining membership in a pagan cult.
  - b. Attending ceremonies in a pagan temple, perhaps related to trade guilds.
  - c. Employment by a pagan temple.
  - d. He could refer to taking grievances before pagan courts. (1 Cor. 6:1-11)
  - e. He could refer to visiting temple prostitutes. (1 Cor. 6:12-20)
  - f. He could refer to entering mixed marriages, particularly as they had a dangerous association with idolatry. (1 Cor. 7:39)
  - g. He could refer (and this is most likely) to eating meat offered to idols at pagan temples and in the homes of pagan associates.
  
- G. Paul's basic admonition is justified by a series of rhetorical questions, the first two of which occur at the end of verse 14: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?
  - 1. Paul first stresses the polarity between righteousness and lawlessness.
    - a. The noun translated "fellowship" or "in common" refers to a relationship involving shared purposes and activities.
    - b. Paul makes a similar comparison in Romans 6:19 ("for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.")
    - c. I am also reminded of James 3:11-12. ("Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.")
  - 2. And what fellowship can light have with darkness?
    - a. Paul describes a life without Christ as an ethical and theological darkness.
      - 1) (Ephesians 5:8) For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.
      - 2) (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.
      - 3) (Colossians 1:12-13) Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.
      - 4) (4:6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
      - 5) (John 8:12) Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.
    - b. Other inspired writers make the same point:
      - 1) (1 Peter 2:9) But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

- 2) (Isaiah 9:2) The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.
- c. Before our conversion we were in bondage to the prince of darkness who leads a kingdom of darkness. In that murk lives every sort of immorality and idolatry.
- 1) (Romans 13:12) The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.
- 3. God has called Christians into fellowship with his Son, and Christians can only have true fellowship with Him and with other Christians.
  - a. The early church was marked by a keen sense of fellowship with one another, and it seems that today our fellowship does not rise to the level we see, for example, in Acts 2:41-47.
  - b. And perhaps the reason is that we have not suffered as they did. Shared persecution no doubt increased the fellowship among early Christians.
  - c. In the first century it was neither acceptable nor fashionable to be a Christian. In the first century, no one "chose a church" and then "joined a church" just to get business contacts.
  - d. But even with less fellowship today, we can still see the beauty in Christian fellowship. We have all likely had the experience of traveling and finding a local congregation of Christians we have never met. But as we sing the same songs and proclaim the same message and worship the same God, we suddenly feel right at home. That is Christian fellowship, and sadly it is becoming rare for the simple reason that the only place Christ appears in many "Churches of Christ" is on their sign -- and many are doing their best to remedy that as they change their names to "Community Church."
- **V. Verse 15: And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?**
  - A. The word translated "concord" could also be translated "harmony."
    - 1. It suggests some sort of mutual agreement or an alliance. A paraphrase might be "Does anyone think that God would sign a contract with Satan?"
    - 2. The inference, of course, is then how could a Christian ever make an alliance with Satan? How could a Christian ever engage in an activity that compromises God's interests?
    - 3. There can be no harmony between Christ's kingdom of light and Satan's kingdom of darkness.
  - B. Belial is a Hebrew word that can mean "worthlessness," "ruin," or "wickedness" -- all of which are accurate descriptions of Satan.
    - 1. In the Greek, it is spelled as Beliar, and its use here has caused much discussion. One thing is for certain: Paul did not borrow it from the Old Testament because the term is never personified there as it is here.
    - 2. In the period between the Testaments, Belial was used as a name for Satan, much as Lucifer has been used for that purpose.
    - 3. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, Belial appears as the arch enemy of God, and this similarity led to some of the theories we considered (and rejected) earlier about the origin of these verses.
    - 4. We do not know for certain why Paul used this name here, but Paul possibly wanted to personalize the idols and show how they are Satanic and an antithesis of Christ.

- 5. (1 Corinthians 10:20) But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.
- C. Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?
  - 1. Some translations render this "or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"
    - a. But the answer to that question is quite a lot! We are both sinners. We both need Jesus Christ. We both live in this world. We all have an appointment with death. We experience the same joys and pleasures; we experience the same sorrow and pain. We have much in common, even though we also, of course, have much that is not in common.
  - 2. A better translation is to translate "part" as "lot," "share," or "portion" so that Paul is asking what portion we have with an unbeliever rather than to have Paul simply asking what we have in common with an unbeliever.
    - a. We may have much in common, but our lot is not one of those things.
    - b. In Colossians 1:12, Paul tells us that we are partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.
    - c. Unbelievers have no share in that inheritance or in God's promises to those who obey his gospel.
- **VI. Verses 16-18: And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.**
- A. What agreement has the temple of God with idols?
  - 1. The word "agreement" used here refers to some kind of consensual affiliation, such as a pact joining persons together in a common cause.
  - 2. The verb form is found in the Septuagint's translation of Exodus 23:32-33, where it refers to the prohibition of joining with the inhabitants of the land in some kind of agreement because of their idolatry.
    - a. "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee."
  - 3. This is not a general appeal, but instead directly relates to a major issue in Corinth -- association with idols.
- B. Paul clarifies the metaphor by identifying the Corinthian Christians as the temple of the living God.
  - 1. God is everywhere and cannot be confined to a house built by human hands. He is everywhere and reveals his power against false gods whether they be Dagon of the Philistines or Baal of the Canaanites.
  - 2. But the Jews said that God dwelled in the Most Holy Place in the temple in Jerusalem. And the Greeks considered that temple a laughingstock because, unlike their own temples, it had no statues or images.
  - 3. Paul tells both groups that we are the temple of the living God.

- a. Elsewhere Paul tells us that our bodies are each a temple of God, but here he says that we (plural) are the temple (singular) of God.
- b. The church is God's temple because it is in the church that God can dwell with man and does dwell with man.
  
- C. Paul next provides a series of proof texts from Scripture to reinforce his main admonition in verse 14. Why did he choose these particular passages? The answer will help reveal his purpose in this section of the letter.
  - 1. Each text was chosen from contexts of worship of God, whether linked with the temple or in opposition to worship of false gods.
  - 2. The texts are linked together by the thought that God is a father to his people, who are asked to keep themselves pure.
  
- D. The first quotation appears at the end of verse 16: As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
  - 1. The promise here is fourfold: God will dwell with his people; God will walk with his people; He will be their God; and, He will make them his people.
    - a. This quote is a golden thread that God has woven into his Word from the beginning to the end.
    - b. (Genesis 3:8) And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.
    - c. (Exodus 25:8) And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.
    - d. (Exodus 29:45) And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God.
    - e. (Revelation 21:3) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.
  - 2. This quote likely comes from Leviticus 26:11-12.
    - a. (Leviticus 26:11-12) And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. 12 And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.
  - 3. Ezekiel 37:27 has also been proposed as a source:
    - a. (Ezekiel 37:27) My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
  - 4. The context in Leviticus 26 makes it the more likely choice. That chapter deals with setting the people apart from worshipping idols so they can properly worship God. Note, for example, the first two verses of Leviticus 26:
    - a. Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God. 2 Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.
  - 5. The Leviticus passage has been altered slightly. The second person has been changed to third person, and "I will live among them" replaces "My tabernacle shall be with them." That latter change affirms that God now dwells among his people without the need for any physical temple or tent. The church is the dwelling place of God.
  
- E. The citation in verse 17 combines Isaiah 52:11 with Ezekiel 20:34.

- 1. (Isaiah 52:11) Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing ; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.
- 2. (Ezekiel 20:34) And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.
- 3. The context of the Isaiah passage involves carrying the Lord's vessels out of Babylon, and the context of the Ezekiel passage involves the gathering of the people for purging the rebels and the people's persistent worship of false gods. Note, for example, Ezekiel 20:38-39.
  - a. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also , if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols.
- 4. These quotations each contain a note of warning and each reinforces Paul's point that to be a worshipper of God requires that one be separated from the worship of idols.
- 5. The citation from Ezekiel interprets the one from Isaiah: God rescues with a mighty hand and then purges. The phrase "I will receive you" thus may contains a note of warning along with a note of welcome.
- 6. As God is holy, he expects his children to be holy.
  - a. With variations, that theme appears throughout the Scriptures.
  - b. (Leviticus 11:44-45) For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 45 For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.
  - c. (1 Peter 1:15-16) But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.
- 7. Of course, we have all sinned and none of us can approach God based on our own holiness.
  - a. It is sin that separates us from God, and it is only through Christ that the barrier of sin can be removed. But the fact that we cannot live perfect lives does not mean that God has not called us to live perfect lives.
  - b. (Matthew 5:48) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.
  - c. Christians live under a very high standard. The example we are instructed to follow is God himself. His purity and holiness is our standard.
  - d. But we can't be perfect, right? Thus, we must pursue a lower standard, right? Perhaps a standard that permits a certain level of unholiness to remain intact and unchallenged in our lives, right? Wrong!
    - 1) (Romans 6:1-2) What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?
    - 2) (Hebrews 10:26-27) For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

- F. Verse 18 joins together 2 Samuel 7:14 and Deuteronomy 32:18-19.
  - 1. (2 Samuel 7:14) I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.
  - 2. (Deuteronomy 32:18-19) Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. 19 And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.
  - 3. In 2 Samuel 7 God is speaking to David through the prophet Nathan about Solomon, the immediate successor to David's throne.
  - 4. The Deuteronomy reference is not an obvious one, and we will consider in a moment why it is a likely source, but if it is the source, then its context indicts the people of Israel for abandoning God (verse 15), serving strange gods (verse 16), and sacrificing to demons and false deities (verse 18). Further, verse 18 specifically refers to God as parent. Verses 20-21 chide rebellious children who worship other gods and yet promises they will be cleansed.
  - 5. Verse 18 is the only place in Paul's writings where he uses the phrase "sons and daughters" in place of the generic term "sons," which generally refers to children, both sons and daughters. (For example, see Galatians 3:26 -- "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.") Why does he include "daughters" here?
    - a. Some argue that Paul includes the term to make some sort of statement about the role of women in the church, but that issue has nothing to do with the context here.
    - b. Since Paul is citing the Old Testament and fusing different passages together, a much more likely source for his use of the term "daughters" is the Old Testament.
    - c. Deuteronomy 32:19 refers to sons and daughters. Paul referred to this same chapter in his warnings against idol worship in 1 Corinthians 10:20 (Deut 32:27) and 10:22 (Deut 32:17), as well as in his reference to Christ as the rock in 1 Corinthians 10:4 (Deut 32:18).
    - d. This evidence suggests that Deuteronomy 32 is the most likely source for the phrase "sons and daughters" in verse 18.
- G. Here is how one commentator sums up Paul's choices of these Old Testament passages:
  - 1. "Each in its own way reinforces both in warning and promise the call to give sole undivided allegiance to God as his sons and daughters. The passages bear every sign of having been chosen to address the specific dangers of idolatry that lie at the heart of Paul's aggravation with the Corinthians and the cause of much of their conflict."
- H. Many commentaries wonder why Paul combined and paraphrased these Old Testament verses. There are two responses.
  - 1. First, Paul did not have a complete Old Testament to work from. The scrolls were very large and hard to navigate. He had no concordance. In short, Paul was working from memory and putting together God's view on idolatry from many parts of the Old Testament.
  - 2. Second, Paul was speaking and writing under inspiration just as surely as the Old Testament authors and prophets were. If the Holy Spirit decides to paraphrase the Holy Spirit, then who are we to complain? What Paul attributes to God, God said at least twice -- once through the Old Testament authors and here through the inspired apostle.
- I. Chapter 6 ends with a reference to the Lord Almighty, which is the only place in Paul's letters where he uses that phrase. But again the focus is on idolatry, and Paul reminds the Corinthians that God is the all powerful ruler of everyone and everything.
- J. Verse 17 says that as God's people we must come out from among them and be separate.

- 1. Paul has made it clear elsewhere that we must continue to live in the world and must continue to have some association with the people of this world. In fact, we are commanded to do so. How can we fulfill the great commission if we avoid those who are lost?
- 2. But being in the world does not mean we can be of the world. If we are of the world, then we harm both ourselves and others. We harm ourselves because as we become polluted and contaminated, we drift away from God and become useless to him. We harm others because as the church becomes increasingly like the world, we lose our ability to reach the world with the gospel.
- 3. As God's people, we must be separate; we must be different. We cannot have the same priorities as the world; we cannot have the same goals as the world; we cannot have the same focus as the world. Unlike the world, we know that these things are not permanent. In their place, we cling to that which is permanent.
- 4. (4:18) While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.
- 5. When we go beyond reading that verse and start living that verse, then we will have no trouble coming out from among the world and being separate. Such a lifestyle is a natural byproduct of looking at the things that are not seen.