

1,15,26, 2 Cor. 6:14-18, The Family of God (Part 1)

This is part one of a two-part study we are going to do on the last section of 2 Cor. chapter 6 (vs's 14-18). So, we'll start by reading through the passage;

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate", says the Lord. "Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "And I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

This section has one primary theme – separation based on contrast. It could be called "holiness" as referring to the contrast between good and evil or light and darkness. But the only way to bring a Christian into a full understanding of this is for them to realize that all of this is related to identity not to compliance to an external written code.

The Old Covenant quotes that Paul uses establish the distinction that should exist between the people of God and those of the world. Unless that distinction and separation is there, there can be no testimony of the holiness of God.

But whether we are dealing with the physical temple in Jerusalem, the articles and sacrifices made in the Jewish ceremonies, or countless other regulations, feasts and laws, the external obedience of the Jews was only a shadow of the reality.

As we saw when we studied in Colossians and Hebrews;

(Col. 2:16-17) . . . in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

(Heb. 10:1) The law is only a shadow of the good things to come, not the realities themselves.

That which is born of Spirit is spirit. The reality or substance of that which is eternal is spiritual; it's the inside of the cup, not the outside.

We aren't being shaped into the image of Christ from the outside; our conformity to Christ is the work of the indwelling Spirit. He is the only One Who can bring us to Christlikeness. The Law can only condemn our failures; only grace can conform us to Christ.

(2 Cor. 3:3,6) You are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart . . . (we are) ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

(Gal. 6:18) If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

(Col. 1:27) Christ in us, the hope of glory.

So, again, the primary advance through history in God's eternal purpose has been to begin with the types and shadows to create a longing, and a deep hunger for true righteousness and then, in Christ, to bring in the spiritual reality so that our distinction from the world is not, as in the Old Covenant, based on outward behavior, but on inward transformation. That which was written on stone is now written in our hearts.

I wish new Christians could be taught from day one, that what distinguishes a Christian from a non-Christian is not simply a change in behavior based on a new set of rules and laws, but instead, it's a change in the person themselves so that their behavior, rather than being obedience to a Christian religion, is now an outward expression of who that person is inwardly.

In spiritual maturity, we do what we do, not because we're trying to imitate Christ or keep a set of commandments, but because *we* desire to do what's right, because we are *becoming*, not *mimicking*, that which is Christlike.

The result of the external obedience of the faithful in Israel was "I will be their God, and they will be my people." The Jews were a unique race in the earth; a testimony to the existence and power of Jehovah.

The result of *internal* transformation of the faithful in the Church is the growing reality of a true family in Christ as the firstborn of a new humanity that provides the unique testimony of the presence of a holy God to the world by our becoming shaped into the exact image of God's Son.

Under the Old Covenant the temple of God was a massive building filled with multiple pieces of furniture that represented various aspects of Christ's nature and glory. And God's people had to do the best they could in obedience to the Mosaic Law without the benefit of the indwelling Spirit and without regeneration. As Peter made clear in 1 Pet. 1:3;

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

The new birth could not happen until the barrier of sin was removed through the death and resurrection of Christ. Now, in the New Covenant, the temple of God is the body of the Christian, both individually and corporately.

God destroyed the outer temple in 70 A.D. and at the coming of the Holy Spirit, He began building His spiritual temple in the disciples of Christ. Furniture *typifying* Christ is no longer needed; Christ Himself has come to live in us.

As we saw in our passage in 2 Cor., God has been working steadily and faithfully throughout human history to create something that has been on His heart from before time.

In all He has done, God's goal has been twofold; first, have a race of people who are distinct from the fallen humanity, a people who possess the indwelling presence of the true God and second, for the Father and Son to have a family and all the love, intimacy and fellowship that the word "family" implies.

Man was created for the express purpose of being God's children, His family – that was His desire. And this family would take on what all children take on – the DNA, the "image" of their parent;

(2 Pet. 1:4) Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may become *partakers of the divine nature*, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

It's not by "religion" (Christian or otherwise) that we "escape" the evils of this world, the things Paul lists in 2 Cor. 4; it's by becoming the kind of human that is like Who Jesus is – a Man who hated evil and loved righteousness, and didn't need any Law or commandments to motivate or guide Him; it's His nature – and now, because of all that regeneration represents, we have that same nature being progressively formed within us.

Just as in natural growth within the human family, moving to full maturity requires training and discipline. Even Jesus learned obedience through the things He suffered; He was brought from a child to an adult through the experiences of life;

(Heb. 5:7-9) During the days of Jesus' earthly life, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from what He

suffered. And having been made mature, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

(Lk. 2:52) Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

That's what's happening to us. We are becoming people who will do exactly what Paul is asking of the Corinthians, not just out of determined obedience alone, but also as the result of becoming a family of the Father whose personal delight is to please Him.

When, in Matt. 5, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled"; His audience had no idea how that was going to happen- the Cross, the Resurrection, Pentecost, and the formation and development of a race, a family of God, who by nature are "filled with righteousness".

This is why you'll see so many passages like these repeated over and over throughout the Bible – they are based on the heart motivation of God to have a family of mature sons and daughters as living testimonies of His presence and eternal objects of His affection;

(2 Pet. 3:18) Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever.

(2 Tim. 3:16-17) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be mature, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

(Heb. 5:12-14) By this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have their (spiritual) senses trained to distinguish good from evil.

This is our highest personal priority – to move from childhood to adulthood spiritually; just as Jesus, our Forerunner and elder Brother did in His time on earth.

And, just a reminder, because this *is* our priority, and God's priority *for* us, Satan's primary focus is to prevent that growth by enslaving God's people in a place of spiritual infancy through the perpetual instruction of only the milk of God's Word. No child, in the natural or the spiritual, can grow to full maturity on milk alone.

I know that coming under the authority of men who are teaching solid food, or as Paul put in in Act 20, are communicating the “full counsel of God”, is hard; but the alternative is to completely miss becoming who we are meant to be in Christ. It’s something we have to fight for, but it’s a battle that is essential to win.

(2 Pet. 3:16) (Paul), as also in all his epistles, speaks in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

The word “untaught” is referring to the need to be taught by those who communicate the truths of God’s word to us. In our time, just as in Peter’s, there were believers who felt that all they needed was to study whatever manuscripts they had and that would take them to maturity. They believed that they didn’t need to come under the authority of the headship gifts of Eph. 4 which the Lord provided to instruct them and take them to full stature.

(Eph. 4:11-13) (The Lord) Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the (purpose of) equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

(Heb. 13:7,17, Remember those who exercise spiritual authority over you, who have taught the word of God to you, whose faith follow . . . Obey those who lead you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account.

Let me take a few minutes to show why the Lord set it up this way. Ezek. 28:12-19 reveals the cause and results of the fall of Lucifer;

“You were the seal of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The sardius, topaz, and diamond,
Beryl, onyx, and jasper,
Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.
The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes
Was prepared for you on the day you were created.”

“You were the anointed cherub who covers;
I established you;
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.
You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created,
Till iniquity was found in you.”

“By the abundance of your trading
You became filled with violence within,
And you sinned;
Therefore, I cast you as a profane thing
Out of the mountain of God;
And I destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the fiery stones.”

“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;
I cast you to the ground,
I laid you before kings,
That they might gaze at you.”

“You defiled your sanctuaries
By the multitude of your iniquities,
By the iniquity of your trading;
Therefore, I brought fire from your midst;
It devoured you,
And I turned you to ashes upon the earth
In the sight of all who saw you.
All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you;
You have become a horror,
And shall be no more forever.”

And in Isa. 14:13-14 we read this;

You said in your heart,

'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
In the remote parts of the north.
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.'

Satan's fall was caused by pride; by being unwilling to submit to the authority of God. This attitude toward authority became the essential nature of fallen humanity. Even in the garden, the enemy's appeal was to cause pride to govern Adam's and Eve's decisions;

(Gen. 3:4) . . . God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.

Lucifer wanted to be like God; fallen humanity wants to be their own gods – independent from the true God. We can see by what we read in Ezek. and Isa. the power and effects of pride, the destruction and evil it causes. And all we have to do is look at human history over the last 6000 years to see what pride and the self-life has done to humanity.

Jesus said He was "meek and lowly of heart" and we have to become like him, not like Lucifer. So, the Lord goes to work on us from day one to eliminate the domination of the arrogant flesh within us and replace pride with humility.

The natural man hates words like "submission", "authority", "obey", etc. But God has structured the body of Christ in the only way that we can both have our minds renewed through the humility of submission to spiritual authority, as well as trained through education in the Word of God.

This is why people who just read devotional books and listen to milk-based sermons never grow spiritually – they are moving outside the divinely designed process for spiritual advance.

Ok, all of this is simply part of God's process in first calling out and saving, and then refining and maturing His eternal family. The process is difficult, both in the willingness on our part to become serious in our study of God's Word as well as in the suffering we have to pass through for the Word to become flesh in us. But all of it is necessary if God is to have His heart's desire in the end;

(Rev. 21:3-4) The tabernacle of God is now with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will

wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

An eternal, mature family in fellowship with their Creator forever.

This is why Paul stresses this in our passage in 2 Cor. 4:18; "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Fellowship (in God's mind) is much more than the social interaction of like-minded individuals. Sometimes the best way to see the practical reality of a spiritual principle is by using "contrast". So, bear with me, I want to read some information that shows the contrast between "Christianity" as an organization of man and what the Lord had in mind when He spoke of Christianity being a Father-child relationship;

The Divine thought is not to have companies of Christians constituted by a New Testament technique any more than it is to have congregations, preaching-places, or just Sunday services. Primarily it is to have spiritual families; thus, when it is time for His people to take spiritual responsibility, if the Holy Spirit had things on His right basis, He would distribute them so that new spiritual families are brought into being. This is organic growth as differing from organized expansion which is so unsatisfactory in its resultant spiritual measure. How much safer and purer is this Divine method. For one thing, it starts from the inside and not from without. Its bond is mutual love, not divisive doctrines. It grows by spiritual birth or organic oneness, not by adherence or "joining". Its success is not determined by its size or numbers, but by its spiritual life and inward measure of Christ.

There is nothing "professional" about a true family; neither is there anything artificial or formal. What a true natural family would be in every respect, as to its own inner corporate and family life, and as to its growth, testimony, work, and multiplication of itself in new families in due course, so the local companies of the Lord's people ought to be; for God intended His visible institutions to embody His invisible, spiritual, and heavenly thoughts and principles. But it is all spontaneous and vital, not organized and technical. May this not *this* be the Lord's object in allowing or causing that ever present sense of inadequacy, limitation, and dissatisfaction in "organized Christianity"; and may *this* not lie behind His permitting of so much destruction in the realm of the traditional framework which has really come to take the place of the true spiritual family? There is nothing like an emergency and suffering to bring down to the bedrock; and the bedrock of true Christian experience is that, beneath all else, the Lord's true people are a family.

The first thing that the Lord Jesus said on His resurrection was "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father". When the meaning of His resurrection was made good in the coming of the Holy Spirit, we find that the believers in Jerusalem were spontaneously constituted a spiritual family, "breaking bread from house to house". Later, reference was made to one local company as "the Church in thy house". Let us remember that only two spiritually responsible ones are essential to be the starting-point of a family.

My personal goal in this, besides trying to clarify what Paul wrote in the passage we're studying, is to show how pure and simple Christianity has always been meant to be from God's perspective, and how unnecessarily complex and confusing it's become because of Man's and selfish and prideful need to put *his* hands on the things of God and conform them to *his* image.

Since the world succeeds by organization, planning and marketing, we think that's what we should do too; The world measures success by the degree of effort put into entertainment, professionalism and numerical size; and so will we, but of course we'll make sure that a slogan like 'It's all about Jesus' dominates our website's 'vision statement'.

Here's the way J.B. Stoney described the spiritual meaning and outcome of this issue of contrast within the Church;

In the concept of holiness, there are three classes of saints. One class who never really intended to give up the world; and a second class who, like Abraham (even though failing from time to time), have persistently and faithfully pursued the path of separation and a heavenly walk; and a third class, who began well but like Lot, were drawn away by some present gain. As to the first, their whole way declares what they are, it is no excuse for a saint to say I never gave up the world and its refinements, because eventually such a one's sin will find him out; he has not faith to enter the land, to walk as a heavenly man. The second class, though weak and sporadic in their walk, are kept by the power of God through faith. And as to the third, however promising their start, like a hunted rabbit they return to the field from which they were driven. They go back to the worldliness which they had never truly condemned, and which had always held a shrine in their hearts. The false knowledge of our standing and the deepest exercise of our soul will not preserve us if the true meaning of Our Calling is overlooked.

I'm sure by now we can all see that there is a great deal more to Paul's "be ye separate" exhortation in 2 Cor. 4 than we might think at first – it literally lays the foundation for understanding both our identity as members of a new humanity as well as enabling us to see

the temporal and eternal outcomes of the choices we make in terms of their impact on how our lives will, or will not, be a living testimony God's purpose in creating us in the first place.

So, what I want to do now is use some additional information I've gathered to add some depth and clarity to what we've looked at tonight.

First, in several of our past studies we've seen that everything we do is to be done for the glory of God;

(1 Cor. 10:31) Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

(Eph. 3:20-21) To Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

From Kittel's Theological Lexicon, we learn this;

Regarding the word, glory (GK. doxa), "While individual nuances may embrace divine honor, splendor, power or radiance, what is always expressed is the divine mode of being . . . with emphasis on the element of visible manifestation."

All that is just another way of saying that the life, radiance or splendor of the indwelling Christ being visibly manifested through our moral flesh is what "glorifying God" really means. For anyone to obey 1 Cor. 10:31, it must be Christ Himself, not us imitating Him, that is being seen and sensed by those around us.

Author Walter A. Elwell puts it like this;

In this regard, the most significant use of the ideas of glory and majesty in their application to God is stated that God's glory is the external manifestation of His being. God's glory is something that appears (Exod. 16:10); something that is revealed (Isa. 40:5).

So, since the actual presence of God's own life being revealed is the only way He can be glorified, then no matter how impressive, worshipful, emotional or seemingly Biblical any other expression of Christ may seem, if it's just Christians doing Christian things, it's not Christ – and if it's not Christ, there is no ". . . to Him be glory in the Church" happening. Like Sardis, it may have a reputation of being alive, but it's dead.

Neither the invisible world of principalities and powers, nor the natural world around us are experiencing the impact of a “life unto life, or death unto death” expression of the Lord if we are anything but a vessel available to Him for His own self-expression. And at that point, the whole purpose of our creation is set aside in favor of manufacturing a man-made Christian religion that has no more influence on the world than any other religion that man’s imagination can create.

There are two distinct humanities inhabiting this planet, and unfortunately those who claim to be in the humanity that was born from the resurrection of Christ can, and often do, live exactly like the fallen humanity believing that their Christian activity and devotion effectively differentiates them from the lives of those in a fallen world. It doesn’t; it’s not our activity, no matter how sincere and committed that activity is, that distinguishes us; only *His* activity through us can do that; and in the varied members of the family of God, according to Heb. 5:14, only those who advance to spiritual maturity are able to understand, let alone live, the difference.

The child in a family is living primarily in himself. The mature believer is living in Christ. Faith isn’t trusting God to help us live the Christian life, faith is trusting God to live that life for us. The Christian life is Christ; it is Christ living in us so that “. . . the life of Jesus (not our life) may be made manifest through our mortal bodies” (2 Corinthians 4:10-11)

It’s 2026, and we have a pretty good idea of the condition that the church is in, at least in United States and Europe; but as the saying goes, ‘we work with what we’ve got’.

This is exactly what the Bible said would happen in our generation- and it has.

And just FYI – I’m not against or critical of the people in these churches. I’m against the guy standing on stage claiming to represent God to them- and leaving out all the most important things the Lord wants His people to hear.

The churches in our community are filled with our family- our brothers and sisters. Some are open; some are closed and we may or may not learn much on Sunday morning depending on who the pastor is, but that doesn’t have to keep us from being involved in home groups and other small fellowships that most churches offer. If we do connect in some way, we are able to experience what family is, and as I’ve said before, we can always supplement our Sunday morning teaching with authors and others who can give us what we need to grow. There’s no advantage to isolation unless we have no other option. That’s always a personal decision, but all we have to do read through the Book of Acts to understand why spiritual family and fellowship

is so important to the Lord; so, whenever possible, we should definitely do what we can to connect to those who belong to the Lord, even if it's only a few.

I'll close with one example from Acts that shows what I mean regarding the practical value of maintaining this kind of relationship wherever it's possible to do so. This passage in Acts shows very clearly what the possibilities are both for us as disciples of Christ, for the lost who are able to be impacted by who and what we are, and most importantly for the manifest glory of the Lord;

(Acts 2:41-47, *Amplified Version*) Those who accepted (Peter's) message were baptized; and on that day about 3,000 souls were added [to the body of believers]. They were continually and faithfully devoting themselves to the (authority) and instruction of the apostles, and to fellowship, to eating meals together and to prayers. A sense of awe was felt by everyone, and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed [in Jesus as Savior] were together and had all things in common considering their possessions to belong to the group as a whole. And they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing the proceeds with all [the other believers], as anyone had need. Day after day they met in the temple [area] continuing with one mind, and breaking bread in various private homes. They were eating their meals together with joy and generous hearts, praising God continually, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord kept adding to their number daily those who were being saved.

That is just one example of an outward expression of a true, inward, spiritual reality.