

## **Others May, But You Cannot**

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7: 1

### **Warning Against Idolatry**

14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 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." 17 Therefore, "Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 18 And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 1 Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

If we would be the best for the Lord then we cannot be careless and worldly, and it is most important that we do not lower our standard of what is right or wrong because other Christians appear to be living in an undisciplined way. Our standard is the Word of God. God calls every one of His children to a life of separation; that is to say, He calls them voluntarily and deliberately to separate themselves *from* all that is evil and displeasing to Him, and *to* Himself. Someone has said that Christian separation is "the power to live in the world but not of it."

In 2 Corinthians 6: 14 - 7: 1, we learn that Christians are unique people. They are believers, as distinct from unbelievers (verse 14); they are workers of righteousness, in contrast with workers of wickedness (verse 14); they are children of light, and not children of darkness (verse 14); they belong to Christ, and not to Belial (verse 15); they are part of the temple of God and must have no part with idolatry (verse 16); and because of this, Christians are to come out and be separate from those who do not love and who deny the Lord (verse 17) - notice the force of the word "therefore".

### **1. THE DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION IS A VERY PROMINENT BIBLICAL DOCTRINE**

It is emphasized from Genesis to Revelation. For example, look up Genesis 1: 4, and compare Genesis 12:1 with Genesis 17: 10-11. Why was the Ceremonial Law given?

Why was a Jew forbidden to eat pork and certain fish (Leviticus 11: 7 and 12)? Why was he not allowed to plough with an ox and an ass together (Deuteronomy 22: 10); to plant two kinds of seeds together (Leviticus 19: 19); or to wear a garment made of wool and linen (Leviticus 19: 19)?

All these laws were given by God to teach the same lesson of separation. Circumcision was a rite which set forth the principle of separation. The Jew put on a garment that was not "mixed" to remind him that he was a separated man. He did not plough with a mixed team for the same reason. Now look up Exodus 10: 26 and 11: 7, and compare Exodus 33: 15-16 with Leviticus 20: 24 - and 2 Timothy 2: 19.

## **2. THE DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION TOUCHES EVERY PART OF THE LIFE**

It touches our personal and public life, our pleasures, amusements, habits, the food we eat, the dress we adopt, the books we read, the friendships we make and our daily occupation. It touches our outward and our inward life - compare 2 Corinthians 7: 1, and it touches everything that is sinful and doubtful, as well as many secular and secondary things. If we are exercised about this matter of separation, for example in regard to some of the things we have just mentioned, then by applying the following principles and answering the following questions in all honesty, we are enabled to make a right decision regarding our mode of life. (Let us remember that we are not to enforce our ideas upon others who may think differently.)

- Will it glorify God - or not?
- Will it promote or endanger my Christian life?
- Will it help or hinder a weaker brother?
- Will it prosper or damage my witness?
- Will it please or grieve the Holy Spirit?
- Will it lead me into or out of God's will?
- Will it make the teaching about God attractive? (Titus 2: 10)

## **3. A SPECIAL PROMISE IS MADE TO ALL WHO LIVE A SEPARATED LIFE**

This is indicated in 2 Corinthians 6: 17-18, and it is a three-fold promise. If we are prepared to live a separated life, the Lord says:-

- "I will receive you."
- "I will be a Father to you."
- "You will be My sons and daughters."

In Luke 15: 11-24, we have the story of the Prodigal Son. He was a "son", but he went away into the far country and was out of fellowship with his father. When we are living unseparated lives we are just like him; we are in a backsliding state, living away from our Father, (though we are His children); we are out of fellowship with Him and we are acting like immature and disobedient children. When the Prodigal returned and separated himself from all that belonged to the far country, what did the father do?

- He received him - compare Luke 15: 20-21.
- He became a father to him in a way which he could not become while he was in the far country - compare Luke 15: 22-23.
- He dealt with him as a son - compare Luke 15: 24.

The Christian who is not living a separated life is rather like the Prodigal who is in the far country, mixed up with all the things of the world, out of real intimate fellowship with the Father, and not enjoying the privileges of sonship and all the provision of the Father's house. Are you like this - an unseparated Christian?

Other Christians may be worldly; they may dishonor the Lord by going to questionable places, mixing with those who ridicule and blaspheme His Name, or who adopt worldly standards. But - you cannot be like this if you would be the best for God, and if you really want to be like the Lord Jesus, who was "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners" (Hebrews 7: 26). If you do want to be like Him - 2 Corinthians 6: 17 - 7: 1.