

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

STAYING SEPARATE IN A CONNECTED WORLD

We are living in a time when connectedness is the rule of the day.

With our cell phones, Internet and media we are always connected with those around us. Being connected to those you love and to those who need you is one thing, but there is another kind of connectedness that is not so good.

Some of the common buzzwords you often hear today are ***“tolerance, acceptance, openness, seeker friendly, inclusive.”***

The idea behind all of these terms is togetherness, or being connected on a human level. There is a concerted push in the world today to bring everyone together under the same umbrella, one world, one society, one church.

This is the heartbeat of the world and, dangerously, it is becoming the heartbeat of the church.

I would remind you that ***God did not call His people to be inclusive, but exclusive!*** The fact is, we are called to be vastly different from the world around us!

Looking at the setting of 2 Corinthians, this trait of separation was sorely lacking in Corinth.

Of all the churches mentioned in the New Testament, the church in Corinth was undoubtedly the most worldly/carnal.

If the church in Philippi was known for its ***compassion***, and the church in Ephesus was known for its ***commitment***, the church in Corinth was known for its ***carnality!***

It was a worldly church dwelling in a wicked city. The city of Corinth was so vile, that to be called a ***“Corinthian”*** meant that you were a person of low moral standards.

Cretans were had the reputation as “liars.”

Sadly, the evil of that society had penetrated the church because the believers were trying to hold on to their ways of the worldly life so there was little distinction between them and the world around them.

Paul is letting them know that it should not be that way! These verses tell us everything we need to know to remain separate in a connected world.

While the world and the church are melding together so that there is little distinction, God still expects His people to be different.

He expects us to stand apart from the world around us and these verses tell us how to accomplish that.

While all the church world around us is changing to accommodate the world, we have some very good reasons for staying in the paths of righteousness.

1. V. 14-16 **WE ARE MARKED BY SEVERAL CONTRASTS**

Paul uses several verbs to make his argument: *“fellowship, communion, concord, part, and agreement”* all of these speak of *“something held in common, or something shared.”*

His argument here is that Jesus and His followers have nothing in common with the world around them. He points this truth out by revealing **3 areas** in our lives where there is to be contrast:

1. **There Is To Be A Contrast In Our Walk** - The word *“righteousness”* has the idea of *“purity of life, or of that which is pleasing to God.”*
 - The idea here is that God’s children are to be different from this world in the way they conduct their lives:
 - **Phil. 1:27**. “Let your conduct/way of living be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”
 - **Rom. 13:14** “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision- [premeditated plans, contemplation] for the flesh, to fulfill its lust.”
2. **There Is To Be A Contrast In Our Wisdom** - Light and dark can have no fellowship. Even the tiniest bit of light has the power to dispel the most oppressive darkness!
 - What Paul is talking about here is this: *A life governed by the word of God has no shared ground with a life governed by the flesh, the world and the devil!*
 - We are to be different because we are to live our lives according to the Word of God.
 - We have a different standard of living than the world does:

- **1 John 1:7** “If we walk in the light as HE is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sins.”
- **John 14:21** “Jesus said, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

3. **There Is To Be A Contrast In Our Worship** - Paul reminds us that we are God’s possession.

- Just as there is no common ground between Jesus and the devil (Belial), and between one who confesses Christ and one who denies Him, the idols of the flesh and the world have no business in the temple of God.
- This building is not the temple of God! You, who are saved are His temple, **1 Cor. 6:19-20**

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own!
For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

The things of this world do not belong in your life, nor do they have a place in your worship of the Lord! Just as our physical life is to be clean, so too is our spiritual life!

Our responsibility is not to make the house of God and our worship here “*seeker friendly*”.

Our duty is to consecrate ourselves to the will of God and to worship Him in Spirit and in truth!

We are to place the totality of our beings on His altar –

Rom. 12:1-2 “I urge you by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable/rational service. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

- Leave the growing business to Him!
Instead of trying to be “*seeker friendly*,” the church should strive to be “*Spirit friendly*!”
- We need to create an atmosphere in which the Spirit of God can work, move and bless. As we do, He will see to it that those He desires to be here will get here, be saved and will grow in grace.

The whole point is this: God's people are to be different from the world around them because we possess a new nature:

2 Cor. 5:17

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.”

2 Pet. 1:3-4 “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue. By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

[don't put illustration in PowerPoint]

A pig rolls in the mud because it is a pig. If you could change its nature to that of a sheep, it would shun the mud and head straight for the green grass.

When you are saved, you have a new nature.

It is not like the old nature, but it is different and it is hungry for the Lord and His will.

2Tim. 2:19 “...The Lord knows those that are His. Let everyone that names the name of Jesus depart from iniquity.”

If you don't have that hunger, perhaps you have not had the encounter with Jesus that is called salvation and repentance.

II. V. 14, 17 **AS BELIEVERS IN CHRIST, WE ARE MANAGED BY SPECIFIC COMMANDS**

1. V. 14 **We Are Commanded To Be Segregated** – [separated from others of the same kind or group]

- This command pertains to **people**.
- It comes from the Old Testament, **Deut. 22:10**. Ox/donkey not to plow together.
- The ox and the donkey were two vastly different animals. The ox was clean; the donkey was not. They possessed two vastly different natures.
- To yoke them together was to invite trouble! The “*unequal yoke*” is a military term. It means “*stay within your own ranks.*”
- It has the idea of not walking with the world.
- **The believer needs to closely monitor all of their relationships, because walking with the world often results in walking like the world:**

1 Cor. 15:33 34 “Stop fooling yourselves, evil companions will corrupt good morals and character. Come back to your right senses and awaken to what is right. Repent from your sinful ways.”

2. V. 17 **We Are Commanded To Be Separated** –

- This command pertains to **practices**.
- Just as we are to refuse to walk **with** the world, we are also to refuse to walk **like** the world!
- Let the world do its own thing, we who are saved are to be different!
- We are a “*called out people*” and we are to be different!
- The word for “*church*” = **Ecclesia** – “the called out ones.”
- Many have read the words of Paul in **1 Cor. 9:19-23** “**I became all things to all men so that I might win some.**”
- concluding Paul altered his lifestyle and message to accommodate different crowds of people. Like a chameleon – changing colors to camouflage.
- What Paul did was to apply the Gospel in different ways to speak to different groups.
- In His personal life, he lived in such a way that he did not offend anyone, whether they were Jews, Gentiles.
- In other words, he lived a life of self-sacrifice and self-control. He didn’t change to suit the crowd, he just lived to please Jesus! He wasn’t against anyone – he was just for Jesus.

III. V. 17-18 **WE ARE MOVED BY SATISFYING REWARDS.**

v. 17 “Therefore, come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing. Then I will take you in”

1. V. 17 **There Is The Reward Of His Favor** –

- Those who walk the separated life have God’s promise that He will “*receive*” them. The word “*receive*” means “*to treat with favor.*”
- God is saying, “*If you will be separate from this world for My glory, then you will enjoy My favor. My smile will be upon your life!*”
- **John 17:14** “I have given them Your word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world.”
- I don’t know about you, but I want God’s favor! I want His smile upon my life, don’t you? A clean, separated life is how you get that smile on you!

2. V. 18 **There Is The Reward Of His Fatherhood** –

v. 18 “I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord.”

- All the redeemed are the “*children of God*” and He is a Father to all.
- Just because all enjoy the **relationship**, there are many who do not enjoy the **fellowship!**
- Often, there is a rift between the Lord and some of His children because of what they have in their hearts and lives.
- When those things are taken care of and that child turns back to God in holiness and separation, that child will enjoy the sweet fellowship of the Lord once again!

IV. V. 7:1 **WE ARE MOTIVATED TO STEADFAST CONVICTIONS**

7:1 “Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Paul tells us that it is the Promises and the Person of God that should motivate each of us to seek a closer, more consecrated and separated walk with the Lord.

A. **Motivated To A Clean Walk** –

- We are called upon to “cleanse ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” The filthiness of the flesh would refer to those **external** acts of wickedness and filthiness of the spirit would refer to those **internal** attitudes of the heart that lead to external sin.
- Sins of the flesh - **Gal. 5:19-21**.
- **That which we do on the outside is merely a symptom of a problem on the inside!**
- Many people have confessed the same sins over and over and still go right out and so the same things again.
- **Why?** Because you haven’t gotten down to the root of the problem!
- The real problem is not with the body, **but with the heart!**
- You see, the body might be in place, while the heart is a hot bed of sin and evil!
- The body is an inanimate object until it is animated by the will.
- Whatever is in the heart, will be carried out by the body, **Matt. 15:18-19!**

Therefore, we must actively cleanse ourselves both **inwardly** and **outwardly**, so that the favor of the Lord can rest upon us and upon this congregation!

B. Motivated To A Consecrated Walk –

- The phrase “**perfecting holiness**” has the idea of “*completing or getting the whole mind of Christ into the soul.*” “Fulfilling and completing, finishing.”
- It is about us ceasing to be driven by the flesh, the world and the devil, and about beginning to be moved through life by a desire to please the Lord.
- This idea of “**perfecting holiness**” is the idea of Christ in you and living in you to enable you to live a life that honors and glorifies the Lord:
- **Col. 1:27** “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”
- **Gal. 2:20** “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

- **But, how is this possible?**

1. By resisting and avoiding sin in all its forms –

1 Cor. 10:13 “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

2. By setting the “**fear of God**” before our eyes.

That is, by refusing to engage in any thought or activity that would bring God’s displeasure upon us! (Where is the fear/reverence/respect of God in these days?)

Are we really expected to remain separate in this connected world?

Yes, but, we are to be separated - not isolated!

Remember Jesus? He lived in this world and He lived a perfectly holy life, -**Heb. 7:26**.

But, at the same time, He was “**a friend of publicans and sinners.**” - **Luke 7:34**.

We are to practice contact without contamination in this world.

We have to be here and we have to interact with the world around us.

We are to attempt to reach them. But, even while we live here in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, we are to shine as lights in the world. **Phil. 2:15**

Don't ever be ashamed of the fact that you are out of step with this world!

Let us never be ashamed of what we are, what we believe and of the convictions we hold sacred.

Instead, let us strive to insure that it remains that way until Jesus comes!

If we begin to lower the standard today, we will soon be no different than the myriads of churches all around that have forfeited the presence and the power of God so they might gain the popularity and praise of men!

What you allow in moderation today, you will do in excess tomorrow!