

Chapter Six

THE PROBLEM WITH PAGANISM (6:1-7:1)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Which O.T. prophet does Paul quote in 6:2, and why?
2. Why would Paul “commend” himself (6:4) when in 5:12 he disclaimed doing so?
3. What is the point in Paul’s review of his “troubles”?
4. What is being “mismatched” with unbelievers?
5. To what extent is the christian to “separate” himself from unbelievers?

SECTION 1

In Attitudes (6:1-2)

Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to **6** accept the grace of God in vain. ²For he says, “At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.” Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

6:1 Profitlessness: Paul is professing that he is laboring with God to keep the Corinthian christians from coming up empty of the grace of God. The Greek word *kenon*, translated “vain,” stresses the absence of quality. It expresses the hollowness of anything, the absence of that which otherwise might be possessed. Chapter 6 ties into chapter 5. They are to be no longer like the pagan people around them, viewing everything from human perspective. If they do, it is certain they are void of the grace of God. The grace of God demands that those who have actuated it in their lives see everything from the divine perspective! If those who claim to be christians still look at people and things differently than God’s Word directs, the grace of God has been of no profit to them. Grace that is not responded to is an empty grace. It is no grace at all. It has never been received.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Paul had a problem with some christians who were responding to the grace of God in practically the same way their pagan (heathen) neighbors responded. Though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him (Rom. 1:8-21). Those who called themselves christian at Corinth had probably not fallen to the same depravity as those described in Romans the first chapter, but they were going that direction. They were listening to the Judaizers, glorying in the flesh, and refusing to let the pure grace of God fill them so they might see all from the divine perspective. That is the way heathen respond to God's grace. Preachers still have this problem, either with receiving the grace of God themselves, or with church-members who are empty of God's grace.

6:2 Procrastination: The apostle quotes the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 49:8). Isaiah's statement (49:8) is a messianic prophecy. The "time of favor" in Isaiah's prophecy calls upon the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8ff) as a type of the messianic age. Jubilee was a type of the time of delight and grace that would come when the Messiah appeared (see Isa. 61:2; Luke 4:16ff). Isaiah was predicting the N.T. dispensation (see author's comments in *Isaiah, Vol. III*, pg. 184, pub. College Press).

The Judaizers among the Corinthian christians were seducing some into legalism and a rejection of the dispensation of grace. Paul quotes Isaiah here to refute the Judaizers. Paul is using the O.T. to prove that the gospel he preached to the Corinthians was the true gospel in the Messiah. They need not listen to the Judaizers and wait for another Messiah. To procrastinate would be to miss the "acceptable" time.

God has only one "acceptable" time. That is the time "in Christ." The word "now" is the eschatological now, the now of the Christian age in contrast to the "then" of the Old Testament age. *There is no other age more acceptable.* The first "acceptable" in 6:2 is the Greek word *dekto*. The second "acceptable" is *euprosdektos* (literally, *eu*, well, *pros*, toward, *dektos*, acceptable). meaning "very favorable acceptance."

Essentially, Paul is saying, "Do not be waiting for something better." If ever the Corinthians were going to be changed from their pagan attitudes and pagan ways, the time was "now." Christ was (and is) the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He is the fulfillment of

all that God intended for man when man was created. Jesus filled up full God's purpose for man, and made that fulfillment available to all men who would receive it by grace through faith. The gospel age is the last age there will ever be (see I Cor. 10:11).

To put off receiving the grace of God in Jesus, to procrastinate and wait for something better (in another Messiah) would be to miss the very favorably accepted time of God. And this searching and waiting for someone other than Jesus is not only what the majority of Jews are still doing, it is what the majority of heathen are still doing! Every preacher faces that problem with people today. He is surrounded by people who insist that God surely has a better way than grace through Jesus. Some of these people are even in the Church. They are sure that God still has some dispensation on earth yet to come which will be a "more acceptable time" than this present Christian age.

We must let God's grace fill us now, not tomorrow, not a thousand years from now. There is only one word on God's clock: is *now*. The devil's time is always "tomorrow." God's time is always "today," "NOW"! Now is the day to quit looking at things like the heathen. Now is the day to start seeing everything through the revealed word of God, from the divine perspective. Paul taught this by precept and example.

SECTION 2

In Actions (6:3-13)

³We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, ⁴but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, ⁵beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labors, watching, hunger; ⁶by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, ⁷truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; ⁸in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as

SECOND CORINTHIANS

punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

11 Our month is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide.

¹²You are not restricted to us, but you are restricted in your own affections. ¹³In return — I speak as to children—widen your hearts also.

6:3-4 Endemic Conflicts: Paganism, which surrounded the christians of Corinth in the first century, and permeated their every circumstance and association, would also present itself as an easier way by which to deal with the crises and struggles of life. Paganism would free an individual from taking a personal, vocal opposition to falsehood, immorality, and indifference. Paganism would demand no forbearance, kindness or good reputation. It would be the path (Jesus called it, “the broad” way) of least resistance; it would be the way of the majority. It is evident from Paul’s “first” letter to the Corinthians that some of the christians there had already been seduced back into paganism. This is a problem that every preacher faces in his ministry. Either he succumbs to paganism as a personal way of life, because of temptation or discouragement, or he is burdened with the paganism of God’s flock.

Once again, the apostle Paul appeals to his own life and ministry as an example and motive by which the Corinthian christians might be victorious over the pressures of paganism. He begins by declaring himself innocent of giving any *obstacle* (Gr. *proskopen*, “offense,” literally, “strike-against”) or hindrance to anyone else. Paul’s motive for this is to keep his “ministry” from being *blamed* (Gr. *momethe*, “faulted, condemned”). That certainly is not the way of paganism. Paganism has no such concern for another’s attitudes or reactions. Pagans just do not care, except for themselves. Unbelievers who offend others seldom concern themselves with the needs of the offended. But it was the apostle’s way of living as a servant of God to *commend* (Gr. *sunistanontes*, “stand, approve”) himself in *every way*. Paul asks the christians at Rome (Rom. 15:30-33) to pray earnestly that his “service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.” Of course, Paul sought to commend himself in every good and godly way. But his actions would not be commended by pagans. They would scoff at his

behavior and call it "foolishness." (Acts 17:16-21; I Cor. 1:18ff).

Human beings learn and adopt behavior patterns more through example than any other source. It is imperative that christian preachers be aware of their conduct under all kinds of circumstances so that no one be turned away from Christ. There are certain conflicts or circumstances which are endemic (go-with-the-territory) to the ministry of the Word. Paul suffered them all. And in it all, he was able to commend his ministry as acceptable to the saints. In verse 4, he lists a few of these indigenous sufferings. "In great endurance" (Gr. *en hupomone polle*) would be literally, "in remaining-under, much." The Greek word *hupomone* is from two words, *hupo*, "under," and, *mone*, "remain." Endurance is not necessarily passive. The same Greek word is used to describe the "patience" or "steadfastness" of Job (James 5:11), who was certainly not passive during his confrontation with his three friends and God! In all the trials and tests of the ministry of the Gospel, Paul learned how to keep himself steadfastly trusting in the grace of Christ (II Cor. 12:7-10). Jesus placed a premium on steadfastness and endurance (Luke 8:15; 21:19; Matt. 10:22; 24:13), and so did the writers of the epistles. "In afflictions" (Gr. *en thlipsesin*) might be translated, "in pressures." Every preacher knows about "pressures." Stress and tension are the constant companions of preachers. Paul knew pressure from his Jewish brethren, from his Gentile brethren, from pagan authorities, from co-workers, and in addition to all this was his "daily anxiety for all the churches" (II Cor. 11:28). And in the midst of *extreme* pressures, which few preachers since have ever experienced, he served God and men blamelessly across the whole Roman empire! Paul did not cave in or quit the ministry or revert to unbelief even in the face of great pressures.

The next word describing circumstances endemic to the ministry is *anagkais* translated "hardships" in the RSV. This word is usually translated "constraint" or "constrained" or "compelled" (see Matt. 14:22; Mark 6:45; Luke 14:23; Gal. 2:3; Acts 28:19, etc.) The word is also translated "necessities." Did Paul mean he continually felt "constraints" and "compulsions"? Even though he was an apostle, there were all the ordinary submissions Paul had to make to others. He would be submissive to the elders of the church which sent him out as an evangelist or missionary (see Acts 14:26); he was submissive to civil

SECOND CORINTHIANS

authorities (see Rom. 13:1-8); he suffered the restraints of some sort of physical handicap (II Cor. 12:7ff); and he was willing to forfeit many of his "rights" as a "strong" christian for the sake of "weaker" brethren. Paul suppressed many personal preferences and desires. He experienced frustrating constraints. But in it all he conducted a faithful and commendable ministry.

The final word portraying circumstances that "go-with-the-territory" is *stenochooriais*. It is a combination of two words, *steno*, "short, narrow, little" (from which we get English *stenography*, "short-writing"), and, *choria*, "need, necessity, distress." This word *stenochooriais* is translated, "calamities" in the RSV and "distresses" in the KJV. Some might think "calamities" is too strong a word. However, Paul had to deal with a number of catastrophic or fateful situations. The riot in Ephesus was one such situation (Acts 19); the earthquake and the near suicide of the jailer in Philippi was another (Acts 16); the Judaizers, the implacable Jewish enemies, and the pagan rulers continually wreaking destruction on his work in every place, still another. The near ruin of the Corinthian church in his own lifetime was calamitous in Paul's mind. Certainly, not every christian work begun by Paul over the vast empire of Rome remained intact. Undoubtedly he heard of "calamities," at least beginning ones, in the churches he had labored so diligently to start (see Gal. 3:1; 5:1, etc.). Paul may be using the word *stenochooriais* to mean "short on necessities." In other words, Paul experienced "the short end of the stick" many times in his ministry. He had times of abundance, but times of deprivation and hunger too (Phil. 4:10-13). The majority of modern preachers, even in affluent America, know the experience of needing "necessities." Most preachers live on the razor's edge of "calamity" every day when it comes to salary, health insurance, children's needs, retirement needs, and other "necessities." Many times the calamity strikes! But we must all *learn*, as Paul did, how to be content and able to do all things through Christ who strengthens. Above all, there must be no obstacle put in anyone's way to come to Christ.

6:5 External Tribulations: Along with the problems endemic to the ministry because of its very nature, there also come conflicts and tensions from outside the ministry. Paul uses a number of words to describe these external difficulties. There is the word *plegais*,

“beatings,” “stripes” or “wounds.” We get the English word “plague” from transliterating this Greek word. Paul experienced “countless beatings” (II Cor. 11:23-25). Few American preachers have ever suffered this. However, many native preachers in foreign lands have! Many have been martyred, faithful unto death, and their number constitutes a great host of witnesses for the faith. There is the word *phulakais*, “imprisonments.” He was imprisoned at Philippi (Acts 16), imprisoned at Jerusalem (Acts 21), and imprisoned at Rome (Acts 28) once, and again (II Tim.). There may have been other times (see II Cor. 11:23). Paul spent considerable time imprisoned at Rome — long enough to write four of his epistles (Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philippians). There is the word *akatastasiais*, translated “tumults” or “commotions.” We have already referred to the “riot” at Ephesus. And the book of Acts and Paul’s epistles indicate that he had to continually suffer tumultuous hostilities from Jews and Gentiles alike (see Acts 13:45, 50; 14:4-6; 14:9; 15:5ff; 16:19-24; 17:13ff; 18:6, 12; 19:9; 19:23ff; 21:27; 22:22; 23:6; 24:9; 25:3ff). It is not easy to serve God and hold forth an acceptable ministry in the midst of constant commotion! But Paul did it. If he did it modern preachers can do it! There are the words, *en kopois*, “in labors.” This Greek word means working to the point of exhaustion. Being a preacher of the Gospel is *hard work* (see Rom. 16:6, 12; Col. 4:13)! Energy must be expended. Weariness, tiredness, beat-downness are physical accompaniments to the ministry. The amount of emotional stress that exhausts the physical body of a preacher is incomprehensible to most non-preachers! Many preachers have literally ruined their health because they were “workaholics” and burned themselves out before their time. Preachers are “on the go” nearly every day of the week, and “on call” twenty-four hours every day. The word *agrupniais*, translated “watchings” but literally, “sleeplessness” (see II Cor. 11:27). Today’s ministers get less sleep than doctors! There are meetings at the church nearly every night, and phone calls often after the preacher has gone to bed to sleep. The last word in this verse is *nesteiais*, translated “fastings” but more likely should be translated “hunger” (see II Cor. 11:27; Phil. 4:12). Paul did fast occasionally (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23) but there is no indication that he practiced fasting regularly. Few ministers of the Gospel in America have to suffer hunger, but many in foreign countries do. In spite of all

these external tribulations, Paul commended himself in his ministry "in every way." An awesome example for all who follow in his vocation!

6:6-10 Efforts at Christian Living: In every way possible Paul, the preacher faces the temptations and pressures of the pagan world around him and deals with them. In it all his ministry remains commendable. It is unassailable by either christian or non-christian. Even in the small details of everyday living — in the confrontations with people and institutions — Paul is the victor over paganism. In these verses he describes his efforts to maintain his christian life in the ministry.

First, such a ministry necessitates *purity*. The Greek word is *hagnoteti*. It means "innocence, chastity, abstinence." The Greek word *hagnoteti* is from the same root as *hagios* which means "holy one, saint, sanctified." Paul lived a life of moral purity. He did not indulge in any of the lasciviousness of the heathenism surrounding him.

The next word Paul uses to describe his christian living is, in Greek, *gnosei*, meaning "knowledge." The apostle does not qualify this "knowledge" as Biblical knowledge. He probably means to include knowledge of all kinds and in all areas that would help him make his ministry "commendable." Paul knew Greek literature and poetry (Acts 17:28). He was a great scholar. He even familiarized himself with Gnostic philosophy enough to be able to expose its fallacies. But above all, he was a great Bible scholar!

Paul commended himself and defended himself against paganism by a life of "forbearance." The Greek word is *makrothumia*, literally, macro-suffering, or "longsuffering." There is no doubt that Paul "suffered-long" with the Corinthians, the Galatians, and even many of the Judaizers. He would not permit himself the "luxury of retaliation or vendettas for personal wrongs.

He was kind. "Kindness" comes from the Greek word *chrestoteti*. It is the word used by Jesus to characterize his "yoke" as "easy." To be kind is to be at ease with people — to make people feel at ease. To be kind is to make things *easy* for others — that is to aid others, to help and assist them. "Kindness" is active, not passive. The heathen world of Paul did not even understand the concept of being kind to one another, let alone doing kindnesses (see Rom. 1:31). The fruits of unbelief are "foolishness, faithlessness, heartlessness and

ruthlessness.” Kindness does *not* indulge others in wrong.

He faced the heathen world with “a holy spirit.” In the Greek text, the words are *en pneumati hagio*. There is *no* definite article before *pneumati* and it should be translated, “a spirit” — evidently referring to Paul’s human spirit and not the Holy Spirit. Furthermore the Greek word *hagio* is a neuter noun, also emphasizing that it is Paul’s spirit that is holy (the Greek noun would be *hagio*, masculine, were it the Holy Spirit). It is possible for human beings to put up an outward show of ceremonial and ritual holiness while inwardly their “spirits” are in rebellion. The Pharisees (in which group Paul once held membership) were experts at this. Paul had changed all that. Now, even his “spirit” was holy.

His inner person being surrendered humbly to Christ’s imputed righteousness, he loved with a “genuine love.” This is a characteristic Paul commanded other christians to cultivate (see Rom 12:9), so he practiced what he preached. The Greek words are actually, *agape anupokrito*, literally, “an unhypocritical love.” Christian love is no facade. It is not surface and superficial. Christians do not “play like” they love. They really, genuinely, earnestly care. They care when they don’t feel like caring. They care when others are not “worthy” of being cared for. Pagans do not understand this kind of love. Pagans love those who love them first (see Matt. 5:43-48),

Next the apostle claims to be different than the paganism around him because he commends himself “in a word of truth.” Once again, the absence of the definite article before “word” (Gr. *logo*) means the “word” is Paul’s word and not the Word of Truth. Heathen philosophy usually defined truth on a purely pragmatic basis. This was Pontius Pilate’s concept of truth — whatever “worked” for his purposes. The apostle continues by asserting that he does not behave as an unbeliever so he puts no obstacle in any one’s way and keeps his ministry free from fault “in God’s power.” The Greek reads, *en dunamei theou*. The “dynamic” for Paul’s life is not heathenism, but God’s power. God’s power is resident in truth, love, righteousness, faith, and selflessness. The heathen would think to attain power through deception, indulgence, skepticism, and selfishness.

One of the main problems the preacher faces in the tension between his convictions about the Gospel ministry and the pull of paganism is the decision about which “weapons” to use to conduct his

SECOND CORINTHIANS

ministry! Paul has already stated that he did not use worldly weapons to conduct his ministry (see II Cor. 2:17; 4:2). He will state it again (II Cor. 10:3-6) most emphatically. There is a constant temptation, not only for preachers, but for all christians to use "weapons" (methods, tools, practices, objects) that would compromise Biblical principles simply because such "weapons" seem to "work." It is the old trap, "the end justifies the means." Paul would have nothing to do with that kind of subtle, but pernicious, paganism. He said he conducted his ministry "with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left." He fought the good fight of faith armed completely in righteousness. No underhanded, cunning, one-hand-one-thing and the other-hand-another with Paul. Double-mindedness, divided heartedness, and split-handedness is paganism. We must not only yield our minds and souls, we must also yield the members of our bodies as "weapons" of righteousness in the service of God (see Rom. 6:12-23). The Roman soldier was armed with a sword in one hand, a shield in the other. The sword was a weapon of offense, the shield a weapon of defense. Paul says he conducts his ministry, both offensively and defensively, always careful to do what is right (righteous).

Finally, Paul lists a series of stark circumstantial contrasts he has had to live through as he conducted his ministry. This is an awesome list of clashing experiences. To live through such situations would destroy all except those surrendered in faith to the grace of God. Paul is determined however, that regardless of a life filled with dichotomies, he will bring no discredit on the ministry God gave him. He is committed to proving himself a genuine minister of God whatever he might have to go through.

He begins by stating there were times when he was "honored" (Gr. *doxes*, "glory"), and there were times when he was "dishonored" (Gr. *atimias*, devalued, as in money). In Biblical usage, both the Hebrew and Greek words translated "glory" literally mean "to give weight to." In other words, to assess, to give value to, is what is meant by "glorifying." Sometimes Paul was considered valuable, other times, not. There were times when people spoke well of Paul and times when they spoke evilly of him. He uses the Greek words *dusphemias* ("defamation") and *euphemias* (from which we get the English word *euphemistic*, literally, "well-spoken") to describe contrasting reputations circulated about him. Even though Paul continually strove to

present himself blameless before God and men (I Cor. 8:24-27; Phil. 3:12-16) not everyone spoke well of him! Not everyone spoke well of Jesus! And our Lord said, "Beware when all men speak well of you" (Luke 6:26) because some men speak well of false prophets!

During his ministry Paul had to endure from christians (especially at Corinth) what is normally expected only from heathen people. Apparently one of the reports circulating in the church at Corinth was that Paul was a deceiver. "Impostor" is not a good translation of the word *planoi* used by Paul in the Greek text. *Planoi* is the word from which we get the English word *planet*, and literally means, "to wander, to stray." Paul was accused of being one who led people astray! Yet Paul's actions were always *true* to the gospel, and his preaching was always *true* to the gospel. He never strayed from the gospel even if it meant a face to face confrontation with a "pillar of the church" (Gal. 2) or with kings (Acts 24:24ff; 26:24ff) or Jewish high priests (Acts 23:1ff) or Greek intellectuals (Acts 17:22-31). Slander is to be expected from those who hate God, but not from those who profess to love God. But every minister of the gospel, if he is realistic, expects it, even from professing followers of Christ.

And though Paul taught that recognition should be given where it as due (Rom. 13:7; I Cor. 16:18) and scrupulously practiced it himself (Rom. 16; I Cor. 16; etc.), there were times when christian people ignored him and deliberately refused to acknowledge him. He says there were times when he was an "unknown" as well as times when he was "well known." But that did not keep Paul from serving the Lord in every way he could. He was not devastated by lack of recognition. If people, even christian people, were oblivious to his importance he was able to deal with it by considering it their problem — not his. He knew that his ultimate recognition would come from the King of the universe (II Tim. 1:11-12; II Cor. 10:18; Rom. 2:29, etc.), so the recognition of men was of little significance.

The christian life presents a continuing combination of paradoxes, even to the christian himself, let alone to the unbeliever. If Paul could see his life and ministry in the Lord as "dying, and behold we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything," how then must the unbeliever see the christian ministry? Usually the sees only the physical, visible aspects of lives totally com-

SECOND CORINTHIANS

mitted to Christ — martyrdom, discipline, sorrow, poverty, and destitution. This was the visible lot of the apostles, many of the first century christians (see Heb. 10:32-39), and is that of many followers of Jesus today. Especially is this the case with preachers and missionaries surrounded by societies which have outlawed freedom of speech and religion. And some of these circumstances apply to nearly every preacher who is unwilling to compromise the message and the ethics of God's word.

Paul is not theorizing here. These words — martyrdom, discipline (Gr. *paideuomenoi*, chastening), sorrow, poverty, destitution (Gr. *meden echontes*, "nothing having") — describe the normal outward circumstances of the christian life. Many christians, especially in free and prosperous societies, are unwilling to admit Paul's statement here as a characterization of the christian life. They find no paradoxical dichotomies between the physical and spiritual aspects of their discipleship because they are physically free, untroubled, and prosperous. But still, the life of any christian willing to sacrifice self and surrender all that he has (Luke 14:33), will experience these paradoxes. And he will be tempted to view them as a pagan would.

However, every preacher or missionary who faces martyrdom, chastening, sorrow, poverty, or destitution, may also experience life, joy, wealth and victory. That is the spiritual side of the christian ministry. And the spiritual experience is the only experience that abides forever. The physical experience is momentary (see Rom. 8:18; II Cor. 4:16-18). Through the divine perspective (faith in God through his revelation, the Bible) every christian can enter into that eternal experience right now (see Heb. 11:1)! Paul did! There is no reason preachers of the gospel or christians should ever be plagued with the problem of pagan perspective!

6:11-13 Extending Christian Love: Christian preachers and workers will always be plagued with the problem of pagan insensitivity when they extend true christian love. Agape-love (God-like love) is love offered even to those who do not "deserve" it. It is love given without any expectation of reciprocation. It is not based on sentiment but it is a deliberate, rational act of caring and helping even when sentiments are contrary.

Paul's expression, "Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide" is graphic. It portrays complete, undisguised honesty. It

offers complete exposure to vulnerability. Both Greek words used by Paul, *aneogen* (has been opened), and *peplatuntai* (has been enlarged), are perfect tense verbs indicating that Paul had extended himself fully in love to the Corinthians long before he wrote this letter and was still doing so. Paul had spoken to them and loved them without any reservations or restraints. He placed no qualifications on his love for them. They had undoubtedly hurt his feelings by their carping insinuations about his integrity (see 1:15ff). They had demonstrated their immaturity and carnality by sinning against his apostolic message. But Paul was still as wide open in his mind and heart toward them as ever. He would verbally expose every recess of his mind and heart to them as before. He would give of himself completely as before. He is holding none of himself from them — protecting nothing of himself from them.

But what plagued Paul was they were restricting themselves. They were acting like non-Christians. The word translated “restricted” is the Greek word *stenochoreisthe*, and means, “to reduce.” The Corinthians were reducing the possibilities of a joyful fellowship with the apostle Paul by their own refusals to be as open and loving as Paul. These words are a classic description of the attitude and approach which must be used for the healing of alienations between Christian brethren and friends. Jesus exemplified this with his apostles (see John 15:12-17; Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-22, etc.). Perhaps the Christians at Corinth had fully repented of their criticisms of Paul (see II Cor. 7:5-11). But they were still limiting themselves the joy of complete brotherliness with Paul by “restricting their own affections.” They would not “widen their hearts” as he had. The Greek word *splagchnois* is translated “bowels” in the KJV, but, rightly “affections” in the RSV; literally the word means, “inward parts,” or “viscera” and encompasses the higher organs of the body such as the lungs, liver, and heart — all considered to be the residence of human emotions. Man is created in the image of Almighty God. Therefore, man is by nature, mind, will and emotions. Paul is saying here that nothing stood between him and open, loving brotherhood with the Corinthians except their own “feelings” toward him. And there was no justification for these “restrained” feelings.

When Paul said, “In return (for my open heart) — I speak as to children — widen your hearts also,” he was not accusing them of

childishness (although their withholding of affection was childish), he was *appealing* to them as a *father* to children. His appeal was one of affection! He was their "spiritual" father. By his gospel preaching they were conceived and born (Acts 18), and by his preaching and epistles they were nourished. When Paul spoke of *widening* their hearts he used the past tense of the imperative (Gr. *platunthete*) indicating their hearts were not yet opened as his (perfect tense, *peplatuntai*) was and had always been. Imperative mood indicates Paul was imploring them to return his affections.

SECTION 3

In Associations (6:14-18; 7:1)

14 Do not be mismated with unbelievers. For what partnership have righteousness and iniquity? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Therefore come out from them, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

7 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, and make holiness perfect in the fear of God.

6:14-16, Yoking: It has never been the will of God that his chosen people should *yoke* themselves unequally (Gr. *heterozugountes*, from which we get the English, *zygotes*, and the prefix, *hetero*, "yoked to one of a different kind") with *unbelievers* (see Exod. 23:2; 33:16; 34:11-16; Lev. 20:26; Gen. 24:3; 28:1; Num. 23:9; Deut. 7:2-3; Josh. 23:6, 7, 12; Jdgs. 2:1-2; Ezra 4:3; 6:21; 9:12; 10:9-15; Neh. 9:2; 10:30; 13:3; 13:23-27; Psa. 1:1; Prov. 4:14; 24:1; Isa. 52:11; Acts 2:40; Rom.

16:17; I Cor. 5:11; Eph. 5:11; II Thess. 3:6, 14; I Tim. 6:5; II Tim. 3:5; II John 10). The fact that God's people continue to do so is a problem that plagues preachers and other spiritual leaders of the church. For the idea of "yoking" see, Matt. 11:29; I Tim. 5:18; 6:1; Gal. 5:1; Acts 15:10; I Cor. 9:9; Phil. 4:3).

Paul is not talking about necessary social associations here. He had already granted that christians would often times have to be "associated" with unbelievers in mundane affairs (I Cor. 5:9-13). What the apostle seeks to forestall here is the uniting of a christian with an unbeliever so that the christian is actually working toward the same purpose as the unbeliever. There is an illustration in the O.T. in the prohibition against yoking together an ass and an ox in order to plough a field or do any other work (Deut. 22:10; Lev. 19:19). The apostle clarifies what he means in the following contrasts and opposites. What Paul says here relates to the opening words of this chapter, ". . . we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain" (6:1). William Barclay writes, "The idea is that there are certain things which are fundamentally incompatible and were never meant to be brought together. It is impossible for the purity of the christian and the pollution of the pagan to run in double harness." For the christian to accept the grace of God and then join with any enterprise which is blatantly opposed to the will of God and dedicated to destroying righteousness and truth is vanity! It is self-deception!

The christian cannot be in partnership with *iniquity* (Gr. *anomia*, lit. "lawlessness"). It is an impossibility! Jesus declared, "No man can serve two masters . . ." (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13; James 4:4). No man can be a friend of God and a friend of the world at the same time. No man can obey conflicting orders or realistically serve two opposing sovereigns! The christian must love righteousness and hate lawlessness (Heb. 1:9).

Paul continues, "What fellowship has light with darkness?" *Light* (Gr. *phos*) has no *communion* (Gr. *koinonia*) with *darkness* (Gr. *skotos*). Where one is the other cannot be! Another impossibility! (see Eph. 5:8-11; I John 1:5).

What *accord* (Gr. *sumphonesis*, from which we get the English word, *symphony*) has Christ with *Belial* (Gr. *Beliar*, lit., "worthlessness, ruin, desperate wickedness"). The word Belial came to be used as a name for Satan. Christ gathers, Satan scatters (Matt.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

12:22-32). Where one is the other cannot be! Another impossibility! Neither can a man be a *believer* and an *unbeliever* at the same time. Therefore the believer must not unite himself, or make himself *part of* (Gr. *meris*) anything dedicated to producing unbelief. If he does, he becomes an unbeliever. It is impossible to be a believer while working at the same time to produce unbelief!

The last phrase, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" is conclusive. The word "agreement" is from the Greek word *sugkatathesis* and means literally, "stand together with." It was a word common to the Greek culture of that day and meant, "to approve by putting the votes together." Idols, false gods, and everything for which they stand, lying, wickedness, and hurtfulness, vote as one. They all agree in opposing the God of truth. Every new idol or image added to history's pantheon of false gods votes the same. But can any one of these false gods be brought into the "temple" of God (the christian's heart), there to speak and vote for truth, righteousness and love? Never! No false god will ever vote in unison with the True God. Christians cannot be joined to idols! (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25; I Cor. 10:6-22; 12:1-3; I Thess. 1:9; I John 5:21). Covetousness is idolatry.

Believers, individuals united to Christ in covenant relationship, *are* the *temple* of God. The Spirit of God resides in those who have believed in his Son and obeyed his revealed will. God allowed his chosen people in ancient times to build an ornate temple in which they might congregate and glorify his name. But no building, however ornate, could ever be the residence of God. He does not dwell in temples made by human hands (Acts 7:47-50; 17:24; Isa. 66:1-2; John 4:20-21). In symbolic form God's presence was in the "holy of holies" of the Hebrew tabernacle and temple. But in reality his presence has always been in the hearts and minds of believers (Psa. 51:10-11; 148:10; Isa. 63:11; Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:27; 37:14; Hag. 2:5; Num. 27:18; Rom. 8:5-17; I Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:21-22; I Pet. 2:5). Jehovah God is the Absolute Sovereign of everything that exists. There is no other sovereign. Any man who wishes the Absolute Sovereign to dwell in him cannot allow another god to dwell there. Jehovah cannot be "other-yoked" with idols in man's heart. Jehovah votes for absolute truth; idols vote for absolute falsehood!

The RSV double spaces its text between 6:13 and 6:14 and between 7:1 and 7:2. This emphasizes the *parenthetical* nature of the passage.

But that should not necessarily lead us to think of the passage as disconnected to the subject under discussion here! Such momentary digression is certainly in keeping with Pauline literary style in Romans, Ephesians, Hebrews and other works. But remember the context. Paul has been vindicating himself against slanderous opponents. He has also been pleading with the Corinthian believers to reckon themselves "new creatures" in Christ, with new constraints and new perspectives. It is altogether plausible to suggest that the *unbelievers* of 6:14 are those opposing and slandering Paul to the Corinthian church. In fact, it appears there were unbelievers *within* the church there denying the resurrection (I Cor. 15). Paul is exhorting the believers in Corinth to clearly separate themselves from these unbelievers. There also appears there are unbelievers trying to call themselves christians and worship idols at the same time (I Cor. 8, 9, 10). When Paul uses the word *heterozugountes*, "yoked to one of a different kind," he is admonishing the christians at Corinth they "cannot live in the church with someone who does not share their pre-suppositions."

Whatever this passage means, it cannot forbid members of the Christian Church to be married to spouses who are believers from other denominations. There are "believers" in all denominations. We believe denominationalism is a spiritual error. Christ is not pleased with its perpetuation. But then, there are numerous spiritual errors being perpetuated within the Restoration Movement with which Christ is not pleased. Are we to think Paul's plea for separation in this text is for separation from every person who believes the Bible is God's inspired word and Jesus is his divine Son, though they may sincerely obeying differently than we because they have never been privileged to see as we have seen? Never!

Whatever this passage means, it cannot mean the absolute prohibition of the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever. First, the context forbids any such interpretation; no mention is made here of the marriage relationship. Second, the Greek tense of the verb, *heterozugountes*, present tense participle, would literally be translated, "Do not go on being yoked to one of a different kind. . . ." That would *contradict* what the same apostle wrote in I Cor. 7:12-13. While the Old Testament (see references cited above) forbids Hebrews from marrying "foreigners," the prohibition was

clearly concerned with maintaining separation from *idolatry*. Joseph married Asenath, daughter of an Egyptian priest (Gen. 41:50); Moses married a Midianite (Exod. 2:21); Hosea was commanded by God to marry a woman “with a spirit of harlotry” (Hosea 1:2) and when she deserted him and wound up in the slave market, Hosea was told to go “love again” a woman who is an “adulteress” (Hosea 3:1-5).

This passage focuses contextually on all that has been said in chapters 5 and 6. Contextually, Paul is giving a call for believers in the church at Corinth to separate themselves from the unbelieving, wicked opponents who are slandering him. What Paul has done is to take his usual argument against idolatry and apply it to those in Corinth seeking to destroy his ministry to the truth.

6:17-18; 7:1 Yielding: The place of God’s abode is to be always pure. That which is false, in rebellion against God, and hurtful cannot abide where God abides. Otherwise, God is false, impotent and unworthy of trust or adoration. God dwells in believers and believers are the church. The church must not yield to pagan influence of any kind — neither theological nor ethical. The church must “come out and be separate” from false doctrine and false living. And Paul had to deal with both circumstances in his letters to Corinth.

Plainly, he has in mind here the arrogance the Corinthians had in refusing to immediately discipline (“drive out”) the man living an adulterous life with his father’s wife (I Cor. 5:1ff). That is apparent from Paul’s subsequent discourse in II Corinthians 7:11-13.

Paul quotes from (or paraphrases) a variety of Old Testament passages here to prove his point that wickedness cannot be tolerated where God dwells (Lev. 26:11-12; Isa. 52:11; Ezek. 20:34; Jer. 51:45; Isa. 48:20; Jer. 50:8; Zech. 2:6-7; II Sam. 7:14; Exod. 25:8; Ezek. 37:27; Jer. 31:1). For verse 18 see Hosea 1:10 and Isaiah 43:6. God’s chosen people in the Old Dispensation, warned over and over not to “yoke” themselves to gods “of a different kind,” would not separate themselves from idolatry and heathen wickedness. They eventually became, in fact, worse than their heathen neighbor-nations in idolatry and wickedness (see Jer. 2:11; 18:13). In the Revelation given to John concerning the seven churches of Asia Minor, an angel, with authority and splendor, cried with a loud voice to the church surrounded by the idolatry and licentiousness of the Roman empire, “Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her

plagues. . . ." (Rev. 18:4). No matter how difficult it may be, it will always remain true that christians must separate themselves from anything and anyone that is opposed to God and what God has declared right. The Lord never promises separation from ungodliness will be easy (Matt. 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24; Matt. 18:23-26; John 15:18-21; Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 12:49-53; 14:25-33). The Greek word translated *separate* is *aphoristhete*. It is a compound of *apo*, "from," and *horizo*, "boundary, limit, fixed point." *Horizo* is the word from which we have the English word, "horizon." Paul is saying that christians must "Come out from the midst of them (unbelief) and fix themselves away from unbelievers." Believers are not to "touch" (Gr. *haptesthe*, "fasten or cling to") anything that defiles or dirties (Gr. *akathartou*, "unclean"). This means anything that defiles spiritually. Anything in opposition to the will of God is unclean.

There is a "cost" which must be paid to follow Jesus — *separation* from whatever is disapproved by Jesus and his word. But what a reward! The "separated one" is "welcomed" (Gr. *eisdexomai*, "taken by the hand, taken hold of") by God into God's eternal family like the "father" welcomed the "prodigal son" (Luke 15:11-24). The "cost" for separation from ungodliness is infinitesimal compared with the reward!

It is unfortunate that our English translations are marked with a chapter division between 6:18 and 7:1. Chapter 7, verse 1, is plainly the concluding statement of this passage about holiness and separation. There were no chapter divisions when Paul wrote this letter in Greek. Chapter divisions were inserted by Stephen Langton in the thirteenth century. And verse divisions were inserted by Stephanus, the Paris printer, in the sixteenth century. We will treat 7:1 here.

Since God has promised judgment (II Cor. 5:10, 11) for the impenitent and gracious adoption (II Cor. 6:16-18) for the separated, it is imperative that we have a *catharsis* (Gr. *katharisomen*, "cleansing") from every *pollution* (Gr. *molusmou*, filthiness, foulness) of *body* and *spirit*. Body, soul and spirit make up the whole man (I Thess. 5:23). A man cannot keep his body pure but sin with his mind and expect Christ's approval (cf. Matt. 5:21-30). Nor should the christian try to justify himself by saying he keeps his mind pure so it doesn't matter what he does with his body. That Gnostic sophistry is thoroughly denounced by Scripture (I John 3:4-10, etc.).

SECOND CORINTHIANS

The last phrase is most significant. Paul instructs christians precisely as to how this separation and cleansing is to be *accomplished*. It is done by "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (Gr. *epitelountes hagiosunen en phobo theou*). The word *epitelountes* is a present tense participle derived from the word *teleios* which means, "to complete, to finish, to bring to its goal." In other words, we reach the goal of holiness (we are separated, cleansed) in the fear of God! The fear of God is a *healthy* (cathartic) attitude! Peter tells us to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear" (I Pet. 1:17). Only the fear of God will purge a world in rebellion against God of its wickedness. Only the fear of God will restore that sense of awe, respect and worship that is absent from both the church and the world. Isaiah wrote, ". . . when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the Lord." (Isa. 26:9-10). The Psalmist said, "When he slew them (the Israelites in the wilderness) they sought for him; they repented and sought God earnestly." (Psa. 78:34). See sermon notes at the end of this chapter, *Judgment Begins at the House of God*.

The scriptures bear witness that a significant contributing factor to purging the church of its plague of paganism is consistent proclamation of the judgment and fear of God. Paul says so in this very text! The goal of holiness is reached through the fear of God.

And so Paul has dealt with another problem that plagues preachers — the problem with paganism. Paganism now, as then, is at times an attraction in which preachers may be tempted to indulge, or it surrounds a preacher like a plague in those to whom he ministers. And how did Paul deal with it? By first appealing to the brethren at Corinth to remember how much he had opened up his heart in love to them and pleading with them to reciprocate the same kind of openness. And, second, by reminding the brethren of the incongruity of yoking belief to unbelief. And, third, by pointing out that holiness is brought to its goal through the fear of God. Not a bad plan for the church to follow in any age!

APPREHENSION:

1. How does chapter 6 tie into chapter 5?

THE PROBLEM WITH PAGANISM

2. Why does Paul quote from Isaiah about the "acceptable time"?
3. What is Paul's purpose in appealing to his own ministry as free of placing obstacles in people's way?
4. Name four restraints Paul had to endure in his ministry. Do preachers today suffer any similar "restraints"?
5. Are preachers anywhere today suffering beatings, as Paul did? Where, Why?
6. Is preaching and ministering work? Hard work? Who says so?
7. Is scholarship essential to preaching? Scholarship in what areas?
8. What is kindness? Why should those who minister be kind?
9. Can love be hypocritical? When is it unhypocritical?
10. What weapons did Paul use to conduct his ministry?
11. Did anyone ever assail the reputation of the apostle Paul? Why?
12. Should preachers and other christian workers be recognized for their work?
13. What are some of the paradoxes of christian ministry?
14. What does Paul mean, "do not be mismated with unbelievers"?
15. What is the "temple of God" Paul talks about in 6:16?

APPLICATION:

1. Name some ways you have responded to the grace of God.
2. Do you know anyone waiting for a more "favorable" time to be reconciled to God? Why are they waiting? What have you said to them?
3. How do you handle the conflicts and circumstances that go-with-the-territory in ministering as a christian?
4. Do you concern yourself with helping your preacher find relief from the "pressures" of his ministry? How?
5. What can you do to help those today who are being beaten and persecuted for their ministries? How was Paul helped? Can that kind of help still be given today?
6. What is so "hard" about preaching or ministering? Have you tried it? Would you be willing to follow your preacher two days next week and do everything he does?
7. Does your church expect its preacher to devote much time to studying the Bible and preach Biblical sermons? Does it grant him

SECOND CORINTHIANS

the time to do so?

8. How is a person kind to another? Have you been kind to someone today?
9. Can you love when you don't feel like it? How? Why?
10. Is it alright to use whatever works in preaching and ministering?
11. How do you handle defamation of your reputation? Has it ever happened to you as you ministered in Christ's name? What did you do?
12. Does it hurt when you do not receive recognition for some good deed?
13. How do you resolve the paradox of being a christian and yet having so much sorrow surrounding you?
14. Does "do not be mismated with unbelievers" mean do not marry non-christians? Why do you think so?
15. How is a christian to go about separating himself from unbelievers and uncleanness? Do you fear God? Should the fear of God be preached?

Special Study

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

Ezekiel Chapters 15-24

Text: 18:30-32

Introduction

- I. SILENCE IN THE PULPITS TODAY ABOUT JUDGMENT!
 - A. General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, said at the turn of this century, "The chief danger of the 20th century will be: Religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, Forgiveness without Repentance Salvation without Regeneration, Politics without God and Heaven without Hell."
 - B. There certainly is no silence in the O.T. on the subject of JUDGMENT!
 - C. Neither is the N.T. silent about it!
In fact, Jesus talked more often about the judgment than he did grace, or mercy, or practically any other subject!
 - D. In Cruden's Concordance:
 - 1. 666 references to Judgment or Judge
 - 2. 288 references to Merciful, Mercy
 - 3. 108 references to Forgive or Forgiveness
- II. AND, SURPRISINGLY TO MOST PEOPLE, THE BIBLE FOCUSES FIRST ON JUDGMENT UPON THE HOUSE OF GOD (HIS COVENANT PEOPLE).
 - A. From Genesis to Malachi, God's Old Covenant scriptures are primarily a record of God's judgments, chastenings, disciplines upon God's chosen to produce for himself a Messianic people.
 - B. From Matthew to Revelation, the New Covenant is the same — JUDGMENT FIRST UPON THE CHURCH TO PRODUCE A "CITY SET ON A HILL" "A LIGHT UNTO THE WORLD" "A PILLAR AND SUPPORT FOR THE TRUTH."
 - C. When the church of Christ was faced with the depravity and violence of the first four centuries of the Roman empire, Christ began by judging the churches of Asia Minor,

SECOND CORINTHIANS

- D. The epistles are laced with apostolic judgments, and promises of judgments, for wickedness within the churches themselves!
 - 1. In Corinth, division, sexual immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, pride, false doctrine.
 - 2. In the Galatian church, legalism, false teachers
 - 3. Then there is Hebrews, James, Jude, I & II Peter — all warning of judgments if repentance was not forthcoming.

III. AWAKE, REPENT, O CHURCH OF GOD, FOR JUDGMENT MUST BEGIN AT THE HOUSE OF GOD.

- A. Someone has said that hell is truth seen too late.
- B. The truth is, judgment comes. It is no myth. It is sober fact.
- C. Judgment is not merely something that the Church is announcing to the world. It is something that God is saying to the Church itself.
- D. Judgment must begin at the House of God.
It is clear Biblical teaching that God continues to purge his Church on earth through judgments.
But the church, almost as if it were taking its theology from an unbelieving world, refuses to say much about the Judgment.

Dr. L. Nelson Bell, former missionary, and Billy Graham's father-in-law, once said: "Why is there so little preaching on judgment today? Because man's concept of wrath is so distorted by his pleasure in sin he cannot understand the wrath of a holy and righteous God. Furthermore, men want the approval of their peers and it is not popular to expose the nerve of sin and its consequences!"

Discussion

I. THE PRECIPITATION OF JUDGMENT

- A. First, God's chosen people rejected God's Word.
 - 1. Ezekiel was told, ". . . they will not listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me; because all the house of Israel are of a hard forehead and of a stubborn heart."
3:7

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

2. Then there were the false prophets “prophesying out of their own minds” “crying peace when there was no peace” “hunting down souls for their own profit,” Ezek. ch. 13 and 22.
 3. And those who came to Ezekiel’s house to sit before him and BE ENTERTAINED! They came to church to be entertained . . . for a spectator sport. God told Ezekiel they would listen to his words, but they would not do them. Ezekiel was to them like one who sang love songs with a beautiful voice and like one who played well on an instrument, and the people heard it all (and were *entertained*) but they did not do them.
 4. GOD HAS STORED UP JUDGMENT FOR HIS PEOPLE IF RELIGION IS TO THEM ONLY ANOTHER FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT . . . AN ESCAPISM . . . A PASTIME.
 5. The Church today, with all its electronic flim-flam, its self-serving “star-studded” entertainment syndrome . . . seeking emotional thrills but not doing the word of God, stands just where Judah stood in Ezekiel’s day!
- B. Second, rejecting God’s word leads to unfaithfulness.
1. Having scorned God’s word, there was no basis or reason for remaining faithful to their commitment to belong exclusively to Jehovah.
 2. Ezekiel depicts man’s unfaithfulness to God in the parable about God’s unfaithful wife (ch. 16).
 3. Those who are contemptuous of the sacredness of marriage vows destroy the very basis for faithfulness in that human relationship.
 4. Just so, unfaithfulness toward God, our husband, is due to contempt for the sacredness of our covenant vows with him.
 5. Unfaithfulness comes from a permissive, promiscuous, rebellious attitude. It is a “me first,” “I am responsible to no one,” “I may have promised, but I don’t intend to keep promises” mind-set.
 6. Unfaithfulness is destructive of every social structure

SECOND CORINTHIANS

known to man . . . the family, the church, the nation.

7. God loves his bride, the church, with an everlasting, absolute love. He is jealous for her affection, her commitment, her faithfulness. **AND HE WILL BRING DOWN HIS WRATH ON A CHURCH UNFAITHFUL . . . A CHURCH WHO FLIRTS WITH THE WORLD. A CHURCH PROSTITUTING ITSELF TO EVERY FALSE, VAIN FAD AND FASHION . . . GOING AFTER SOME OTHER SOVEREIGN, WILL SOONER OR LATER COME TO JUDGMENT.**

C. Third, an unfaithful attitude led Judah to immorality.

1. Immorality is more than actions — it is a mind-set. Immorality is choosing wrong rather than right, and then doing wrong. There is only *one* right — and that is what God's word says is right! Therefore, to choose against what God's word says, its immorality!
2. An immoral mind-set will inevitably be lived out in immoral actions. Worshiping other gods, making other things sovereign in our lives, is spiritual prostitution! **MAKING ANYTHING OTHER THAN GOD FIRST IS IMMORAL!**
3. Immoral actions may be wrongs committed or rights omitted.

Large segments of Christ's church have rejected God's word, have violated his covenant, have prostituted themselves immorally in unbelief, and have played the role of whore . . . seeking another love. Turning their back on God's love, offered through his covenant terms (explicitly outlined in his Word), **THEY ARE UNDER HIS WRATH!**

II. THE PURPOSE OF JUDGMENT

- A. For the sake of God's name! This statement is repeated over and over in Ezekiel (ch. 20 and 33)
 1. God judges first the house of God, so it "will know that I am the Lord." God must vindicate his sovereignty — his absolute, exclusive sovereignty.
 2. He must *prove*, with evidence unmistakable, that all other "gods" in which man is tempted to trust are false,

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

not sovereign, have no power.

GOD DOES THIS BY JUDGMENT UPON FALSE GODS AND THOSE WHO WORSHIP THEM!

3. There is *nothing more important* (certainly not man's feelings or circumstances) than God *vindicating his name!*

WHAT GOOD WOULD OUR FEELINGS OR CIRCUMSTANCES BE, NO MATTER HOW PLEASANT, IF GOD DOES NOT *PROVE* THAT HE EXISTS AND THAT HE IS ALL POWERFUL, AND THAT HE ALONE IS TO HAVE OUR UNDIVIDED ALLEGIANCE?

4. These people of Ezekiel's day would eventually throw their precious, expensive idols of gold and silver out into the garbage dumps because they had it proven to them Jehovah God was supreme . . . he proved it by JUDGMENTS!
5. God has to prove to "his house" (first) that he is sovereign and that he will judge unfaithfulness and idolatry.

If God is indifferent to immorality and idolatry within his own "house" his name is of no significance to either his own or to the world.

Rom. 1:18ff . . . God has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, and he has revealed it in the things that have been made (i.e. nature) which prove his existence and his omnipotence (sovereignty).

God judges through nature by allowing men to suffer in their own persons the due penalty of their errors (Rom. 1:28).

GOD HAS BUILT INTO HIS REDEMPTIVE PROGRAM CERTAIN NATURAL JUDGMENTS UPON THE WICKED DEEDS OF MEN.

HIS NAME IS VINDICATED SINCE THROUGH THESE JUDGMENTS SOME WILL ACKNOWLEDGE HIS POWER AND SOVEREIGNTY AND TURN TO HIM FOR SALVATION.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

“Sixty-minutes, CBS, March 16, 1986, investigating the epidemic of AIDS among the 70,000 homosexuals in San Francisco. One homosexual man called it “a plague.” He said the homosexual community is gripped with “fear.” The majority see it with fear and are “changing their life-style.” 300 homosexuals are no longer crusading for political power, but are pleading for help. One out of every 2 homosexuals (35,000) have AIDS. “Our community is devastated . . . there is a lot of fear.” But one with the disease said, “Some people are claiming this is a judgment of God upon us for being homosexual, but my God is a different kind of God than that . . . he is a merciful God and would not punish me for being a homosexual.”

GOD IS VINDICATING HIS NAME AND HIS WORD (esp. Rom. 1:18ff) BEFORE OUR VERY EYES!

GOD IS DOING IT RIGHT HERE IN JOPLIN (AND THROUGHOUT THE USA) WITH JUDGMENTS UPON A SOCIETY INDULGING ITSELF IN ILLICIT DRUGS.

- B. To turn men from their sins. The fear of judgment is a major factor running from Genesis to Revelation in God’s message to turn men from sin.
 1. Hear the Psalmist: “When he slew them (the Israelites in the wilderness) they sought for him; they repented and sought God earnestly” Psa. 78:34.
 2. Isaiah said, “. . . when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals perversely and does not see the majesty of the Lord” (Isa. 26:9-10).
 3. Paul wrote in II Cor. 5:10-11, “. . . we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. . . . Therefore, knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men. . . .”

C.S. Lewis, in his book, *The Problem of Pain*, writes: “. . . Pain as God’s megaphone is a terrible instrument; it may lead to final unrepented rebellion. But gives the only opportunity the bad man can

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

have for amendment. It removes the veil; it plants the flag of truth within the fortress of a rebel soul. . . . Evil man must not be left perfectly satisfied with his own evil . . . it must be made to appear to him what it really is . . . evil. . . . To condone an evil is simply to ignore it, to treat it as if it were good. . . .”

Hebrews warns christians not to go back to legalism for justification because it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, 10:26-31.

Leroy Garrett points out in *Restoration Review*, Jan. 1986, p. 205-207.

“. . . impressive was the ‘great fear’ that pervaded the primitive church, and we see from Acts 2:43 that fear was a reaction as early as Pentecost. . . .

The angelic cry from heaven is to ‘Fear God and give him glory’ (Rev. 14:7), and man’s ultimate duty has been defined as ‘Fear God and keep his commandments’ (Eccl. 12:13).

“. . . Two very public sins and two very real executions! (Ananias and Sapphira). If the same rule were applied to the church today, we’d likely have a plethora of funerals. But in time we’d have less sinning!

“. . . The fear generated by this chilling incident poured over into the community. While the townspeople held the church in high esteem for its moral standards, the record tells us an amazing fact about their reaction: *None of the rest dared join them* (Acts 5:13). While the church had enjoyed rapid growth, it suddenly came to a screeching halt. For a time no one would join the church, lest the penalty of sin be too severe. Such a conclusion as “If you join the church you may get yourself killed!” was possible. But it was not for long, for as the church continued its powerful witness ‘more than ever believers were added to the Lord’ (Acts 5:14). *The judgment against Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates that God is indeed in control and that he takes sin seriously. And it reveals that there is a place in the hearts and minds of us all for the fear of God.*”

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Mr. Garrett . . . "Only the fear of God will rid our world of its tormenting moral plagues, whether terrorism, drugs, child abuse, crime in our streets. And only the fear of God will restore that sense of awe and worship that is lacking in both the church and the world."

- C. To purge a people for himself through which he may offer redemption to the unbelieving world.
1. Ezek. 18:30-32
 2. Ezek. 20:32-44
 3. Paul says the church is to perfect holiness in the fear of God (II Cor. 7:1)
 4. Peter tells us to "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear" (I Pet. 1:17).
 5. If the church will not judge itself, God will!
HE IS DETERMINED TO MAKE REDEMPTION AVAILABLE TO SINFUL MAN THROUGH A HOLY CHURCH.
 6. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Corinthians telling them to judge the immoral man and deliver him to Satan for the death of the flesh. Paul says more in rebuke to the church for its refusal to judge and purge, than he does about the immorality of the man.
Then Paul continues in I Cor. ch. 6 continuing to rebuke them about their indifference to judging themselves.
 7. God brought his judgments upon the Old Covenant people from Abraham to John the Baptizer (2400 years) and purged only a small remnant through which he brought the Messiah into the world.
 8. God began to the church from the moment of its inception on Pentecost. He continued judging the church into the next four centuries during the Roman empire (letters to the 7 churches of Asia Minor — Revelation).
A CHURCH NOT JUDGED AND PURGED BY CHRIST IS NOT PREPARED TO STAND AGAINST THE DECEPTIONS OF THE BEAST, FALSE PROPHET, AND HARLOT.
SHOULD WE DARE THINK OUR GENERATION WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM GOD'S JUDGING

AND PURIFYING!

III. THE PROCLAMATION OF JUDGMENT

- A. Each person is responsible for his own sin. Ezek. 18:33
1. No circumstances, environment, deprivation, or other person can be blamed for an individual's sin, in spite of what sociologists and psychologists may say.
 2. The Bible, God's inspired, inerrant word deals with sin from the only divine, omnipotent, omniscient perspective known to man.

Question, CAN THE BIBLE BE TRUSTED TO PROVIDE "ALL THAT PERTAINS TO LIFE AND GODLINES?" . . . IN THE AREA OF SPIRITUALITY?

WHAT DID THE EARLY CHURCH DO BEFORE FREUD, BEFORE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS? DID THEY HAVE ANY RESOURCE AVAILABLE SUFFICIENT TO DEAL WITH SIN?

WERE THE HOMOSEXUALS, TRANSVESTITES, PEDOPHILES, MANIC-DEPRESSIVES, SCHIZOPHRENICS, NEUROTICS, PSYCHOTICS IN SOCIETY BROUGHT INTO THE CHURCH AND THEN SENT TO PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS? NOT ACCORDING TO I COR. 6, etc.

Those who would not follow God's revelation in the N.T. to cure all kinds of socially aberrant behavior were left to "suffer in their own persons the due penalty of their errors" . . . or as Jesus put it in Matt. 18, were as the Gentile and the publican.

Those who were in the church and unwilling to change social behavior rapidly were delivered to Satan for the mortification of the flesh. Those christians who were overtaken in a trespass, and repented, were restored in a spirit of gentleness.

3. The book, *Psychological Seduction*, by William Kirk

SECOND CORINTHIANS

Kilpatrick, a teacher of psychology at Boston College, writes,

- a. In 1952 Hans Eysenck of the Institute of Psychiatry at the University of London discovered that neurotic people who do not receive therapy are as likely to recover as those who do. Psychotherapy, he found, was not any more effective than the simple passage of time.
- b. Dr. Eugene Levitt of the Indiana University School of Medicine found that disturbed children who were not treated recovered at the same rate as disturbed children who were.
- c. Extensive Cambridge-Somerville Youth Study showed that uncounseled juvenile delinquents had a lower rate of further trouble than counseled ones.
- d. Other studies have shown that untrained lay people do as well as psychiatrists or clinical psychologists in treating patients. And the Rosenham studies indicated that mental hospital staff could not even tell normal people from genuinely disturbed ones.
- e. Despite the creation of a virtual army of psychiatrists, psychologists, psychometrists, counselors, and social workers, there has been no letup in the rate of mental illness, suicide, alcoholism, drug addiction, child abuse, divorce, murder, and general mayhem.

The more psychologists we have, the more mental illness we get; the more social workers and probation officers, the more crime;

4. Mr. Kilpatrick continues: "A good deal of research suggests that psychology is ineffective. And there is evidence pointing to the conclusion that psychology is actually harmful."
 - a. He says, "The church has always proceeded on the assumption that reality is what we are built for: the more of it we get, the better off we are. The Christian faith is not founded on beautiful subjective thoughts, but on decisive historical events that occurred during

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

the time when Augustus and Tiberius ruled Rome.”

What our Lord came to reveal, moreover, was not a set of inspirational themes, but a transcendent reality, the reality of things as yet unseen but nevertheless fixed and solid.”

- b. The mind's first duty, then, is not to prefer pleasant thoughts but to record things as they are.
- c. And in that revelation of reality from God is the reality of GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY ARE PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR BEHAVIOR!
- d. And you should get the book, *Reality Therapy*, and read that! Written by a psychologist practicing in veterans hospitals and delinquent juvenile institutions.

He insists that the cure for anti-social behavior is facing the reality of personal responsibility for one's behavior and changing it, even if it takes discipline and punishment to produce the reality!

IT IS THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY TO PREACH WHAT THE BIBLES SAY, PRACTICE WHAT THE BIBLES SAY . . . AND NOT CALL UPON INADEQUATE (AT BEST) AND PROBABLY HARMFUL HUMANISTIC SYSTEMS CALLED PSYCHOLOGY.

MEN AND WOMEN AND TEENAGERS ARE RESPONSIBLE BEFORE GOD AND BEFORE MAN FOR THEIR ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIONS. THEY MUST HEAR AND BE CONVINCED THAT GOD JUDGES SIN AND WICKEDNESS.

WE HAVE TOO LONG LIED TO OURSELVES ABOUT WICKEDNESS AND CALLED IT, "DISEASE," "MENTAL ILLNESS," "LIBERATED LIVING," "EVOLUTION OF THE SPECIES," "DIFFERENT LIFE-STYLE" . . . ETC., ETC.

5. Some people see what I've said as cruel, uncompassionate, unforgiving.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

But get this straight — forgiveness has nothing to do with letting the forgiven have his own way!

Some think if you don't let the one doing wrong have his own way you haven't forgiven him.

THAT'S NOT THE WAY GOD FORGIVES.

PARENTS KNOW THAT!

JESUS ALWAYS SAID, "GO . . . SIN NO MORE, LEST A WORSE THING BEFALL YOU!"

6. It was the apostle Peter who wrote in his second epistle that the world *deliberately ignores* the fact of the judgment of God upon sin. THE FACT OF JUDGMENT IS WRITTEN IN THE FOSSIL RECORD . . . THE GREAT FLOOD IN NOAH'S DAY WHICH IS THERE INGRAVED IN STONE!

SO MAN DEVISES EVOLUTION IN WHICH TO HIDE FROM THE *REALITY OF THE JUDGMENT!*

- B. Proclaiming the judgment is to be a real *burden* to believers! God made it intimately personal to Ezekiel. HE WANTED HIS PEOPLE TO NOT ONLY KNOW ABOUT JUDGMENT, BUT TO BE BURDENED WITH IT AS A MOTIVE FOR PROCLAIMING IT.

SO HE TOLD EZEKIEL, "Sigh therefore, son of man; sigh with breaking heart and bitter grief before their eyes" 21:6.

AND HE WAS TO SIGH BECAUSE OF THE TIDINGS OF JUDGMENT COMING.

1. One of the things the church of the N.T. is to do is "groan and travail inwardly (and outwardly) as we see this present creation subjected to futility (judgment), Rom. 8.
 2. GOD WAS GOING TO TAKE AWAY FROM THE JEWS OF EZEKIEL'S DAY THE "DELIGHT OF THEIR EYES" (THE TEMPLE) SO THEY WOULD BE BURDENED WITH HIS JUDGMENTS.
- C. Judgment upon the world (and that will include the church so long as she is in the world) is a very significant part of "THE ETERNAL GOSPEL."

1. "Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water'' (Rev. 14:6-7).

2. In Acts 24:25, Paul preached justice, self-control, and future judgment before kings and emperors.
3. Paul preached the day of judgment as certain and proved by the resurrection of Christ, to philosophers, Acts 17:30-31.
4. Peter preached judgment as ordained by God, Acts 10:42.
5. Jesus said he came to judge the world, John 9:39; 12:31; 12:18,49.
6. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and the judgment, John 16:8-11.
7. Jesus proclaimed the judgment in almost every lengthy sermon he preached. . . .
 - a. In the Sermon on the Mount, ch. 7.
 - b. In the Sermon in Parables, Matt. 13.
 - c. In the Sermon on His Deity, John 5.
 - d. In His sermons during the Feast of Tabernacles, John 7,8,9,10.
 - e. In his last sermon to the apostles, John 15-16.
 - f. In his great evangelistic sermons in Luke 13,14,15,16,17.
 - g. AND IN THE TENDEREST PARABLE JESUS TOLD, THE ONE OF THE PRODIGAL SON, HE SHOWED THAT IT WAS THE JUDGMENT UPON THE PRODIGAL'S REBELLION THAT TURNED HIM BACK TO HIS FATHER!

FRIENDS, IT IS THE CHURCH'S CALLING TO PREACH AND WARN, FIRST ITSELF, THEN THE WORLD, OF THE TERRIBLE JUDGMENT COMING. JESUS IS COMING WITH HIS ANGELS IN FLAMING FIRE, TO RENDER VENGEANCE UPON ALL THOSE THAT KNOW NOT GOD AND OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL, II Thess. 1:8ff.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

THE CHURCH IS NOT PRACTICING EVANGELISM UNTIL SHE DOES THIS. GOD PUT THE JEWS IN THE CENTER OF CIVILIZATION TO PROCLAIM AND PROVE THE SOVEREIGNTY OF JEHOVAH . . . THEY DEFAULTED ON THEIR CALLING . . . SO GOD JUDGED THEM TO PROVE TO THEM AND TO THE WORLD AROUND THEM THAT HE MEANT WHAT HE SAID.

WE MUST PREPARE OURSELVES FOR THE REDEMPTIVE PROGRAM OF GOD . . . AND THAT INCLUDES THE FACT THAT, "JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD."

Conclusion

When the great, busy plants of our cities
 Shall have turned out their last finished work,
When the merchants have sold their last order
 And dismissed every last tired clerk,
When our banks have raked in their last dollar
 And have paid out their last dividend,
When the Judge of the earth wants a hearing
 And asks for a balance — WHAT THEN?

When the choir has sung its last anthem
 And the preacher has voiced his last prayer,
And the people have heard their last sermon
 and the sound has died out in the air,
When the Bible lies closed on the altar
 And the pews are all empty of men,
When each one stands facing his record,
 And the great Book is opened — WHAT THEN?

When the actors have played their last drama
 And the mimic has made his last fun,
When the movie has flashed its last picture
 And the billboard displayed its last run'

JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

When the crowd seeking pleasure has vanished
And gone out in the darkness again,
When the trumpet of ages has sounded
And we stand before HIM — WHAT THEN?

When the bugle call sinks into silence
And the long marching columns stand still,
When the captain repeats his last orders
And they've captured the last fort and hill'
When the flag has been hauled from the masthead,
All the wounded afield have checked in,
And the world that rejected its Savior
Is asked for a reason — WHAT THEN?

IF THERE IS ANYONE HERE THIS MORNING, WHO HAS NOT OBEYED THE GOSPEL, WE PLEAD WITH YOU TO COME FORWARD NOW, AND CONFESS YOUR FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, OBEY HIS COMMAND TO BE IMMERSUED FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, AS BOTH HE AND HIS APOSTLES HAVE STATED IN THE BIBLE. . . . *

DO IT TODAY. JUDGMENT IS COMING. IT IS CERTAIN. BUT GOD'S GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS IS CERTAIN, TOO, IF YOU WILL JUST HEAR, AND DO WHAT HE HAS SAID.