



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

2 Corinthians 6:11 through 7:4

“Puritanism in the New Testament”

TRANSCRIPT

As those of you who've been following along in the exposition of 2 Corinthians know, we are in Chapter 6 and have just finish the 10th verse of the 6th chapter in the exposition, and are to begin with verse 11 today and to finish with chapter 7 verse 4. As I have mentioned several times the apostle has been engaged in the discussion of his ministry, partially as a defense of himself but also an explanation of the ministry and has reached a kind of climax with the last few verses of the 5th chapter, although not at the conclusion of what he has to say concerning ministry. So we have passed the climax, but the apostle is continuing to discuss ministry. And last Sunday we saw that he laid a great deal of stress upon the experiences that he has undergone in the conduct of his ministry seeking to support the contention that he makes that he has been a minister of God, a servant of God and not of man.

And as one reads those verses, particularly from verse 4 through verse 10 one cannot help but feel, as I mentioned last week, humiliation that our service of God is so reprehensible in the light of this tremendous devotion and dedication of the great apostle to the Gentiles. And what is startling about it, I guess, to us today is to think that the Corinthians who were brought to the knowledge of the Lord by the apostle in his preaching -- as he says in his first letter, he was the one who begat them through the

gospel -- that they are ungrateful and unthankful of the ministry that Paul has given them and, in fact, are questioning it. It seems very strange except that human experience could probably duplicate this countless times through the years. So the apostle must defend himself and at the same time encourage the Corinthians to open up their hearts to him as perhaps they once did.

So now he will make an appeal, but in the midst of the appeal is a remarkable series of exhortations and promises that are addressed to this group of believers in the city of Corinth in Greece. We begin with verse 11 for our Scripture reading,

“Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. Now in a like exchange--I speak as to children (The sense here is not, I speakest to little children who don’t understand, but I speak as to my children whom I have begotten in the faith.) open wide to us also. Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, (Belial is one of the Old Testament words expressive and identified with Satan himself) or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,”

Now as Paul often does, he cites a series of passages from the Old Testament. And they are not specifically cited as you might cite in Bible memory association work, for example. He takes phrases and clauses from several places. And that would probably have been a normally necessary thing since they did not have to hand most of the apostles all of the scrolls of the Old Testament. And what they knew they had largely committed to their memory. So he has woven together a series of passages. Inclusive of some of the great ones of the Old Testament. So he says,

“Just as God said ‘I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.’ Therefore, ‘COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST (Paul added the therefore) Therefore, ‘COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,’ says the Lord. ‘DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,’ says the Lord Almighty.”

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.”

Those remarkable words in the light of the fact that the apostle had now enemies among the Corinthians who were seeking to pervert the main thrust of his ministry and some of them evidently even propounding a gospel that Paul could not even call the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May these words that he apostle has spoken, speak to the inmost being of each one of us. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the word of God and for its ministry to us. And we recognize that in this word there is the self-attesting testimony of the Holy Spirit of God. And therefore, through the word Thou doest speak to us. May our hearts be responsive and open and receptive by Thy grace.

And we thank Thee, Lord, for the day in which we live and for the opportunity of proclaiming the message the apostle has left us in our day. We thank Thee for the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who died for sinners that they may be saved by means

of his atoning death accomplished on Calvary’s cross. We thank Thee for all of the other promises of God, the presence of the Holy Spirit, the relationship that we have to our father in heaven, the experiences that have been ours in Thy providence, and the position that we have before Thee. Justified, adopted into the family as sons, reconciled to Thee, having received the forgiveness of sins, Priest’s of the living God. Amazing truths for which we give Thee thanks, Lord.

We pray Thy blessing upon the whole church today, upon this land which we’re a part, of this local assembly, its leaders and members and friends and the visitors who are here with us today. Lord, bless them richly. May the word of God be very precious to each one of us. And, Lord, we pray for the sick and the ill and some who bereaved. We pray for them especially. Encourage and console and strengthen and supply the needs that exist. We commit to Thee not only those who are ill but those who minister to them. May Thy hand be upon them for physical and spiritual good in accordance with Thy will. Be with us as we sing together, as we listen to the Word of God.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Puritanism in the 20th Century does not have a very good connotation for us. And one of the reasons for it is simply that the world has taken a notable group of people and the term that has designated them and has made them out to be something quite different from what they really were. The subject today is: Puritanism in the New Testament. Because there is no doubt that one of the great truths represented by the Puritans, the one that we’re dealing with today is surely a Biblical truth and one that should be emphasized. One of the things that I would like to say by way of introduction is that it’s not easy to always harmonize truths that are found in the word of God with other expressions of truths.

All of us who have read the Bible at all have had difficulty in harmonizing certain passages with other passages. That should not surprise us. In a book as large as the

Bible and with as many different authors involved in it, it’s not surprising at all that we should find terms used that have one significance with one author and the same terms used by another author, given by that author a different sense. For example, we have things like: “The Lord will bear our burdens,” but then in another place, “Everyone shall bear his own burden.” And that, because people don’t read the Bible in context generally, has been a stumbling block for many. And as a simple harmonization of those two expressions is made when we realize that in one case we are speaking about the experiences of this life. And we expect that the Lord will bear all of our burdens.

But when we come to stand before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ, at that time no one else can bear our burdens. So the text; bear ye one another’s burdens, do not apply there. But every must bear his own burden; that is, we must stand before the Lord, and we will hear him judge us at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ in the light of the reality of our acts, actions, and attitudes as Christians. We have other problems in the New Testament. Simple ones like, for example: the Lord Jesus said, “That we are in the world but we are not of the world.” And one might ask, “Well, if we are not of the world, then how is it possible for us to have a commission to go out and evangelize the world?” Or to come to our text here -- and that’s what I really have in mind. The apostle states here that we are not to be bound together with unbelievers, or as the Authorized Version renders it, do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Do not be bound with unbelievers.

Now, how is it possible for us to harmonize that with statements such as are made in Luke chapter 15, where the people, in describing our Lord’s ministry, say, “This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” So on the one hand we have the Lord Jesus having all kinds of fellowship with unbelievers, sinners, and yet we are told do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.

Now, we think there is a simple harmonization of this, but nevertheless it illustrates the point that biblical truths are not always easy to harmonize. The application

of biblical principals is also difficult. What’s the implication of this 14th verse, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers”? Does that have application to our business relationships? Does that have application to our personal friendships; that is, our social relationships? Does that have relationship to the marriages into which we enter? Are these the things that might be legitimate applications of the apostle’s text?

We might say if we were interpreting this passage just from the standpoint of New Testament exegesis, we might say that the apostle, since he’s writing to the Corinthians, and he’s saying that we should not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, would surely be talking about some of the things that he has written to them in past correspondence, and that includes marriage, because in the first epistle he mentions the fact of marriages between Christians and non-Christians and has some words of counsel with regard to that.

It might be a reference or might be inclusive of eating meat that has been offered to idols in the home of an unbeliever. And we should not enter into a situation like that. The apostle states that fact in the first epistle, also. It might even be a reference to speaking in tongues with unbelievers present in the service in those days. For Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 mentions that. And it surely would be inclusive of instituting legal proceedings against the fellow believer before unbelievers. And so those are things that one might say in context, the apostle must have had in mind. But I think that it is probably true that almost all biblical students would affirm that it’s a legitimate extension of this text, if it is an extension, to include business relationships, social relationships that are bonds in any way upon us, and especially marriages.

The tragedy of a mixed marriage is one of the great tragedies of Christian experience. And I know when I started out preaching and teaching and marrying, I didn’t have many experiences of course like anyone else beginning. But now after 35 or 40 years, I can look back on some experiences. And I will acknowledge that I have been deceived about the spiritual condition of people who made profession before me of their

faith in Christ. And the wreckage of marriages caused by a believer marrying an unbeliever is one of the things that I see strewn over my past experience and the experiences of others with me. Because obviously in my fellowship with other believers in like position and with many of you in the audience, we have seen many instances of an unbeliever marrying a believer or a believer marrying an unbeliever.

As I look out in this audience, I see some of you who’ve been involved in some things like this. I don’t pass judgment upon it because I don’t know. And sometimes it’s very difficult to know how one went wrong. But we know the results: anger, strife, misunderstanding, divorce, and lost children. These are some of the things that flow out of the apostle’s injunction, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers.” And if we go contrary to the word of God at this place, it’s not surprising that we should have those results.

There are principles and laws that are not written in our constitution because our constitution is not a Christian doctrine document. There are principles and laws that are the moral laws of the Lord God Almighty. We cannot disobey them with impunity. And sooner or later the results manifest themselves. So it’s surely true that we need to ask ourselves the question, “What is the application of the apostle’s word?”

I was looking at William Barclay’s commentary on the Corinthian epistles. It’s a very short, brief mixture, some casual comments on the general flow of thought. It’s filled with a lot of little interesting stories. And one of them was about F.W. Charrington. Mr. Charrington was an heir to a British brewery fortune and was due to inherit a large sum of money. He said that once he was walking down the street and he passed by a bar. And as he passed by, he saw a man and obviously his wife arguing outside the door. It seemed very plain that his wife had come and called him out, and they were arguing and he was making an effort to go back in. And she was seeking to keep him from going back in and suddenly he turned and with a beautiful right cross instead of a left hook, that Donald Curry knows about today, a right cross caught her and knocked flat on her

back. Mr. Charrington said I started over to say something about it, and I looked up and there was my family name above the bar, “Charrington’s.” And he said something like, “That man, when he hit that woman and knocked her out also knocked her out of my business.” And I never went back to the brewery business. Well, Mr. Charrington, if he acted as a Christian, was acting according to the word of God.

There are relationships into which we enter that are relationships in which we cannot fully and completely, as completely as we can of humans, serve the interests of the Lord Jesus Christ. Puritanism, I said, has been given a bad name. It’s identified with severe austere profession of a more rigorous religious conduct than one might expect. I emphasize the word “profession” because often it’s regarded by people as being hypocritical and we have to admit that no doubt there are many hypocrites among the historic Puritans as they are among those of us today who profess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. But this rigid, rigid often perceived-to-be hypocritical conduct, we’ve sometimes called it Puritanism. There is a genuine New Testament Puritanism however. A separation from sin and evil but a genuine Christian must cultivate, even Arminians and Calvinists who don’t agree on soteriological truths, do agree here if they’re believers in Christ. Christians are to separate from evil and sin in their Christian life.

So let’s turn to this passage. We’ll try to elucidate a few things that may need some exposition and thus follow Paul’s thought which he offered to the Corinthians alone. He begins with an appeal for acceptance on their part. I say that seems strange after he has been their spiritual father, for him to have to appeal to them in this way. And you’ll notice the tender feeling that is expressed in the apostle’s words. And even the fact that he names them as Corinthians expressly is something that is unique in Paul’s writings. He called the Galatians, O foolish Galatians, but I’m not sure that he ever mentions anywhere else personally the people to whom he was writing. So he says in the 11th verse, “Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide,” that’s the expression of the tender feeling that he has in this rare appeal that is made to people

whom he has brought into relationship with the Lord. The justification of it, it’s expressed, you’re not restrained by us but you’re restrained in your own affections. The sense of tension that we have in our relationship is not caused by me. The tenseness and the tension is caused by you. Now, in like exchange, I speak as to my children, open wide to us, also. So his spiritual believing children are asked to respond to him.

Now, he immediately launches into an admonition against moral and spiritual compromise. That’s specifically what he’s speaking about, moral and spiritual compromise. Do not be bound together with unbelievers. James Denny in an exposition of this passage calls this one of the most peculiar passages in the New Testament, that in the midst of this tender appeal he should suddenly insert this admonition. What I’d like to say [is] this generous love does not preclude warnings. As a matter of fact, one of the evidences of true love is admonition.

As we’ve often said and as you know as well or better and I, if a father or a mother is not willing to discipline the children, that’s not simply bad family conduct but that’s an expression of lack of proper affection for one’s children. In other words, admonition is needed by all of us. We never reach the state where we do not need some admonition. I’m still receiving a few admonitions, needed admonitions no doubt, from my help mate. Who every now and then blurts out something, she would probably like to keep it to herself, but she blurts it out, and the fact is I needed it. We never pass the stage -- at least it seems to me -- in which we do not need admonition and warning. And I don’t regard that as being a lack of love. I consider that as being a true concern and love.

So the apostle, when he stops his appeal with, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers,” or “do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” -- I still like that Authorize Version rendering -- he’s not expressing lack of love for the Corinthians. That’s an expression of love.

So now let’s take a look at this. He has said, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers.” That expression goes all the way back to the Old Testament in Deuteronomy specifically verse 10. This is the text that the apostle had in mind and from which he has organized his admonition. In the 10th verse of Deuteronomy 22 we read, “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together,” or “With an ox and an ass together,” as the Authorized Version renders it.

Why is that? Well, in the first place, the ass was an unclean animal by Levitical law. The ox, on the other hand, was a clean animal. Here are two animals that ceremonially do not have the same position. Or to put it in another way, as we well know, here are two animals that have different natures and therefore they’re not to be put under the same harness, the same yoke. So the apostle begins with this and suggests right at the beginning that the believer, having been brought into the relationship with the Lord with a new nature, a divine nature given by God the Holy Spirit through regeneration and faith, is of a different nature from an unbeliever. He is also governed, not always of course in act, but what he would like, governed by the principals of the word of God. Those are his values. Those are the principals by which he would like to live. On the other hand, the unbeliever has no such principals. He is governed by principals that are opposed to the word of God in rebellion against the word of God. His values are different.

So here are two individuals, of course in Paul’s illustrative gaze, the ox and the ass. But what he is speaking about, the believer and the unbeliever and their values, their philosophy, the principals by which they would live and would like to live are totally different. So don’t be bound together with unbelievers. In order to support this, someone has suggested this was something probably that Paul preached because you can catch the kind of sense of a sermon being made. And in this instance, at least perhaps something he expressed in a sermon because these are rhetorical questions. And there

are five of them; he says, “For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?” or “What fellowship has light with darkness?” or “What harmony has Christ with Belial?”

This word “harmony” is the word from which we get the English word symphony. It suggests an orchestra. And an orchestra, of course, can manifest harmony or disharmony. One can see it if you go to hear an orchestra play, arrive 15 or 20 minutes early and you will hear the strangest cacophony of sounds or something like that. Everybody’s playing their own instrument in their own way. And testing their instruments, and we all know what that sounds like. In fact, we’ve heard it so many times, we can almost hear it right now, can you not? But now when the orchestra begins to play and they play together, what a different sound. That is the symphony. That’s what he’s talking about when he says harmony.

Now of course we have a similar situation in individuals. Individuals bound together with other individuals, operating on different principals. That’s like the orchestra before it begins to play. That’s the home in which the father is a believer and the mother is not, or the mother is the believer and the father is not. That’s like an orchestra that’s playing chaotically, not governed by the same principals. So what harmony has Christ with Belial? Christ with the evil one? As a matter of fact, everything that God is doing is in the process of overthrowing the evil one. And here is a believer united with someone who is motivated by the principals of the evil one and the values of the evil one. Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?

Now, one of the reasons that he says the temple of God with idols is because in the temple and the Tabernacle for that moment, one of the acts of sacrilege, which could be committed and was later, was the bringing into the temple area of idols. Idols of Baal, Dagon and so on. So what agreement has the temple of God with idols? You know, it’s an interesting thing. That this was sacrilege to bring an idol into the sacred area of the temple of the tabernacle which represented in typical fashion and illustrative fashion, the

holiness of God and the ministry that he had to the believing people of God. The pagans also add the same kind of restrictions. If you brought anything that was reminiscent of Jehovah into their temple area, that was sacrilege.

As a matter of fact, some of you believers in Christ might find it difficult to get into the building that is south of here. Or if you went out to the state of Utah and sought to enter the temple there, you would find it rather difficult to get in because their principals are different, and they recognize that they’re different too. It would be sacrilege for you. It’s startling, isn’t it, that we Christians are able to enter into agreements. We, the temple of God, enter into agreements that bind us such as marriage and some of the other things to which this text may apply.

Now, this raises questions of course, and naturally if don’t like what Paul is saying, you can think of things that would cause difficulties for Christians who haven’t thought very much about this. How is it possible for us not to be bound with unbelievers? After all, most of you men who are in this audience, you’re in a business. And so far as I know, there is no indication that the International Business Machines is a Christian organization or American Telephone & Telegraph and various other large corporations. So that raises questions in your mind, of course.

How shall we follow the apostle’s injunction? Well, there are several ways in which Christians have sought to do it historically. One is simply to isolate yourself, become something like a hermit. Join a religious order of kinds and thus have relationships only with such. Luther was an Augustinian monk. He probably was not involved in things that he thought at one time in his life were restrictive things. It’s possible for Christians today to live so much in isolation, that they never really have any contact with anyone else.

Now, the apostle speaks about this in his first epistle. He said, Look, if we are going to be isolated, we’ll have to go out of the world. He speaks specifically about the fact that we are required to live in this world of which we are a part. So isolation is one

extreme. On the other hand, these things, of course, seem to flow with the style of the times. It’s possible to be so identified with the world. And frequently excuses are made for it, after all, we have to reach the world, do we not? We have to reach them so we’ve got to be in and among them. Don’t we have to be? And so all the barriers are broken down, not recognized, and we become one of the world links. And so we’ve identified with them that, as a matter a fact, our lives our worldly lives. Amalgamation, on the other hand, is obviously not right.

I remember the story of two other boys who were out foraging around, and they found two little baby linnets, and so they brought them home where they had a canary in a cage. And as little boys do, philosophically minded, scientifically minded, decided that they would perform a little experiment. And so what they did was to take one of the little linnets, and they put him in a little container by the side of the canary on one side and the other linnet on the other side.

Mother happened to come in about that time and said, What’s going on?

They said, Well, we found these two little baby linnets, and we are putting them up by the canary so that the linnets will sing like the canary because the linnets are there. Well, a few days later she came in and she found the canary chirping like the linnets, which is really what usually happens because the principle that we, having the sin nature within us, that principle is taught incidentally in the book of Haggai, that we of ourselves will always have a tendency not to serve the Lord, but to depart from the Lord. In fact, we’ve seen things like that.

Now, we do admit that the nature that God has given us is the nature that causes us to desire to fellowship with the Lord, but we have still the sin principal. And therefore the conflict exists and almost always -- in fact Paul says, in every case, always the sin principal overcomes if by God’s grace we don’t rely on the presence of the Holy Spirit within us. So Paul’s statement, then, do not be bound together with unbelievers, is something very much needed for our day. And if we were to ask, what kind of

relationship are we to have? Perhaps the physicians type of principle is what we should follow.

Physicians, when they deal with people who have needs which require surgical treatment, other forms of treatment, follow a principal that someone has called: contact without contamination. We have to make contact with the world. We have to live in the world. But our responsibility toward the world is to be an instrument for the Lord in winning those whom God has intended for us to win and to be brought into the family of God. And our attitude towards the world is the attitude of no fellowship. In the sense that the apostle is speaking about here, the fellowship of submission, the fellowship of involvement, the fellowship of bondage, but the fellowship with an aggressive attitude of seeking to win them for that which means so much to us.

So we are to be evangelistic. Evangelistic, and when the time comes when it is evident that we are to be fruitless with an individual in our relationship to them. That’s the time for us to think of another approach to other people. So the apostle says don’t be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. I don’t think there’s any doubt that this applies to marriage. And any of you contemplating a relationship with a man or a woman, one of the fundamental principals of the relationship is if you’re a believer, that spouse must be a believer -- I mean, must be a believer. God overrules in some situations, and you can find exceptions, but ultimately your future happiness and the happiness of your family may depend on that simple decision.

Now, it surely has application to business. No businessman, I would think, would be exercising good Christian judgment if he entered into a partnership with an unbeliever. Inevitably the principles that move the Christian and the principles that move the non-Christian will conflict. I have no doubt that this should also be a principle of our Christian social relationships. If our relationships with -- social relationships with other people are such that we become bound in a relationship with an unbeliever, it’ll be like the linnets and the canary inevitably. We have to have relationships in order to win, but

there is a time when relationships become harmful. Only God the Holy Spirit can give us guidance in places like that.

Paul justifies this very simply. He says, “For we are the temple of the living God, just as God has said.” That’s the language of the tabernacle. It’s the language of the temple. The tabernacle and the temple represented the presence of God and fellowship with God. And furthermore the language that is used is covenantal language as all who recognize the terms of the covenant will understand. So what Paul is simply saying is this, “We are the temple of the living God. Keep the temple clean.” And the temple is not clean if there is a yoking of believers with unbelievers.

So the analogy is simple. Keep the camp clean. That applies to Believer’s Chapel incidentally. We’re anxious to reach people. We’re anxious to bring them in to hear the word of God. If you’re here and you’re not a believer, we are extremely happy that you’re here, but we want you to know we want to win you for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ because we think it’s for your eternal good. What it is meant to us means that much to us. We want you to share it. But we want to keep the temple clean and, therefore, we must in the ministry we carry on be sure to carry it on by believers. Churches that bring in unbelievers into the fellowship and into the membership -- of course we don’t have such a membership -- but bring them into the membership in order to win them, make a fatal mistake. Because soon the congregation will be chirping like the linnets not singing like the canary. I know singing like a canary has another connotation with gangsters, but we are using it in a slightly purified sense.

Now, Paul goes on to say -- the implication of this in verse 17 is, “Therefore come out from their midst and be separate says the Lord and do not touch what is unclean, and I will welcome you.” He moves from the ceremonial pictures and types and examples to the ethical purity. So like the shrines, we are to be withdrawn from the pagan society. We are the temple of the living God. Salvation incidentally is the sharing of the life of the father but separation involves the enjoyment of the father’s love. That’s what he means

when he says, “And I will welcome you.” That’s a very strong word that says, not simply receive you but receive you with joy. So you will enjoy the father’s love. And then he adds promises in order to justify it all. “And I will be a father to you,” the 18th verse, “And you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

That’s a marvelous statement, isn’t it? Because if he’s the Lord Almighty that means these promises will be carried out. And incidentally that word “almighty” is a word that means something like this literally, it means almighty of course, but it’s compounded of Greek words that means: The one who has his hands on everything; the one who has grasped everything; the pantocrator; the Lord almighty. And if he’s made those promises, they’re going to be fulfilled.

R. C. H. Lenski, the Lutheran commentator -- a very fine interpreter in some ways, in other ways not so good, but nevertheless a good Christian man -- has made the comment that Christians have to be, have to acknowledge in the final analysis that they are separatists. You don’t think of Lutheran’s being that way but Dr. Lenski was a good Christian man. We must be separatists. We cannot avoid that. Christians are separate. There’s a marvelous interview that the Emperor Trajan of Rome had with Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who was martyred in 117 A.D, just after the finishing of the last book of the New Testament and the death perhaps of the Apostle John. This is the account of it in the work, the Martyrdom of Ignatius. And Ignatius is standing face to face with the Roman Emperor Trajan. This is the conversation that is reported to have ensued;

“Who art thou,” said Trajan, “Thou wretch of a devil that art so ready to transgress our orders whilst Thou seducest other also that they may come to a bad end?”

Ignatius: “No man calleth one that beareth God, a wretch of a devil for the devil stand aloof from the servants of God.” Ignatius calls himself a bearer of God because of his relationship to the Lord.

Trajan: “And who is he that beareth God?”

Ignatius: “He that hath Christ in his breast.”

Trajan: “Does thou not think then that we too have gods in our hearts?” He’s right. Trajan had gods in his heart, too. They were Pagan gods, “seeing that we employ them as allies against our enemies.

Ignatius: “Thou art deceived when thou callest the devils of the nations gods, for there is one God who made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein and one Christ Jesus, his only begotten son, whose friendship I would fane enjoy.”

Trajan: “Speakest thou of him who was crucified under Pontius Pilot?”

Ignatius: “I speak of him that nailed on the cross sin and its author and sentenced every malice of the devil’s to be trampled under foot of those that carry him in their heart.”

Trajan: “Does thou then carry Christ within thyself?”

Ignatius: “Yes, for it’s written,” and listen to the text he cites. Old Testament and New Testament, in fact, our text. “I will dwell in them and will walk in them.”

Trajan: This is his sentence. “It is our order that Ignatius who saith he beareth about the crucified and himself should be put in chains by the soldiers and taken to mighty Rome to be made food for the wild beasts as a spectacle and a diversion of the people,” which ultimately, evidently took place. Ignatius wrote seven epistles on the way to Rome. We have those epistles. Remarkable things written by a man who was martyred for his testimony.

The apostle in the 1st verse of chapter 7, “Therefore having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God. “These” of course refers to the promises just made in the 6th chapter. “Conduct and calling are to agree.” The ideal of the Christian life are expressed here. “Let’s cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, the entire personality the world of the sense and the world of thought, cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit.” It’s possible to be cleansed of defilement of flesh and not of the spirit. Take the prodigal and his elder brother, the prodigal was possessed of defilement of the

flesh, but his brother, his proud brother who stayed with the father, had defilement of the spirit. So let’s cleanse ourselves beloved of all defilement of flesh and spirit.

And then the positive, perfecting holiness in the fear of God and the fact that that’s a present tense is very interesting because, the fact that it is a present tense suggests that it’s never complete in this life. Do you have trouble in perfecting holiness? Do you find it difficult to maintain a holy life? And let’s put it this way: do you find it difficult to maintain a holy life both outwardly as pertaining to the flesh and inwardly as pertaining to the spirit? Come on. Two of you have nodded, and the rest of you have no problems. Why did you come to hear the ministry of the word of God? You have no problems. No, I know that everyone of you really could say, yes I find it a problem. We are at one in this.

But you know there is an encouragement in it, and we can honestly say that evidence of the fact that this is a continual struggle is found right here by the apostle. Perfecting is never finished in this life. It’s always a struggle. We always have that problem. The work of redemption is not complete yet. So perfecting holiness and the fear of God.

Well, I don’t have time, I don’t think, to say anything much about verses 2 through 4 except one thing and that is when the apostle says in verse 2 in this renewal of the appeal, “Make room for us in your hearts, we wrong no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one,” we’ll see that he’s not just using general terms. When he says we wronged no one, he means in our decisions to do as we did in coming to visit you which he’s referred to in chapter 2. He did not wrong anyone. When he says we corrupted no one, he means we have taught you the pure word of God as over against the false apostles of which he will write later on. And when he says that we took advantage of no one. He refers to the fact that he did not take advantage of the collection. The financial arrangements that were being made for the poor in Jerusalem.

In other words, the apostle blooded the criticism that the modern critics and justified modern critics, of much that has gone on in, quote, “evangelicalism,” unquote, in our day.

Because people said in Paul’s day, the apostle may be in this for himself. He’s taken up this collection among the churches of Greece for the poor in Jerusalem, but how do we know that it’s going to the pockets of those in Jerusalem and not into the apostle’s pockets? As we will see later on, he made special provision that no one could legitimately say that. That’s probably what he’s referring to when he says we took advantage, we defrauded no one. I do not speak to condemn you. As I’ve said before, you’re in our hearts to die together, to live together. Great is my confidence in you. Great is my boasting on your behalf. I’m filled with comfort. I’m overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

What was the problem with the Corinthians? Why did they withhold their love from the apostle? Well, the false teachers that come in, those who were opponents of the apostle in the ministry had entered in among them and as a result the hearts of the Corinthians had become divided. Just like the hearts of Israel in Hosea’s day. When Hosea in the 10th chapter of his prophecy speaks about the things that had happened in his day, he was referring to the same kind of thing. Israel is a luxurious vine; he produces fruit for himself not for God. The more altars he made, the richer his land, the better he made the sacred pillars, their heart is faithless or smooth or even divided. So Israel was busy with all of the things that make up religion. Building alters; making obelisks, doing all of the things as we would say having the choirs sing, the church entertained doing all the types of things in the churches that make for activity, but the heart of the reality of the worship of God is gone.

That’s why. That’s why they were withholding their love. The great promises are perpetually open to us, unlocked gates to the father and communion with him, neglect, indifference, unprayerfulness as someone has put it rather than prayerlessness, unprayerfulness, worldliness and self-indulgence are the only locks. Keep the avenues

opened. Let him walk in us for his glory. Assert the promises in his presence.

Remember not only the promises but the promises exist. We have them. He says therefore having these promises. Separation from the world as friendship with God, it doesn’t mean doer solitude. But admission to the only love that satisfies the soul.

New Testament Puritanism is no harsh, repellant thing eradicating the affections. It’s the opening of the heart to eternal love, to eternal joy, to eternal comfort in rich fruitfulness. There is puritanism in the New Testament. It’s for everyone of us who named Christ. May God help us to illustrate it in our lives.

If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in Christ, you cannot be this. The first step into the relationship with God is the personal response to the gospel that Christ died for sinners. If you recognize that fact and you lean upon him and what he has done in the shedding of his blood, God through the Holy Spirit, regenerates, gives you faith, bring you into the family of God and endows you with the righteousness that is acceptable to him. Come to him and believe in him, trust in him and receive eternal life. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these admonitions that the apostle gave the Corinthians for we need them, too. Deliver us from the unequal yoke. Make us, Lord, by Thy grace, to enjoy in reality the great promises that are ours. Enable us by Thy grace to perfect holiness and the fear of God. If there are some here who have never believed, Lord, through the Holy Spirit, work in them to that end.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

