



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Corinthians 6:11- 7:4

Summer 2025

"Idol Factories"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. Our text this morning is 2 Corinthians, chapter 6. We're going to finish chapter 6, and then begin the first four verses of chapter 7.

Paul is addressing what I think was probably a group within the larger group at Corinth, rather than the whole church coming under this concern that he expresses. And yet there's been a reunion of him with them, but there is still some estrangement evidently. So we read in verse 11;

¹¹Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. ¹²You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. ¹³Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide *to us* also.

¹⁴Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; 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.

¹⁷ "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord.

"AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;

And I will welcome you.

¹⁸ "And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"

Says the Lord Almighty.

⁷ Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

² Make room for us *in your hearts*; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. ³ 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. ⁴ Great is my confidence ^(a)in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

2 Corinthians 6:11-7:4

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time in it together.
Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, what a privilege it is to be with Your people, to be together in this hour and to do this; read the Scriptures together and consider the meaning of the text—and then sing praise to You and what a holy God you are. What an appropriate hymn that is for the things we'll consider this morning. (*Wonderful, Merciful Savior, by Wyse & Rogers*).

We are to be a holy people—and we pray that You would give us the understanding of the things that we've just read, and particular issues that Paul was dealing with and how they apply to each and every one of us—because they do, very much.

So LORD, prepare our hearts for a time of study in Your Word through prayer, through the singing of hymns...and LORD, may You convict us where we need to be convicted, and encourage us where we need to be encouraged. We thank You for this time; it's a great blessing to be with Your people, fellowshiping in this way, and studying this unique book, the Bible, which is Your revelation.

So build us up in the faith, LORD, and we pray for those that are going through real struggles in life; strengthen them and bless them. Give us, who are perhaps going through pleasant times in life, not difficulties, give us an appreciation and thankful hearts for the good things You do for us. You bless us, "beyond all that we ask or think", (*Eph 3:30*), and You've done that chiefly, and most importantly, in the salvation You've given us through the person and work of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.

(Message) Have you ever been caught by surprise...and in dismay or disappointment said something like, 'Wow! I didn't see that coming!'...(maybe it was a question on a final exam.)

There's a verse in the Bible that had that effect on me in the Book of Joshua, Joshua 24, verse 23; (I think it was when I first started studying it in some depth and teaching on it). Joshua is giving his farewell address to the nation and declares, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD..." (vs15b). And the nation responds, "...We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God." (vs18b). And you think, 'Praise the LORD! That is a godly generation.'

But then Joshua tells them, "...put away the foreign gods which are in your midst..." (vs23), I think, 'What!?..."gods"! This is the generation that had the courage and faith their parents lacked. They trusted the LORD, and they conquered Canaan and all the giants that their parents so feared—and all of that time they were carrying with them idols!!'

2 Corinthians chapter 6, has a similar surprise. Paul tells the church, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers", (vs14)... "what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (vs16). You wonder:

'What is this about?...Improper partnerships, pagan temples ...and idols! These are the things that the Corinthians had been, 'saved *out* of', and they were still practicing it to some degree. I didn't see that coming!'

But we should. The fact is, this is a problem we all have, *idols*. We may not go to a pagan temple, but we carry idols in our hearts...and that is why this is a passage that is so relevant for today.

It seems to have been something of a secret at the time. The Corinthians hadn't asked Paul about idols, perhaps they'd kept that to themselves...but he knew. Somehow he knew, (someone, perhaps, had spoken to him privately about things that were going on), and so he had put off addressing this problem...but now it can't wait.

He takes up the problem here in verses 11 and 12, of chapter 6, and asks them, 'Why they were not open with them?', (why they were not speaking freely with him and with those with him?). As Paul puts it, they had been "restrained" in their relationship with them. Now he was emotional about it; "O, Corinthians, our heart is open wide...but you are restrained in your own affections." (vs11-12).

Paul was not a man without feelings. He's not some cold logician. He had a real concern for people; he had a real concern for the lost. We saw that back in chapter 5, in verse 20, "...we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." "Beg", that's what Paul did. And here he showed an urgent concern for the saved, for his friends who had slipped back into their old ways when they had, (for whatever reason), fallen into sinful practices.

You see his intense concern in verse 13 as well, where he calls them 'his children', and he asks them to enlarge their hearts for him, "...open wide *to us* also." Paul was the Corinthians' spiritual father; he brought the Gospel to them, so their lack of affection

was unnatural. But that is what sin, and that is what error does, it affects relationships. It hinders fellowship.

Paul cared deeply for the Corinthians, and he wanted to renew that open, free relationship. We see it all through this passage. So after exhorting them to respond to him, (to repay his love with love for him), he exhorts them to be separate from bad associations, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers..." (vs14a). [Maybe these are the false teachers he's referring to as "unbelievers", who had come to Corinth and had a great influence on them, and against Paul—and separating Paul and their affections for him, through false accusations.]

The exhortation here is general, so it could be others as well, (in fact, I suspect that it is, it's likely old friends from the pagan past were exerting some influence on them). Bad company can dampen spiritual interest. Paul's concern here is not only for his relationship with them, but more importantly, he was concerned about their relationship with the Lord.

So to warn them about entanglements with the world, he used a metaphor, a 'picture' from the Bible—that of a double yoke, under which two animals worked side by side plowing a field. It's taken from Deuteronomy 22, verse 10, and the command, "You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together." That verse expresses the principle of separation: 'The clean and the unclean are not to be mixed.'

And that was very prominent under the Law of Moses...and so it is a lesson, an object lesson, in the Book of Deuteronomy on *holiness*. *Holiness* basically means, *separation*. And the Law of Moses taught that, in every way, in common life. Everything that people did had this sense of separation in order to teach them over and over again, by repetition in a variety of ways, the need to be *holy*—the need to be *separate*.

It was taught to the Israelites from the clothes they wore, the food they ate, the calendar they followed...in every aspect of life they were taught the principle of *separation, purity*. They're taught it in their work. It was an agrarian society; they plowed; they used oxen and donkeys to do work. And so that separation is there in every

aspect of life. Their clothing could not be made of mixed materials, it couldn't have a garment of cotton and wool. Their diet was restricted. They could eat an ox....they couldn't eat an oyster. There were rules that distinguished 'clean' from 'unclean' animals. The Sabbath was *separate* from the other six days...they were to observe it strictly, on pain of death. And all of this was to teach them to be, 'a holy people', 'a separate people.' All of it was designed to do that.

[Now, if I could elaborate on this for a moment without getting too deeply in it, I don't think these principles of separation were because of hygiene or health. I don't think that the distinctions between 'clean' and 'unclean' animals was because, 'the unclean were unhealthy'. Rather, it was a 'principle' to set out before them the sense of *separation*.

You see that, for example, in clothing. There's nothing 'unhealthy' or 'improper' about mixing wool and cotton in a garment; but to make the point of *holiness*, and to just remind them over and over again that 'holiness is separation from evil' and 'separation to righteousness', everything was illustrating that very principle. And so they were not to be 'mixing things', as the Law stated, and following that *instruction*.

They were to be 'a separate people', is what it was all designed to illustrate: 'In the world, but not of the world'...not mixed with what was spiritually unclean. And throughout the Law of Moses that was taught—*purity*...and that's what's illustrated here in this passage from Deuteronomy.]

The principle applies to us today. The Law itself, this Law about the ox and the donkey, is not something we're required to observe. We're not under the Law of Moses; we're not obligated to those laws and those rules.

But we are to the *principles* that are illustrated; and we are to be 'a *holy people*'. And so while we're not under the Law of Moses, we can read the Law of Moses and learn the lessons of the Law of Moses, and how those *principles* apply to it...and that is what Paul is doing here. He's taking that and using that as an illustration. But the

illustration, (and what it illustrates, the idea of *purity* and *holiness*), does refer to those Corinthians—and to us. So Paul is writing this to show them how inconsistent it is to be paired with unbelievers.

Now that could apply, I suppose, to Christian businessmen in certain ways. (I'm not quite sure how to do that, because we live in a different society. We live in one in which it's very difficult to work in a business and not be 'paired' with unbelievers... that's just the situation we're in.) But I think it's very clearly a principle that applies to marriage, the marriage relationship, because Paul prohibits marriage to unbelievers. In 1 Corinthians 7, verse 39, he tells widows that they are free to remarry, "only in the Lord." So a believer is to marry another believer—not an unbeliever.

But, this is a rule that's often broken, as we know. Physical attraction and emotions are powerful influences on people, and particularly the young; and it often results in disappointment and regret. But relationships get involved, and a believer can rationalize what he or she is doing and think, 'Well, I'll win them over in the marriage.' Now that rarely happens. Sometimes it does—God is gracious...but often it doesn't.

There's a story that H. A. Ironside told about two boys who caught two baby linnets. If you don't know what a *linnet* is, it's a *bird*. (And I know that because I didn't know what a linnet was and I looked it up, *[Laughter]*...but you know what one is because you're all bird watchers, and I'm not.) But they found these *linnets*, (they're like a finch...and I know what a finch is, too, because I looked that up)...they found these two birds in a field, and they thought they'd try a little experiment.

So they brought them home, and they put them in cages on either side of their canary. And when their mother asked what they doing, they said, 'Well, we found these two linnets, and we have hung them next to the canary so that they will hear the canary sing, and as a result we want to see if they learn to sing like the canary.' Well the next morning, she heard the birds, but it was the canary that was chirping like the linnets.

[Laughter]

Well, that's the way it works...we conform to them more often than they conform to us. So we are to be careful in all of our relationships. Just as an ox and

donkey don't pull together, believers and non-believers are going in different directions—the opposite direction.

They have different natures from us. They have different values from us. People make mistakes, they make wrong choices. Sometime the situation is not that they made the wrong choice, but that the unbeliever married an unbeliever, and then somewhere along the line, one of them became a believer and the other didn't. —And I think that was probably a large problem within the early church. When these pagans hear the Gospel and one believes and the other doesn't...what do you do in that situation?

Well, the solution's not to separate. Paul addresses that when he speaks to the Corinthians about these issues, he doesn't counsel divorce. In 1 Corinthians 7, verses 12 through 16, he told the Corinthians that the believing wife was to remain with the unbelieving husband. God is good, He is gracious, and in that relationship He can bless. He certainly, 'sanctifies the unbeliever'; that's what Paul states. (ibid.). And hopefully, through the godly life of the wife, or the husband, the other person will be brought to faith. Peter counsels that and offers that hope in 1 Peter 3, verse 1.

But the counsel Paul gives is to, 'avoid such situations, when it's within our ability to do that'; "Do not be bound together with unbelievers." (vs14a). 'Be *separate* and *pure*.'

Now it's broader than marriage in its application, but what it does not mean is, 'Be *separate* from the world' ...cut off all conversation with unbelieving friends or unbelieving acquaintances or family members. It's not saying that; he wrote in 1 Corinthians 5, verse 10, that, 'otherwise we would have to go outside the world if we're going to live like that.' We are forced to live with the unbeliever, and we must live with the unbeliever in a way that is a testimony to the truth of God's grace.

So we are to associate with unbelievers. Paul spent much of his life among unbelievers...in the marketplace, in the synagogues, wherever he could find them. I'm sure he dined with them, sat down and had a meal with them, spoke to them about the

Lord. And the Lord did that as well. In fact, that was the Pharisee's complaint, 'He eats with sinners.' (Luk 15:2). Yes, He did...and He loved sinners; 'He came to save the lost.' (Luk 19:10). Well to do that, and be a part of that great ministry that He entrusted to the church, we have to go to the lost.

Paul didn't compromise the integrity of the faith, or lower in any way, the high standard of his morality—but he associated with the world, as he stated to the Corinthians, "...for the sake of the gospel..." (1Cor 9:23). The danger he warned against is 'close relationships', 'binding ourselves together with others who are not like minded'... for we soon find that we may be 'singing like they do'.

This was a real concern in Corinth; a pagan town with lots of idols, and pagan festivals, and temples. It was a carnal, wicked, pagan city that the Corinthians would have been invited to join in. They've come out of that life—but their friends were still there and would have encouraged them to come and participate in the festival...or whatever.

But as a new creation, they could not do that. They could not conform to their friends and their former way of life. And to emphasize that Paul asks *five* rhetorical questions, each with a pair of opposites which are intended to show how illogical union with unbelievers and their practices is for the believer. "...for..." he asks, (*first*), "...what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness...?" (vs14b). 'How can we, who have been forgiven and freed from sin's power, still live in it?' We can't.

(Now we *can* do it, in the sense that we can practice things that are wrong, but that's it....they are wrong, (they are against our nature). If we're going to be consistent, we cannot do that. Our lives must be different, because we are fundamentally different people, from what we once were. "Reckon yourselves dead to sin, but live to God in Christ Jesus."...that's Paul's first command in the Book of Romans. (6:11).

"...or," he asks, (*second*), "...what fellowship has light with darkness?" (14c). The two cannot be mixed.—Light eliminates darkness. It's a physical impossibility to combine them. And the two are equally incompatible in the spiritual realm, (between belief and

unbelief). In Colossians chapter 1, verse 13, Paul wrote that, 'We have been delivered out of the domain of darkness.' We've been brought into the light—into all of the warmth, and the joy, and the color, and the beauty of light. We cannot go back to the darkness... the two cannot mix.

In verse 15 Paul asks his *third* and *fourth* questions; "Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?" "Belial" means 'worthlessness'. It was an Old Testament name, and one that, in Paul's day, came to be used of Satan. So, with that background, Paul is now contrasting the heads of the two spiritual races, 'The Captains' of the host of believers and unbelievers. 'The Lord of Light', and 'The prince of darkness.' —The One infinitely valuable, the other completely 'worthless'. The One is pure, the other is impure. The One is 'our advocate', and the other is 'our adversary'. How do they have harmony together?

Phillip Hughes cites in his commentary some examples of how this verse, (*vs15*), was used in official letters in the early church, (the church in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th centuries), and one circulated in the 4th century warning the church not to associate with Arius. That was probably the first great heresy.

There are other heresies; there was the heresy that Paul deals with in the Book of Galatians, (which I think was his first book), *Legalism*. The 'Judaizers' had come and they had said, 'It's not enough to simply believe in Christ... you must be circumcised.' So, it's faith plus works. It's grace plus human effort. It's the things we **do**; it's the salvation by *ceremonies*.

But this problem of *Arianism* spread throughout the world, primarily the eastern part of the church, (the Greek speaking church). Arius was a *presbyter* from the city of Alexandria, and he and his followers denied the deity of Christ. They took texts, like Colossians chapter 1, verse 15, where Christ is called, "the firstborn of all creation", and concluded from that, 'He must be creature!' He's the greatest of all creatures; He's the greatest of God's creation. He's greater than the archangels—but He's still, 'a creation of God.' [Rather than understand, "the firstborn of all creation" to mean, 'He's the heir of all things 'He is the creator of it all; He was before everything—and He created

everything! And since His work on the cross has been triumphant, and a victory, He has gained all of that as the heir. The 'firstborn' was the heir in a family, and that's how Paul is using that word—and not that He was 'a created' person—He's eternal.]

But that's how the Arians took that—and so in their letter, (this 'official' letter that circulated warning people about the Arians and that heresy), they wrote, "There is no concord of Christ with Belial." And that's a very good application of that verse, (vs15), to that particular problem.

We could use it in regard to fellowship between Christians and Mormons; (Mormons deny the eternal, unique deity of Christ). Or a liberal protestant and a Christian, or a Jehovah's witness and a Christian, (both of those deny the Trinity). It's not that we can't be friendly...we should be friendly. And we should be very cordial, and helpful, and friendly with everyone, regardless of their beliefs. But we can't call them 'brother' or 'sister' spiritually. They are not—they deny the Gospel.

The Gospel is clear. It can be summed up by saying, 'the five onlys', or 'the five alones': Grace alone, Faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, and, 'to God be the glory alone.' So how do you join with those who deny each of those great truths, who teach salvation through works? It's a denial of the Gospel. The apostle's questions here, (*verses 15&16*), are very relevant for today. We deal with the same circumstances and situations that the Corinthians were dealing with.

His *fifth* question, which is the most crucial of all, is in verse 16. "Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God;"

Idolatry is a violation of the second commandment. And after the Babylonian captivity, the Jews were finished with idols. You see that, you read the Old Testament, the historical books, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, all the way up to the time of the Babylonian captivity—and idols were everywhere. They were even sacrificing their children to idols!

But after the Babylonian captivity, they were cleansed of that. They kept them out of their life. They kept them out of their temple. An idol in the temple was blasphemy. In fact, when the Roman emperor, Caligula, (*ruled 37-41AD*), made an edict that his image, (a statue of him,) was to be set up in the Temple in Jerusalem and in all synagogues, the Jews protested strongly...and they kept that from happening. They protected the material Temple in Jerusalem.

But Paul says, 'we are the true temple'. (vs16b). So, if it was very important to keep, 'the material temple in Jerusalem' free of idols, how much more important is it that we avoid contact with them?

Now that was a literal concern for the Corinthians, and all of the early church because they had been saved 'out of' that environment—that pagan environment, idol worship, and were continually tempted to rejoin it. John ends his first epistle, 1 John chapter 5, verse 21, the last verse. "Little children, keep yourself from idols", or, "...*guard* yourself from idols." It was a great concern in that time.

Well, there are places in the world today where that is still a concern. Not so much in the west...but we still have *our* idols. In a very secular age, we have our idols—thoughts and desires that take root in our hearts. We're 'to guard our hearts'. John Calvin famously wrote in his *Institutes*, that "Man's heart is a perpetual idol factory." Now, that shouldn't surprise us. Jeremiah called the heart, "...deceitful above all things...". (Jer 17:19).

Now Paul's statement here that, "...we are the temple of the living God", (vs16b), is not a reference to us individually. It's true that our bodies...individually our bodies are 'the temple of God'. (Paul makes that point clearly in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 19.) Here though, he is describing believers *collectively*...'The church' is God's temple. So we must keep the ministry pure—which means keep it free of error, free of unbelievers in the ministry, free of sin, free of scandal.

But we keep the church clean by, first of all, keeping our hearts clean, individually. And Paul gives that instruction in chapter 7, verse 1. But that is based on the fact that “we”, (the church), are God's Temple; Scripture proves that. Paul supports it here from Leviticus chapter 26, verse 11f;

"I will dwell in them and walk among them;

And I shall be their God, and they shall be My people." (vs16c)

Well, God has literally fulfilled that from the day of Pentecost, to the present, by ‘dwelling within us’. Our hearts are sealed with the Holy Spirit; He dwells *in us*, literally. We literally have God the Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, living within us—and through Him, God the Father, and God the Son live in us.

Paul asks, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (vs16a). And the only answer to that is, ‘None!’ We cannot allow corrupt things into the church...or to occupy our hearts. So Paul urges the Corinthians to act. He's warned them negatively of being unequally yoked, ‘Don't do that! Don't be unequally yoked.’

Now he exhorts them to take positive action...make a separation; verse 17;

"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate”, says the Lord.

“And 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. (vs17).

Now that's a quote from Isaiah chapter 52, verse 11, which was a prophecy to Judah to come out of the Babylonian captivity. There would be another generation or so, before they went into it, so that was a prophecy to the generation that would be coming ‘out of’ the Babylonian captivity. And what it was a prophecy, or exhortation to do, is, ‘come out without any contamination of idols. Come out cleansed from that sin.’

And that is true by way of application for us. We are to have nothing to do with idols of any kind. We are God's temple; He's our Father. He cares for us as a father does for his children. He gives us protection, He gives us guidance, He gives us wisdom, as a good father does. As we look to Him, and obey Him, He transforms us, "from glory to glory.", (that's chapter 3, verse 18, of 2 Corinthians). Christians are blessed and privileged above all people...So how should we then live?

Paul tells us in verse 1 of chapter 7. These great promises, (*vs16b through vs17*), should produce in us a response. We should empty the temple of all the idols that are there. "...beloved," he says, "let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (7:1).

What are the idols that we harbor in our hearts?

What is it that we cling to in place of God, that really holds our affections more than God does?

What do we value more than God?

Well, it's going to vary from person to person, and that calls for some introspection. But there are lots of good things that can become idols:

Money. There's nothing wrong with money. Money's good. It has its purpose and its function, but it can become an idol for us.

Our careers,

Even our children, we can value them more than the Lord.

Lots of bad things, pornography....(well, give a list, that's an easy one).

And here, 'idols of the mind'. That's what he's speaking of, 'the idols of the mind.' *Error* is an idol...*wrong theology* is an idol. Someone holds on to that which is not true, and which is clearly denied by the Scriptures, and not taught in Scriptures, but holds to it...that's an idol. Paul says, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement..."

Moral lapses, intellectual confusion, improper affections...whatever defilement there may be that hold our attention, that have a hold on us, we're to deny them. We're to 'cleanse ourselves of them', and we're 'to strive for holiness'. (7:1).

So Paul's instruction here is not just negative, it's also positive. We are to be "perfecting holiness." (vs1c). And that is a continual, constant effort. It takes effort, it takes discipline, and it's never complete. "*Perfecting*" is in the *present tense*—and the implication is that it's *ongoing* because we will never be perfect in this life. We will always struggle with sin; we'll always be dealing with it and always be struggling against the pull that the world has upon us.

But, as we live in the fear of God;
focusing on Him,
living for Him,
increasing in our love for Him,
we will be changed. Gradually, continually, (never completely), but we will be changed. —That's the encouragement.

Now after his exhortation, 'Not to be bound with unbelievers', and, 'to increase in holiness', Paul repeats his desire to have them reciprocate his love for them: "Make room for us *in your hearts*..." It is as though he were saying, 'Get rid of all your improper relationships, remove all the idols from your hearts, fill your lives with God...and please make a little room for me, too.'

There were no grounds for shutting him out of their lives. He says, "...we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one." (vs2). These were false accusations, (that were probably made by the false teachers there), that he rejected all as untrue. But that wasn't what he really wanted to get into here; he writes, "I do not speak to condemn you..." (vs3a). He says, 'He wasn't driven in all of this by a kind of self-defense, like he'd been offended by these things and he wanted to defend himself.' That's not it.

He was motivated by his love of them. If there's a thought uniting Paul's concern for the Corinthian's relationship with God and with him, it's 'When our relationship with God is pure, our relationship with people will be pure.' And so he wanted them to 'clean

things up', 'divorce themselves from these idols, (or whatever was their attraction), and be united with him.'

But still, regardless of their attitude toward Paul, Paul loved the Corinthians. In spite of their coolness and coldness toward him, he boasted about them. He says in verse 4, "Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in our affliction."

The change God had produced in them, saving them from 'bondage to Satan', gave him joy that was so great that he felt it even in tribulation. Even in this kind of conflict that he was having with them, he still loved them.

So Paul was optimistic; he looked forward to reconciliation with them. He was resilient in his relationship; he didn't give up on his friends. He didn't become angry with them when they failed and say, 'I'll have nothing to do with you!' He was always seeking reconciliation for their good and to draw them closer to the Lord.

And it wasn't all of them, as I said. I don't think this was the church as a whole; it's probably a group within the church. But is it not amazing that these Corinthians, who had been so blessed by Paul, who was their spiritual father, who brought them the Gospel of eternal life that they embraced...is it not amazing that they would be cold toward him, of all people!? Ungrateful toward him?... No, it's not all that amazing; it's so human, really. Just as idols, (while you may say, 'What is this!?'), they're very common.

We are prone to wander. The biggest idol in our hearts is the idol of self. We think of self, first...we want to satisfy self—and often, as a result, we don't put others first. We need to take a good look at ourselves. And the Corinthians help us to do that... looking at them is like looking in a mirror.

It's one reason I love the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians because they're full of problems; and we see ourselves in those very problems that Paul had to deal with—and the solutions that he gave. And so, like them, we must, "...not be bound together with

unbelievers", (vs14), or, 'enamored of idols'. We are the true "temple of God", (vs16b), and need to live as those who carry Christ in our hearts.

That's a great and glorious blessing, and it's one that the world of unbelievers cannot appreciate or understand. There was a conversation that the church father, Ignatius, had with the Roman emperor Trajan in the year AD 117. The emperor began by calling Ignatius, "a wretch of a devil." Ignatius responded by saying that, "He was one of God's servants who bore God.", (carried God). Trajan asked, "Do you then carry Christ within yourself?" And Ignatius said, "Yes.", (*and then he quoted our text saying*), "It is written, I will dwell in them, and will walk about in them." (vs16c).

Unimpressed, the emperor pronounced sentence on him: "It is our order that Ignatius, who says he bears about the crucified in himself, shall be put in chains by the soldiers, and taken to mighty Rome, there to be made food for wild beasts as a spectacle and diversion for the people." And that happened.

The world may never treat you so harshly, but it will never understand you any better than that. We are different; we carry Christ in our hearts. So while we are in the world, (we can't go *outside* the world), but while we are in the world, we must not be **of** the world. We're different, and we are to behave differently, think and act differently. We are, 'Light in the darkness.'

We're to be that, we're to act as that—to be, '*living purity*' in an impure world; and like Ignatius, (and many, many others), be willing to sacrifice for Christ rather than conform to the world.

But it may be that there's someone here who is still of the world—who doesn't know Christ and is an unbeliever. If so, we invite you: 'Believe!' Or as Paul would say, 'We beg you, believe! Come to Christ.'

He is the Light and life of the world. He is the eternal Son of God, who became a man in order to offer Himself up as a sacrifice for sins and sinners. And all who believe in

Him, who lay hold of Him, are given life—life everlasting. So trust in Christ; it's all you need to do, and you will be saved!

(Closing prayer) Father, "Salvation is of the LORD", (*Jon2:9*), altogether, from eternity to eternity, and everything in between. We give You praise for that.

Now,
The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace.

In Christ's name, Amen.

(End of Audio)