

**~Other Speakers S-Z: David Servant:**

In the previous chapter, Paul made mention of certain antagonists in Corinth who "took pride in appearance and not in heart" (5:12). This theme surfaces more frequently as Paul's letter progresses, and it becomes quite clear that he had found himself competing with Jewish legalists for the affection and loyalty of the Corinthian believers.

It was a delicate matter that required great wisdom on his part, and rather than launch an all-out attack on his adversaries, Paul reminded the Corinthians of the sacrifices he had made on their behalf. It was a subtle strategy that provided an obvious contrast with the Jewish legalists. They could not say that they had endured afflictions, hardships, beatings, imprisonments, sleeplessness, hunger, dishonor, slander and punishments for the gospel's sake, as Paul could! Additionally, the Jewish legalists could not hold a candle to Paul's Christ-like purity, patience, kindness, love and joy (6:6, 10). He had the indwelling Holy Spirit; they did not! They were still dead in their sins, trying to save themselves apart from Christ; he was alive in Christ, saved by grace through faith.

Paul then makes his appeal for the Corinthian believers, whom he says were "restrained in [their] own affections" (6:12), to open wide their hearts to him. How could they resist? Later in this same letter, Paul will take a greater risk, openly and dramatically comparing himself to his antagonists. How delicate are human relationships! And how difficult it sometimes is to maintain harmony, especially when there are selfishly-motivated slanderers trying to cause division.

It is sometimes difficult to follow the flow of thought in Paul's epistles, understanding how one paragraph might have any logical relationship to the paragraph that precedes it. But it is safe to assume that Paul was no dummy, and knowing that, also to assume that there might well be some relationship between paragraphs that seem to bear no relationship. An example of what I'm speaking about is found in today's reading. Paul seems to jump from appealing for the Corinthians to open their hearts to admonishing them not to be bound together with unbelievers. Is he introducing an entirely new subject, or is there some connection to what he had just written?

I think it is quite possible (and logical) that Paul was subtly referring to the Corinthian's relationship to the false teachers who had infiltrated the church. There is little doubt that the Jewish legalists---Paul's frequent adversaries---were not saved. Thus, Paul was reminding the Corinthian believers that they really had nothing in common with them.

Some have gone to extremes in practicing separation from the world, keeping themselves safely cloistered away, consequently having no impact upon the world. We are supposed to be "in the world but not of the world." Our lights should be shining in the world's darkness so that they see our good deeds (Matt. 5:16), but we should avoid any partnerships with the world that make us participants in their evil.

While 2 Corinthians 6:14 is so often applied to marriage partnerships, it has much greater application than that. I am persuaded, for example, that holding shares in mutual funds that own shares in companies that manufacture or promote what God hates is an example of being "bound together with unbelievers." When a production company profits from producing an immoral movie, so do all the shareholders. Should Christians be profiting from a film that glorifies what God hates? Other examples could be cited. The point is that our holy Father expects us, His children, also to be holy. For that reason, we should have no partnership with those who do evil.

What do modern prosperity preachers do with Paul's declaration that he was poor, yet made many rich (6:10)? They avoid it! Paul could have meant nothing else than that he was materially poor, yet through his ministry, he made many spiritually rich. He certainly was not claiming to be spiritually poor yet making many materially rich! If he made many materially rich through "teaching the secrets of divine prosperity" (as some claim), we would have to wonder why he couldn't get those secrets to work for himself.