

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

IN THIS WORLD, WE EXPERIENCE SUFFERINGS: BUT GLORY IS COMING

SECOND CORINTHIANS

✠ II CORINTHIANS

An overview of the Book of Second Corinthians, by Given O. Blakely

Lesson #28

COMMENTARY ON: 6:11-18

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

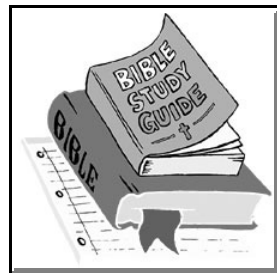
"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

A FERVENT PLEA

In speaking of his choosing, sending, and empowerment, Paul had more in mind than simply confirming the validity of his ministry. His aim is to bring the Corinthians into a spiritual condition that properly honors and extols the grace of God. He knows that salvation is calculated to work great things in men, bring great honor to Christ, and glorify the Almighty God. He therefore will make a strong appeal to the hearts of the Corinthians, showing the total unreasonableness of continuing to live beneath the dignities afforded by grace, and the absolute reasonableness of living in a resolute and godly manner.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"



Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Epistle of Second Corinthians

Lesson Number 28



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO BUILDING THE FAITH AND ENHANCING THE HOPE OF THOSE WHO ARE WORKING OUT THEIR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: AMPLIFIED or AMP = Amplified Bible, (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE = Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ESV = English Standard Version (2001), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT = New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TNK = JPS Tanakh (1985), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT = Young's Literal Translation (1862).

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon

AN EPISTLE WRITTEN TO A CHURCH THAT WAS MOVING AWAY FROM ITS CARNALITY, YET LACKED MUCH INSIGHT. HERE IS A STRONG APPEAL TO PERFECT HOLINESS IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----

A FERVENT PLEA

“ 6:11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. ¹² Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. ¹³ Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. ¹⁴ Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶ And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Cor 6:4-10)

INTRODUCTION

In this passage Paul comes to grips with the implications of reconciliation to God. He has already admonished the saints themselves, “*Be ye reconciled to God,*” affirming that it was as though God Himself was beseeching them to do so. It should be abundantly obvious that reconciliation to God is **not** a simplistic matter, once and for all accomplished by submitting to, what is perceived, as a “*plan*” to be fulfilled by men. The Corinthians had been baptized

into Christ (1 Cor 1:13-17;; 12:13). They had been put into Christ by God Himself (1 Cor 1:30), and, though coming from sordid backgrounds, had been “*washed,*” “*sanctified,*” and “*justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*” (1 Cor 6:11). Yet, they were coming miserably short of the objectives of reconciliation, and had among them certain traits that belied their profession. They had numerous characteristics among them that were actually of the

world, from which God intended that they should be “*delivered*” (Gal 1:4).

Although this matter is not often declared or discussed in the contemporary church, **how is it that a person who is delivered from the world can still remain riveted to it?** How is it possible for a person who has been “*washed*” by the Holy Spirit of God to have the “*filth*” of the world upon him? How can an individual who has been translated into

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- A CONDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP (6:18).
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Christ's own kingdom live as though the world from which he was delivered is primary? How can a person who has "eternal life" live as though life in this world is fundamental? How can a person who has been given a "new heart" and a "new spirit" conduct his life as though this had never occurred?

Early in history, Paul had to deal with these matters. With all of its contention (1 Cor 1:11), division (1 Cor 3:3), immorality (1 Cor 5:1), and inconsideration (1 Cor 6:1-6; 11:21), Corinth stood as a colossal example of the kind of people Jesus did **NOT** die and raise again to create. Pride existed among certain of the church in Rome (Rom 2:1-29). Some in Ephesus were resorting to stealing (Eph 4:28). Some in Colossae were being led astray by an empty procedural religion (Col 2:20-22). Some in Thessalonica were walking disorderly (2 Thess 3:11). Hebrew believers had not grown as they should, and thus had to be tutored as though they were little infants (Heb 5:12). James wrote to professed

believers whom he called "*adulterers and adulteresses*" (James 4:4). There were false teachers who had become prominent, even overthrowing the faith of some. These included Hymanaeus and Philetus (2 Tim 2:17), Phygellus and Hermogenes (2 Tim 1:15), Diotrephes (2 John 1:9), and others.

As you can see, the first century church was by no means an ideal one. There is not the slightest indication that it was ever intended to be the ideal church, or that it was a model to be emulated by succeeding generations. At least twenty-one years after the day of Pentecost, "*Apostles, and the elders*" came together to consider the acceptability of the Gentiles (Acts 15:6-21). There were some in the Corinthian assembly who did not even know there is "*One God, the Father,*" and "*one Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor 8:6). These were in the body of Christ, and were called "*them that are weak*" (1 Cor 8:9), "*the weak brother*" (1 Cor 8:11), "*the brethren*" (1 Cor 8:12), and "*my brother*" (1 Cor 8:13).

The early church was by no means the ideal one. **As I understand the Scriptures, the church is intended to partake of the glory of the New Covenant, which is an increasing glory, not one that wanes, and must be again and again restored to its initial state.** The church is following the path of the righteous which "*Is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*" (Prov 4:18). This perception is highly destructive of much theology. However, if the church is to conclude its course by appearing "*with*" Christ "*in glory*" (Col 3:4), "*not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*" (Eph 5:27), it hardly seems possible that a static state should characterize its tenure in this world. Further, the very notion of restoring the first century church postulates an ideal condition that is static, or unchanging.

BASIS AND REALIZATION

While the BASIS of our reconciliation is found in Christ's atoning death, the **realization** of it has much to do with our comportment in this world. The Scriptures are consistent in their representation of these two things – the BASIS of our reconciliation to, and acceptance by, the Living God, and the REALIZATION, or conscious experience of that reconciliation. Through the centuries, the professed church has managed to muddy the waters on this subject. Some present salvation as though there were no identifiable conditions at all. Others deliver a message that affirms that salvation is wholly dependent upon conditions imposed upon men by their peers. Both views are wrong, and are representative of uncomely and overly simplistic thought.

Even among those who have not formerly embraced the two theological views of reference, there is an obvious tendency toward these doctrinal extremities. Among professing believers, some live as though God really expected nothing from them at all. Advancement in faith and understanding are not seen as required. Their salvation is largely perceived as within the circumference of mere profession, having little or nothing to do with the various aspects of life in this world. Others approach life as if the entirety of salvation depended only upon them – their efforts and punctilious obedience. Thus, if they are honest, they are prone to despair, and are dominated by fear, for it is apparent to them that they are always coming short of their own ideal, to say nothing of the Lord's.

This passage deals with the REALIZATION of reconciliation. **To be more precise, it has to do with confirming** that we are, in fact, reconciled to God. When a person is experientially reconciled to God, that reconciliation makes itself known in

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certain incontrovertible ways. These are intensely personal, and will be approached

Israel that He was “a God of truth,” and that “no iniquity” was Him (Deut 32:4).

In view of that, no “false witness” was to come from them (Ex 20:16). Those who lied, not telling the truth, were to be put away from them (Deut 19:18-20).

righteousness and unrighteousness, they become unrighteous. When light and darkness are supposedly merged, it is nothing more than darkness. If there is attempt to put the truth and a lie together, the result is a lie. An effort to blend the wisdom of this world with the wisdom of God can only yield worldly wisdom. Carnality plus spirituality equals carnality. Self plus Christ equals self. Sin plus piety equals sin.



The Israelites were to separate themselves from the Canaanites, not intermarrying or mingling with them (Ex 34:16; Deut 7:3,4).

They were forbidden to adopt the practices of the heathen (Deut 12:31). They were to be a separate people, for they belonged exclusively to the Lord (Ex 19:5). Thus did the Lord declare, “*And ye shall be holy unto Me: for I the LORD am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be Mine*” (Lev 20:26).

In Our Text

Now, in our text, the ultimate of separation is proclaimed. There are things that cannot, under any circumstances, be joined together. The following couplets will be briefly expounded. They are unequal yokes.

- Righteousness and unrighteousness.
- Light and darkness.
- Christ and Belial
- A believer and a infidel.
- The temple of God and idols.



We will find that all backsliding, spiritual retrogression, the entrance of carnality, and general lapses into “the flesh,” are traceable to some unequal yoke – some attempt to mingle what cannot be joined together.

In the kingdom of God, any admixture defaults to the trait of the inferior and unacceptably. When, therefore, men attempt to mingle

As we go through this text, the gravity of this characteristic of the kingdom will become abundantly evident. **It will also be obvious that this is an especially weak area in the modern church.** I want to emphasize the total unacceptability of this circumstance. Even of old time, long before the Lord Jesus came into the world “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), it was generally known that touching the unclean thing made the one who did it unclean – even if he was a priest of God. Thus Haggai writes, “*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean*” (Hag 2:11-13).

Even under the inferior Old Covenant, that was possessed of a lesser and fading glory, **it was known that holy and unclean cannot mix.** Something that is holy cannot cause someone or something that is unholy to be holy. However, something that is unholy or unclean does have a defiling effect upon those it touches. That is why Jesus told Peter, “*He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all*” (John 13:10). In principle, “his feet” is the part that became defiled in the walk of the disciple. **Whatever part of him touched the world caused a sort of defilement from which cleansing is required.** This washing is depicted in John’s marvelous affirmation: “*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth*

with that in mind. This by no means suggests that the requirements set before us are optional. These are things that **must** be done. The doing, however, will not be facilitated by means of Law or coercion. They will not be birthed by means of the “fear of death.” **Men will be challenged to do what only reconciled and received people CAN do.** Faith will be the hand that lays hold of the truth declared, and grace is the power that will cause it to be accomplished.

THE PRINCIPLE OF NOT MINGLING

Early on, even during the creation itself, God introduced the idea of division – of separation – of things that cannot be mingled together. He first “*divided the light from the darkness*” (Gen 1:4), thereby setting the tone for all of His work, whether material or spiritual. This division was formalized by giving the light the name of “Day,” and the night the name of “Night” (Gen 1:5). He also made a firmament, which He called “Heaven,” **dividing** the waters above it from the waters beneath it (Gen 1:7). He also **divided** the waters and land upon the earth, calling the dry land “Earth,” and the waters “Seas” (Gen 1:10).

Under the Law

Under the Law, God further taught men concerning separation, instructing them that they could not breed together two kinds of cattle, sow their fields with mingled seed, or have a garment mingled with linen and wool – that is, man-made fabric with natural fabric (Lev 19:19). The Lord reminded

us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). That is defilement that we experience **following** the new birth – **after** we have been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col 1:13).

The reason for the necessity of this cleaning is found in the absolute incompatibility of righteousness and unrighteousness, of holiness and sin. **Newness of life cannot in any way be**

joined to the "old man."The glory of the New Covenant cannot be merged with the inferior glory of the Old Covenant. The kingdom of Christ cannot be compacted together with the power of darkness from which we were delivered. The flesh and the Spirit are antithetical to one another, and cannot be made harmonious.

While all of this may seem very evident to the intellect, the apprehension

of this truth has proved to be exceedingly difficult for the church. This is one of the reasons for the passage before us. **Deceived by the devil, and prodded by the flesh, men tend to think they are, of themselves, capable of maintaining purity, while they willingly traffic in defiled realms.** This text confirms that such thinking is altogether false. The world is a realm in which spiritual deliberation and power are required.

AN OPEN MOUTH AND AN ENLARGED HEART

“^{6:11} O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.”

Paul has earnestly besought the Corinthians to do two things.

- ☛ **Be reconciled to God** (2 Cor 5:20). That is, bring their thinking into accord with *“the mind of Christ,”* living in a way that is harmonious with God's ways and thoughts.
- ☛ **Receive not the grace of God in vain** (2 Cor 6:1). That is, not to *“frustrate the grace of God”* by living in way that not only obviates the need for grace, but greatly conflicts with it. When a person is not seeking to appropriate what grace teaches us to reject, a certain enmity it created that sends grace away and causes variance with God Himself.

These two admonitions are made within the vast panorama of the truth that has been placed before the Corinthians, together with its advantages. This includes the following.

- ☛ Grace and peace are accessible to all saints (1:1).
- ☛ The consolation of God is freely given to those who partake of the sufferings of Christ (1:7).
- ☛ Paul's ministry among them had been straightforward, without guile, and in strict harmony with the purpose of God (1:12; 2:17; 4:2).

- ☛ All the promises of God are *“Yes”* in Christ Jesus (1:20).
- ☛ Paul was determined to be a *“helper”* of their joy (1:24).
- ☛ God causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus (2:14).
- ☛ They were the *“epistle of Christ,”* written by the Holy Spirit (3:3).
- ☛ They were products of *“able ministers”* (3:6).
- ☛ They were under a superior covenant (3:7-11).
- ☛ In Christ, they were in a domain of

glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6).

- ☛ They had a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel *“that the excellency of the power”* might be of God (4:7).
- ☛ They had been inducted into a realm where they could focus on things that are not seen – eternal things (4:18).
- ☛ God had *“wrought”* them to inhabit their house from heaven – the resurrection body – when death would be *“swallowed up of life”* (5:1-5).
- ☛ They were part of an appointed

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great spiritual liberty (3:17).

- ☛ The Holy Spirit was changing them from glory to glory (3:18).
- ☛ God had shined into their hearts, *“to give the light of the knowledge of the*

economy where men *“walk by faith, and not by sight”* (5:7).

- ☛ We must all appear *“before the judgment seat of Christ”* (5:10).
- ☛ Christ died and rose again that His

people might live for Him (5:15).

- Once we come into Christ, there is no justification for knowing people after the flesh, or from a human point of view (5:16).
- The person in Christ is a “new creation.” “old things” pass away, and “all things” become new (5:17).
- Jesus was made “to be sin for us,” that we “might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (5:21).
- Paul, as their spiritual father and instructor, was clearly “approved” as a “minister of God” (6:4-10).

What possible reason could be

rarely was a body of believers addressed as primarily associated with the city where they resided. The brethren at Rome were never referred to as “Romans.” That term is used six times in Scripture, but is never employed as a means of referring to believers (John 11:48; Acts 16:21,37,38; 25:16; 28:17). It was always and only used in a political sense.

The brethren in Ephesus were never referred to as “Ephesians.” That word is used three times in Scripture. Each time it refers to the worshiper of the goddess Diana (Acts 19:28,34,35).

The Philippians were referred to as “Philippians,” emphasizing that support came to Paul only from that part

problems, etc., were evidence of worldly corruption. Now Paul will speak plainly to them as “Corinthians.” He is, in a manner of speaking, stooping down to their level to show them how unreasonable they have been.

I understand that the expression “O ye Corinthians” is often understood to be an “affectionate” means of addressing these brethren. However, that view does not blend well with the manner in which Paul addressed other churches. While there is no doubt an element of truth in it, I prefer to view this as somewhat of a reproach. It seems to me that the tone of the following words lends itself to this view.

OUR MOUTH IS OPEN

“... our mouth is open unto you . . .” Other versions read, “We have spoken openly to you,” NKJV “Our mouth has spoken freely to you,” NASB “We have spoken frankly to you,” NAB “We have spoken honestly with you,” NLT “I have told you all my feelings,” LIVING “We have spoken plainly,” IE “our lips are unsealed to you,” WEYMOUTH “my tongue is telling you everything,” WILLIAMS “I am unsealing my lips to you,” MONTGOMERY and “we are hiding nothing, keeping nothing back.” AMPLIFIED

The picture here is that Paul has a lot to say, and earnestly desires to say it to the Corinthians. He wants to speak of the things that have enraptured his own heart, and to do so abundantly and with clarity. His writing has been with unusual poignancy and spiritual glory.

The picture here is that Paul has a lot to say, and earnestly desires to say it to the Corinthians. He wants to speak of the things that have enraptured his own heart, and to do so abundantly and with clarity. His writing has been with unusual poignancy and spiritual glory. Ponder the grandeur of what he has said about the New Covenant (3:6-18), the new birth and its implications (2 Cor 4:6-11; 5:17), the focus of the spiritual mind (4:17-18), the resurrection body (5:1-5), the glory of reconciliation (5:18-21), and the nature of Divine approval (6:4-10).

given for the conditions that existed in the church at Corinth? The truth of the matter is that their state was wholly unjustified. That is why Paul’s word has such a pleading tone. He will strongly appeal to their hearts and minds, summoning them to come up higher.

O YE CORINTHIANS!

“O ye Corinthians . . .” Other versions read, “O Corinthians,” NKJV “Corinthians,” NIV “The people of Corinth,” NJB “Oh, my dear Corinthian friends,” LIVING and “Corinthian people.” IE

The Greek used here is Κορίνθιοι (kor-inth-ee-oi), and means “inhabitant of Corinth.” THAYER “a Corinthian,” UBS and “a person who lives in, or is a native of, Corinth.” LOUW-NIDA

There is a point to be made here that is somewhat obscure, yet worthy of contemplation. To my knowledge,

of Macedonia (Phil 4:15).

The brethren at Colossae were never referred to as “Colossians.”

Certain men who accompanied Paul were known as “Thessalonians,” distinguishing them from others who were from “Asia” (Acts 20:4). The brethren in Thessalonica were referred to as “the church of the Thessalonians,” emphasizing that they were a distinct body of people within that location (1 Thess 1:1; 2:1). The same was said of the church in Laodicea: “the church of the Laodiceans” (Col 4:16; Rev 3:14).

It seems to me that this expression – “O ye Corinthians” – suggested that they had taken upon themselves more of Corinth than of Christ. Their divisions (1 Cor 1:10-11; 3:1), denial of the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12), going to the “unjust” to resolve their

In all of these marvelous words his mouth was wide open, and words of life flowed from it. He was not only enabled to speak of key matters, but to so with great and edifying power.

OUR HEART IS ENLARGED

“... our heart is enlarged.” Other versions read, “our heart is wide open,” NKJV “our heart is opened wide,” NASB “and opened wide our hearts to you,” NIV “our

heart is wide,”^{RSV} “our heart is expanded,”^{DARBY} “our heart is made large,”^{GENEVA} “I love you with all my heart,”^{LIVING} “my heart is stretched with love for you,”^{WILLIAMS} and “our hearts are absolutely open to you.”^{PHILLIPS}

Even though their manners had been unacceptable, Paul entreats them as his spiritual children. He had begotten them, and therefore had a heart for them. When he wrote to them, he was not merely fulfilling an obligation. **He was not writing as a sort of spiritual policeman to correct their wayward manners.** He could say to them as he did to the brethren in Philippi, “I have you in my heart” (Phil 1:7). He had the same desire for them that he had for the church in Galatia – a heart’s desire: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you” (Gal 4:19). Paul had a genuine and growing interest in the advancement of the Corinthian believers. You may recall that Paul’s confessed objective was to “make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery” (Eph 3:9) – that is, to clarify to them what God is doing in Christ Jesus, particularly as it pertains to the Gentiles. The church in Corinth had been blinded by their own carnality, and Paul now labors to enable them to see more clearly what must be seen if men are to advance in the faith. It simply is not possible to do this if the apostle does not have a heart for the people.

An Enlarged Heart

The expression “our heart is enlarged” means Paul’s heart was expanded wide to **include** the brethren in Corinth and their very best interests. It means he was willing to extend himself for their benefit, and “gladly spend and be spent” for them (2 Cor 12:15). This is something a “heart of flesh” can do – and that is the kind of heart we receive in Christ Jesus (Ezek 11:19). This is also something that God Himself does – enlarging our hearts, or giving us greater spiritual capacities. Even in spiritually primitive times, David realized the advantage of an enlarged heart, and sought it from the Lord: “I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Psa 119:32).

Heartless Religion

There is no way to overstate the

dreadfulness of a heartless religion. When there is a propensity to regimentation, the love for Jesus begins to wane, and is eventually left behind the wake of legalistic religion. This is precisely what happened to the Ephesian church, and Jesus Himself severely upbraided them. “I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried

Those are qualities that are exceedingly rare in these days – and yet, there was something that negated them all, commendable though they were of themselves. Jesus had something “against” this church, and it is serious beyond comprehension for Jesus to have something **against** you! Who, upon knowing such a thing, can proceed in life

There is no way to overstate the dreadfulness of a heartless religion. When there is a propensity to regimentation, the love for Jesus begins to wane, and is eventually left behind the wake of legalistic religion. This is precisely what happened to the Ephesian church, and Jesus Himself severely upbraided them.

them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev 2:2-5). Notice the things for which the church in Ephesus was commended.

- They worked
- They labored.
- They endured.
- They could not bear those who were evil.
- They tried, or tested, those who said they were apostles, and found them to be liars.
- They persevered.
- They endured hardships for His name.
- They did not grow weary.

as though all was well? Only a person in a spiritual stupor could hear such words and continue to live in the same way.

The Lord Jesus Christ, held this “against” the church in Ephesus: “you have left (abandoned) **the love that you had at first** [you have deserted Me, your first love].”^{AMPLIFIED} With all of their punctiliousness, Jesus had taken a back seat in their religion. They started out with a fervent love for Him, but they had abandoned that love in favor of a lifeless approach to life in Christ Jesus. There was no heart in their religion, even though there were several good things that they were doing. Unless they corrected this condition, repenting and remembering from where they had fallen, Jesus would remove their “candlestick,” and they would cease to be a church before Him.

Even in their fallen state, the church in Ephesus was far ahead of most contemporary churches – particularly in America. If it is possible for those with a commitment to doctrinal purity to leave their first love, what may be said of those who are sorely lacking in such a commitment? This ought to be obvious enough to require no further delineation. That is the result of heartless religion.

THE CAUSE FOR SPIRITUAL STRAITENING

“¹² *Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.*”

Why do churches get into an unacceptable condition? Paul will now put the axe of Divine analysis to the root of the bad tree – the tree that was bearing bad fruit in Corinth. He will first tell the people what has NOT caused their condition, and the what HAS caused it.

NOT IN US

“*Ye are not straitened in us . . .*”

The idea here is not what Paul thinks of the Corinthians, but how he has conducted himself toward them. That “how” was made known, not by his feelings, but by his actions. What Paul is saying is that nothing that came from him caused any kind of defection in Corinth.

Other versions read, “*You are not restricted by us,*”^{NKJV} “*You are not restrained by us,*”^{NASB} “*We are not withholding our affection from you,*”^{NIV} “*There is no restriction in our affection,*”^{NRSV} “*It is not our feelings to which you are narrow,*”^{BBE} “*YE are not kept strait in us,*”^{GENEVA} “*You are not constrained by us,*”^{NAB} “*Any distress you feel is not on our side,*”^{NJB} “*If there is a problem between us, it is not because of a lack of love on our part,*”^{NLT} “*Any coldness still between us is not because of any lack of love on my part,*”^{LIVING} “*We are not holding back our tender feelings from you,*”^{IE} “*There is no narrowness in our love to you,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*We have not cut you off,*”^{ISV} “*You are not squeezed into a tiny corner in my heart,*”^{WILLIAMS} “*There is no narrowness in my love,*”^{MONTGOMERY} “*There is no lack of room for you in [our hearts],*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*any stiffness between us . . . is none on ours.*”^{PHILLIPS}

Some of the versions do a miserable work in their attempt to clarify

this text. The hands of some of the translators appear to be smitten with palsy when they sought to handle this verse. Thus their academic training overshadowed their spiritual perception. The difference in approach to this verse hinges on the view of the little Greek word ἐν (en). The meaning of this word is largely determined by the context in which it is used. Some of the translations of this word are “in” (“*in Rome,*” Rom 1:7), “by” (“*by the will of God,*” Rom 1:10), “with” (“*together with you,*” Rom 1:12), and “on” (“*troubled on every side,*”

2 Cor 4:8).

If the word is understood to be “in” (in its ordinary sense of domain or area) in this text, then Paul is saying he does not entertain a restricted or narrow love for Corinth, and therefore that cannot be the cause of their condition. **However, it is the restraint of the Corinthians themselves that is the point here, and not a restrained view of them.** That is confirmed by the explanation of their inhibition that follows.

The idea here is not what Paul thinks of the Corinthians, but **how** he has conducted himself toward them. That “how” was made known, not by his feelings, but by his actions. What Paul is saying is that **nothing that came from him caused any kind of defection in Corinth.** Their failure to advance in the faith was not owing to **what** Paul had preached, or in any deficiency in his **love** for them.

IN YOUR OWN BOWELS

“*. . . but ye are straitened in your own bowels.*” Other versions read, “*You are restricted by your own affections,*”^{NKJV} “*but you are restrained by your own affections,*”^{NASB} “*but you are withholding yours from us,*”^{NIV} “*but in your own bowels you are straitened,*”^{DOUAY} “*you are constrained by your own affections,*”^{NAB} “*the distress is in your own selves,*”^{NJB} “*but because you have withheld your love from us,*”^{NLT} “*but because your love is too small and does not reach to me and draw me in,*”^{LIVING} “*You are the ones holding back,*”^{IE} “*the narrowness of your own feelings,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*but you have cut off your feelings toward us,*”^{ISV} “*but the narrowness is in your own feelings,*”^{MONTGOMERY} “*but you lack room in your own affections [for us],*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*must be on your side.*”^{PHILLIPS}

Here again, some of the versions lead us into the desert of confusion. The heart of Paul’s appeal is **not** found in a desire for the Corinthians to love him personally. He is **not** tracing their woeful deficiency to their failure to have a proper affection for him.

The word “*bowels*” is taken from the Greek word σπλάγγνοις (splang-nois), which means “*bowels, intestines (the heart, lungs, liver, etc),*”^{THAYER} “*literally intestines, viscera, inward parts of the body, located in the belly,*”^{FRIBERG} and “*the inner part of the body, especially the intestines.*”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Of course, Paul is not speaking of their fleshly body, for **spiritual characteristics cannot be found in a mortal body**, which is destined to decay. The point is that the “*inward man,*” or our **spiritual** constitution, also has an **inward** part – like a most holy place within the greater Tabernacle or Temple. This is the deepest part of the “*new man*” in which fellowship with God is realized and spiritual life is nurtured and matured. It is where basic desires are found, and the thrust of life is determined. **For the professed believer, this is the part to which real advantage or great hindrance are traced.** In the Corinthians, the cause for their spiritual obtuseness, and faulty

view of Paul and his teaching, was found in their most **primary** desires – their “*bowels*.”

Here, the Corinthians “*bowels*” are **not** a reference to the citadel of their feelings for the apostle Paul himself. Rather, their disdain for the Paul’s person, and their denial of some of his teaching was owing to a more fundamental deficiency – a **lack of a proper attitude toward and love for the truth itself**. Paul simply did not fit into the agenda of many in Corinth. Their minds were set on other things – things in which moral purity, the resurrection of the dead, the New Covenant, the resurrection body, and other Kingdom matters, had no part, and, as a result, they were of no consequence. Wherever their affections were found, it was **NOT** on “*things above*” (Col 3:2). Whatever they were seeking, it was **NOT** “*those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God*” (Col 3:1). Whatever may have been said about their thoughts, they were **NOT** things that were “*true*,” “*honest*,” “*just*,” “*pure*,” “*lovely*,” “*of good report*,” “*virtue*,” or “*praise*” (Phil 4:8).

If the Corinthians had nurtured the “*new man*,” and grown up into Christ in all things, they would have been receiving Paul like the Galatians did at first – “*as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus*” (Gal 4:18). Upon hearing his words, they would have received them as

Where the truth of the Gospel is affirmed and properly expounded, those who neglect, reject, or distort it, do so for the same reason cited in our text – they have no appetite for it. This is why they can hear the truth, yet do nothing with it. It is why they can be subjected to the very “power of God” itself, and yet remain unchanged. They do not have a heart for it!

did the Thessalonians: “*when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (1 Thess 2:13). The Word of God had not been working within the Corinthians because they lacked an appetite for it. As a consequence, all manner of carnality broke out among them, and they had to be rebuked.

A Conclusion

Where the truth of the Gospel is affirmed and properly expounded, those who neglect, reject, or distort it, do so for the same reason cited in our text – **they have no appetite for it**. This is why they can hear the truth, yet do nothing with it. It is why they can be subjected to the very “*power of God*” itself, and yet

remain unchanged. **They do not have a heart for it!** Paul has not let the matter slip by him, and god-sent preachers and teachers must not do so today. There is a flawed church in the world that must be told why they are in an unacceptable state.

Men must arise who will fulfill the word of Paul to Timothy: “*And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will*”^{NIV} (2 Tim 2:24-26). In our text, this is precisely what Paul is doing. Gently, yet firmly, he goes to work on the conscience of the people.

BE ENLARGED!

¹³ **Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.**”

Paul knows that recompense and response are an integral part of spiritual life. **Those who receive much are expected to give much:** “*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more*” (Luke 12:48). The Corinthians had been given much, coming “*behind in no gift*” (1 Cor 1:7). Paul himself had labored tirelessly among them for “*a year and six*

months, teaching the Word of God among them” (Acts 18:11).

Paul wrote nine letters to seven churches: Rome, Corinth (2), Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica (2). Of these nine letters, two were written to the church at Corinth (22%). These nine letters contained seventy-three chapters, twenty-nine of which were written to Corinth (40%). These seventy-three chapters contained 38,077 words, of which 15,528 were written to Corinth (41%). **The majority, therefore, of Paul’s writings to**

churches were addressed to the Corinthians, among who he had also spent a considerable amount of his time. He sowed more seed there, dealt more extensively with their people, and spent more time on their areas of weakness. It was only right, therefore, that more should be expected of them. This is a principle by which God Himself operates. As it is written, “*For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh*

unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Heb 6:7-8).

Having loved the Corinthians consistently and with much heart, Paul now admonishes them to do the same toward him.

FOR A RECOMPENSE

“Now for a recompense in the same . . .” Other versions read, “Now in return for the same,”^{NKJV} “Now in a like exchange,”^{NASB} “As a fair exchange,”^{NIV} “In return,”^{NRSV} “Now for a recompense in like kind,”^{ASV} “Now to give me back payment of the same,”^{BBE} “but for an answering recompense,”^{DARBY} “And in just requital,”^{WEYMOUTH} “Do us a favor,”^{ISV} “I pray you, therefore, in fair exchange,”^{MONTGOMERY} “By way of them, then, do this for me,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “Do reward me.”^{PHILLIPS}

Paul does not ask them for money,

this kind of honor goes to the Father Himself – i.e., **he that has exhibited the most love is to receive the most from us.** That response, however, filters down through Jesus, His apostles, and those who assist us in making progress to glory. Here is how Jesus said it: “He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me” (Mat 10:40). Again He said, “Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me: and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me” (Mark 9:37). And again, on the eve of His betrayal, He solemnly told His disciples, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me” (John 13:20).

To be sure, Paul could not be classified as one of the “children.” He was a “wise masterbuilder” (1 Cor 3:10), and

Their initial conversion is recorded in the book of Acts. “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:8-10).

Several statements of this case are found in the Corinthian letters.

- ☛ “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (1 Cor 3:6).
- ☛ “I write not these things to shame you, but as **my beloved sons** I warn you” (1 Cor 4:14).
- ☛ “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor 4:15).
- ☛ “Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? **are not ye my work in the Lord?**” (1 Cor 9:1).
- ☛ “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (2 Cor 3:2).
- ☛ “Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Cor 3:3).
- ☛ “Now for a recompense in the same, (I speak as unto **my children**,) be ye also enlarged” (2 Cor 6:13).

While loving the brethren is the hallmark of discipleship, it is brought to its highest level in the regard the converted have for the ministers through whom they have believed. These ministers constitute a special gift from God.

possessions, or a change of raiment. He could say to them precisely what he had said to the Ephesians: “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts 20:33). Earlier, when writing to the Corinthians about the appropriateness of the disciples supporting their teacher, Paul said, “But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void” (1 Cor 9:15). He had deliberately kept himself from being “burdensome” to them, even though they owed him their very souls (2 Cor 11:9). Now he asks for the return of their love, which was an appropriate “recompense.”

There is a great truth to be seen here – that of the taught toward the teacher, and the profited toward the one who ministered the profit. Ultimately,

the Corinthians were themselves the product of his work. For them to hold disdain for him revealed their true attitude toward both Christ and God. Nevertheless, Paul will plead with them, appealing to the “new man,” and confirming the reasonableness of a consistent spiritual response from them.

I SPEAK UNTO MY CHILDREN

“(I speak as unto my children) . . .” Other versions read, “I speak as to children,”^{NKJV} “I am talking as to my children,”^{BBE} “I am talking now as I would to my own children,”^{NLT} “as to children I say it,”^{YLT} “I am talking to you as if truly you were my very own children,”^{LIVING} “I ask you as my children,”^{ISV} and “I tell you, my children.”^{WILLIAMS}

The Corinthian believers were Paul’s children, begotten by means of the Gospel that He had preached unto them.

While loving the brethren is the hallmark of discipleship, it is brought to its highest level in the regard the converted have for the ministers through whom they have believed. These ministers constitute a special gift from God. As it is written, “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, **even as the Lord gave to every man?**” (1

Cor 3:5). Paul is, then, calling upon them to regard the gift given to them – his own person and message.

BE YE ALSO ENLARGED

“ . . . *be ye also enlarged.*” Other versions read, “*you also be open,*” NKJV “*open wide to us also,*” NASB “*open wide your hearts also,*” NIV “*widen your hearts also,*” RSV “*let your hearts be wide open to me,*” BBE “*let ‘your’ heart also expand itself,*” DARBY “*be open yourselves,*” NAB “*Open your hearts to us! Return our love,*” LIVING “*Open your hearts wide. Love us back.*” IE “*you too must stretch your hearts with love for me,*” WILLIAMS and “*with the same complete candor.*” PHILLIPS

There were some in Corinth who judged Paul according to appearance. From what is reported, it appears that Paul was not attractive according to the flesh. Paul said of them, “*For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his*

speech contemptible” (2 Cor 10:10). He said of himself, “*But though I be rude* (‘untrained,’ NKJB ‘unskilled,’ NASB) *in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things*” (2 Cor 11:6). This referred to the Grecian standard of speaking, and not to that employed by the God of heaven.

“**Excellency of speech,**” was purposely avoided by Paul because it had absolutely no effect upon his preaching. As he said elsewhere, “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God*” (1 Cor 2:1). At any rate, the failure of Paul to measure up to **their standards** of a great speaker had apparently made it difficult for some of the Corinthians to be drawn to him, or place a high value on him.

What should a people do who have

been spiritually profited by a man who is unattractive to the flesh? Paul tells them what they must do: “*Be ye also enlarged!*” That is, “*stretch your hearts!*” WILLIAMS “*Become larger than your natural; capacities!*” “*Push flesh out of the way, and allow the Spirit more room!*” “*Stop making place for the devil, and make more room for the expression of the love of God!*”

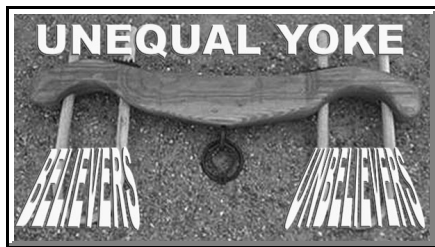
Part of fighting “*the good fight of faith*” (1 Tim 6:12) is ridding ourselves of small responses, and seeking to obtain large ones. **In an environment of free grace, it is not comely for meager responses to be found!** Everything about salvation calls for an abundance from us, flowing from expanded hearts! Spiritual life is depicted as “*rivers of living water*” flowing out of the inmost part of the believer (John 7:38). That outflow includes expresses of unfeigned love toward the brethren, particularly those who have taught us.

BE NOT UNEQUALLY YOKED

“ 14a *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers . . .*”

Here we come to grips with the cause for much, if not all, retardedness and retrogression within the Christian community – unequal yokes.

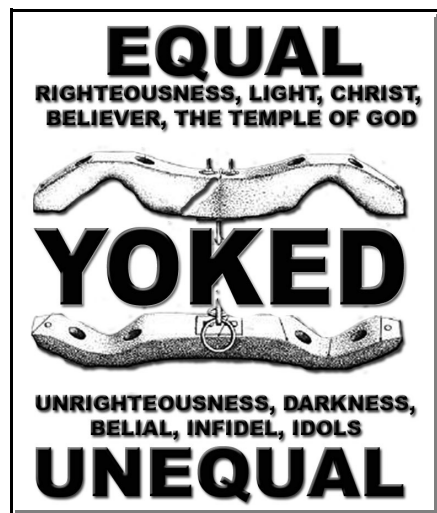
UNEQUALLY YOKED



“*Be ye not unequally yoked together . . .*” Other versions read, “*Do not be bound together,*” NASB “*Do not be yoked together,*” NIV “*Do not be mismatched,*” NRSV “*Do not be mismated,*” RSV “*Do not keep company with,*” BBE “*Be not diversely yoked,*” DARBY “*Do not harness yourselves in an uneven team,*”

NJB “*Don’t team,*” NLT “*Become not yoked,*” YLT “*Do not come into close association,*” WEYMOUTH “*Stop becoming unevenly yoked,*” ISV “*Stop forming intimate and inconsistent relations,*” WILLIAMS “*do not make mismatched alliances with . . . or come under a different yoke with them, inconsistent with your faith,*” AMPLIFIED and “*Don’t link up with.*” PHILLIPS

An “*unequal yoke*” occurs when two people of different primary natures are put together, or work together by choice. Under the Law, the Lord taught people about an “*unequal yoke.*” “*Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together*” (Deut 22:10). Even their garments were not to be mingled with materials of different kinds: “*Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together*” (Deut 22:11). The mingling of diverse livestock, and the sowing of a single field with diverse seed were not permitted: “*Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed*” (Lev 19:19).



An “*unequal yoke*” occurs when two things that cannot be profitably joined are put into the same work – when two who cannot be harmonious are joined in one objective. Two competing natures cannot be joined for the good.

WITH UNBELIEVERS

Strong faith produces strong reasoning, godly determinations, and fervent pleas to live properly– by Given O. Blakely

“... with unbelievers...” Other versions read, “those who do not have faith,” ^{BBE}, “with the infidels,” ^{GENEVA} “with those who are different, with unbelievers,” ^{NAB} “with those who do not love the Lord,” ^{LIVING} and “with unbelievers, like oxen yoked with asses.” WEYMOUTH

When we speak of an “unequal yoke,” we are not speaking of yoking male and female, or bond and free, or Jew and Greek. **These distinctions do not exist in Christ Jesus.** “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). In the work of the Gospel, women labored with Paul (Phil 4:3). Bond and free labored together (Phile 1:10-11). Jew and Greek worked together for Jesus (Gal 2:2-3). These are not yokes that are “unequal.” All such distinctions are dissolved in Christ Jesus, and only in Him.

When it comes to permanent,

Solemnly the Law affirmed to Israel, “*And I will set thy bounds from the Red sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river: for I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. **Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee**” (Ex 23:31-33). Again the Law stated, “*Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee*” (Ex 34:12).*

During the time of the Judges the word of the Lord was, “*And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?*” (Judg 2:2).

On one occasion, Jehu the son of

37:1-8; Ezek 17:15-17).

Ezra told the people of his day that they would “*break the commandments of God*” if they chose to “*join in affinity with the people*” noted for their “*abominations*.” Such a move, he said, would cause God “*to be angry with us*” until He had “*consumed*” them (Ezra 9:14).

The Two Classes of People

Although this will be developed later, it is good to draw our attention to the distinction that is here chronicled. Humanity can be viewed as two opposing bodies of people: “*believers*” and “*unbelievers*.” Because it is not possible to capitalize on the word “*believers*” for sectarian interests, it is not commonly employed in “*church*” circles. In the book of Acts, as the church was increasing, this is how it was stated: “*And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*” (Acts 5:14). When Paul was admonishing Timothy concerning the proper conduct for young people he said, “*Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*” (1 Tim 4:12).

In Acts 5:14, the Greek word from which “*believers*” is translated is πιστεύοντες, and means “to think to be true; to be persuaded . . . place confidence in . . . absolutely to trust in Jesus or in God as able to aid either in obtaining or doing something,” ^{THAYER} “be convinced of . . . as primarily a religious commitment, especially with God or Christ as the object of faith,” ^{FRIBERG} and “to trust, trust to or in, put faith in, rely on.” ^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

“*Believers*” are those who have believed the Gospel, and are trusting in, and relying upon, the Christ proclaimed by that Gospel. They are persuaded of the reality of both God and Christ, and have brought their lives into conformity with that persuasion. **Being “believers” – believers in God and Christ – has distinguished them from all other people.** All others, regardless of cultural identity or seeming moral achievements, are properly known as “*unbelievers*.”

“*Unbelievers*” are the class of people who will ultimately be damned. Jesus said, “*The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for*

“Believers” are those who have believed the Gospel, and are trusting in, and relying upon, the Christ proclaimed by that Gospel. They are persuaded of the reality of both God and Christ, and have brought their lives into conformity with that persuasion. Being “believers” – believers in God and Christ – has distinguished them from all other people.

preferred, and willing alliances, they are not to be formed with “*unbelievers*.” **On one occasion, the ships of Jehosphat were broken up by the Lord because they were built in a joint effort with Ahaziah, “king of Israel who did very wickedly.”** It is written, “*And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber. Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. **And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish**” (2 Chronicles 20:35-37).*

Hanani the Seer was sent to king Jehosphat because he had joined in an alliance with Ahab, God’s avowed enemy. Jehu’s words are arresting: “*Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD*” (2 Chron 18:28; 19:2).

King Ahaz formed an alliance with Tiglathpilneser, king of Assyria, and Israel was brought low because of it (2 Kgs 16:7-8; 2 Chron 28:16-21). Refusing to hearken to the word of the Lord through Jeremiah, Zedekiah made an alliance with the Egypt in an attempt to avoid appointed invasion of Babylon (Jer

him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, **and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers**” (Luke 12:46). “Unbelievers” are not to be considered appropriate arbiters between brethren who have differences. “*But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.*” Paul affirmed that such a practices was “*utterly a fault*” (1 Cor 6:6-7). Those who are not in Christ are generally described as “*unbelievers.*” “*If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?*” (1 Cor 14:23).

“Unbelievers” are those who are **not** believing and trusting in the Lord. They have **not** believed the Gospel, and are thus under the condemnation of God (John 3:18). They are **not** trusting in the Lord, do not live by faith, and are not walking in the Spirit. They are **not** persuaded that God is, and that He is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). “Unbelievers” do **not** have their affection set “*on things above*” (Col 3:1). They are **not** “*strangers and pilgrims*” in this world (1 Pet 2:11), and thus are **not** seeking “*a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*” (Heb 11:10). They are **not** groaning within themselves, “*waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body*” (Rom 8:23).

“Unbelievers” are **not** justified, and thus do **not** have “*peace with God*” (Rom 5:1). They do **not** have access into the grace wherein we stand (Rom 5:2), do **not** have “*faith in the blood*” of Christ (Rom 3:25), and are **not** “*strong in faith, giving glory to God*” (Rom 4:20). They do **not** “*resist the devil*” (James 4:7), “*mortify the deeds of the body*” (Rom 8:13), or “*live by every word of God*” (Lk 4:4).

“Unbelievers” do **not** have a love and preference for the “*brethren*” of Christ (John 13:35), are **not** working out their own salvation “*with fear and trembling*” (Phil 2:12), and have **not** received “*the love of the truth that they might be saved*” (2 Thess 2:10). They are **not** “*in Christ,*” and therefore are **not** “*new creatures.*” For them, “*old things*” have **not** “*passed away,*” and “*all things*”

have **not** “*become new*” (2 Cor 5:17). They are **not** “*reconciled to God*” (Col 1:21), have **not** received “*the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38), and the “*fruit of the Spirit*” is **not** found in them (Gal 5:22-23).

There are various terms that are ascribed to unbelievers. Some of them are found in this passage. Others include the following:

- “Sinners” (Rom 5:19), as compared with “saints” (Rom 8:27).
- “The ungodly” (Rom 5:6), as compared the “the godly” (2 Pet 2:9).
- “The wicked” (2 Pet 3:17), as compared with “the righteous” (1 Pet 3:12).
- “Children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2), as compared with those who “obey from the heart” (Rom 6:17).
- “Children of wrath” (Eph 2:3), as compared with “children of the living God” (Rom 9:26).
- “Lost” (Matt 18:11), as compared with “apprehended” (Phil 3:12-13).

2:1), as compared with “*quicken together with Him*” (Col 2:13).

- “Natural” men (1 Cor 2:14a), as compared with the “*spiritual man*” (1 Cor 2:14b).
- “*Having no hope and without God in the world*” (Eph 2:12), as compared with being given “*everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*” (1 Thess 2:16).
- Those who “*walk in the vanity of their mind*” (Eph 4:17), as compared with those who have been given the “*spirit of a sound mind*” (2 Tim 1:7).
- Those who are “*alienated from the life of God*” (Eph 4:18), as compared with those who are “*alive unto God*” (Rom 6:11).
- Those who are “*crooked and perverse*” (Phil 2:15), as compared with “*the whole family in heaven and earth*” (Eph 3:15).
- They are “*alienated*” in their mind “*through wicked works*” (Col 1:21a), as compared to being “*reconciled unto God*” (Col 1:21b).

“Unbelievers” are those who are not believing and trusting in the Lord. They have not believed the Gospel, and are thus under the condemnation of God (John 3:18). They are not trusting in the Lord, do not live by faith

- Those who “*know not God*” (2 Thess 1:8a), as compared with knowing God (1 John 4:7).
- Those who “*obey not the Gospel*” (2 Thess 1:8b), as compared with obeying the Gospel, (Rom 10:16).
- “*They that are in the flesh*” (Rom 8:8), as compared with those who are “*in the Spirit*” (Rom 8:9).
- “*Dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph

- Those whose “*mind and conscience is defiled*” (Tit 1:15), as compared to those having the conscience “*purged from dead works to serve the living God*” (Heb 9:14).
- “*Them that are without*” (Mk 4:11), as compared to “*them that are within*” (1 Cor 5:12).
- Those who are “*not of God*” (John 8:47), as compared with those who are “*of God*” (1 John 4:4).

What kind of thinking would lead a person to believe it was in any way acceptable to have intimate associations between these two classes of people. God is with one class

This is not an area in which we can draw up certain laws, submitting a list of rules to the various members of the body of Christ. **It is the responsibility of each believer to take this word**

His disciples. The Lord tells us to separate from the world, not unite with it. *“Be ye separate!”* (2 Cor 6:17). At the very beginning of day of salvation Peter cried out, *“Save yourselves from this untoward generation”* (Acts 2:40).

An “unequal yoke” is an attempt to blend these two categories – the saved and the condemned, the godly and the ungodly, those dominated by the Holy Spirit, and those dominated by the devil. Who could ever hope for such an alliance to be blessed by God!

People are not brought to Christ by friendship, but by light. Jesus made that clear when He said, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Mat 5:16). **Jesus did not deliver us from the power of darkness only to allow us to wander about in it once again, seeking to escort others out.** We are warned, *“Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits”^{NKJV}* (1 Cor 15:33). Unequal yokes contradict that solemn word!

and not with the other. The Lord Jesus is interceding for one group, and not for the other. The Holy Spirit dwells in one category, but in the other. The names of one cluster are written in heaven, and the names of the other are not. One group is forgiven, the other is not. One has an inheritance in heaven, and the other does not. **How is it that anyone would imagine that these two groups could, in any way, be put together.**

seriously, and then work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. It will not be popular, and you will make a lot of enemies doing this – but it must be done. You may be charged with being hateful, bigoted, and not caring – but the word still stands. **“Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers!”**

Now, the Spirit will reason with us on this matter. **He will confirm how utterly unreasonable it is to attempt to forge a union between a believer and an unbeliever.** In fact, He will declare that such a thing is not even possible – that it violates everything we know about the Divine nature. As soon as such an attempt is made, the whole union becomes unrighteous. **It introduces the leaven-factor, as it pertains to wickedness, and it will not be long until “the whole lump” is corrupted with it.** Thus it is written, *“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”* (1 Cor 5:6-7).

An “unequal yoke” is an attempt to blend these two categories – the saved and the condemned, the godly and the ungodly, those dominated by the Holy Spirit, and those dominated by the devil. Who could ever hope for such an alliance to be blessed by God!

Babylonish Reasoning

There is a form of Babylonish reasoning that is fashionable in our day. It has been around for a long time. I remember being submitted to it when I was younger. It goes something like this. “Make sure you have some close friends that are of the world, so you can win them to Christ. Do not let all of your close friends be Christians. How can you expect to win anyone by doing that?”

This is an era in which the modern American church is especially obtuse, making this a very crucial text.

Common areas in which unequal yokes can take place include marriage, the selection of close companions, business relationships, church associations, best friends, and focused endeavors. They can be formed in the home, on the job, in the school, and in places of social mingling.

This is totally corrupt thinking, and betrays a spiritually benighted mind. It would be like telling Jesus to make close friends with the scribes and Pharisees, letting some of them be among

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

“^{14b} . . . for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?”

The exhortation has been given: *“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers!”* This is **not** a mere

suggestion, or a reference to a kind of ideal state that is not attained by the majority of believers. **It is not a summons to do the best we can to finally reach this objective, even though it is highly unlikely that it will be accomplished.** There are

certain unchangeable Kingdom principles that demand that we **not** be *“mismatched with unbelievers.”^{NRSV}* Being led by the Spirit, whom he has not quenched, Paul will now state some of these principles, doing so in the form of questions. **He does this because only a fool will**

answer these questions in the affirmative. Their truth is so apparent that it only takes a statement to make the truth evident.

All of these are appeals to “reason together” with God (Isa 1:18) – to come into His presence and consider these affirmations.

The matter of yoking together will be presented in five different ways: “fellowship,” “communion,” “concord,” sharing a “part,” and being in “agreement.”

FELLOWSHIP

“ . . . for what fellowship . . . ” Other versions read, “for what partnership,”^{NASB} “have in common,”^{NIV} “for what is there in common,”^{BBE} “for what participation is there between,”^{DARBY} “be partners,”^{NJB} “for partaking is there to,”^{YLT} and “what common interest can there be.”^{PHILLIPS}

The word “fellowship” comes from the Greek word μετοχή (met-okh-ah), which means “a sharing, communion, fellowship,”^{THAYER} “a participation in common fellowship,”^{FRIBERG} “partnership,”^{UBS} and “a relationship involving sharing purposes and activity.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

The idea is that of two people working together on the same project, and sharing common resources **with one another**. Remember, this a view of yoking, and will focus our attention on one unequal yoke – a yoke that involves **sharing** the same resources.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

“ . . . hath righteousness . . . ” Other versions read, “justice,”^{DOUAY} “uprightness,”^{NJB} “goodness,”^{NLT} “the people of God,”^{LIVING} “right,”^{IE} “right doing,”^{WILLIAMS} “right living and right standing with God,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “goodness.”^{PHILLIPS}

The word “righteousness” refers to the condition of which God **approves**. The person who is righteous is the person God has accepted. “Righteousness” is the expression of that acceptance that is characterized by spiritual integrity, virtue, purity of life uprightness, and correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting.^{STRONG'S} Lexically it means, “the state of a man who is such as he ought to be,”^{THAYER} and “the act of doing what God requires, doing what is

right.”^{LOUW-NIDA}



These days the very notion of “righteousness” is fading fast from the religious scene. While “righteousness” is, indeed, imputed to men upon the basis of their faith (Rom 4:3-22), that is **not** the “righteousness” to which this text refers. **This is the outgrowth of imputed righteousness, where “newness of life” is lived out in human expressions ranging from thoughts to outward words and deeds.** This is the “righteousness” concerning which exhortations are addressed to the saints: “yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as **instruments of righteousness unto God**” (Rom 6:13). Again, we read of “obedience **unto righteousness**” (Rom 6:16), being “servants of righteousness” (Rom 6:18), and awaking “to righteousness” (1 Cor 15:34). Of old time, people of faith were said to have “**wrought righteousness,**” or “performed acts of righteousness”^{NASB} (Heb 11:33).

Speaking of “righteousness” from this perspective, John said, “every one that **doeth righteousness is born of Him**” (1 John 2:29), “he that **doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous**” (1 John 3:7). This, then, is the “righteousness” of reference – the revelation, or exhibit, of a life that has been begotten of God.

UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

“ . . . with unrighteousness?” Other versions read, “lawlessness,”^{NKJV} “wickedness,”^{NIV} “iniquity,”^{RSV} “evil,”^{BBE} “injustice,”^{DOUAY} “law-breaking,”^{NJB} “the people of sin,”^{LIVING} “wrong,”^{IE} and

“iniquity and lawlessness.”^{AMPLIFIED}

“Unrighteousness” is the absence of righteousness. It refers to expressions that are **not** approved by God – to ways and manners that are under the curse of God. **These are thoughts, words, and deeds, that have nothing to do with God, Christ, and the Kingdom of God.** They are expressions of the “flesh,” or sinful nature. From yet another perspective this amounts to **not** doing righteousness. As John wrote, “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever **doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother**” (1 John 3:10). It is also written that “the wrath of God is revealed **against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men**” (Rom 1:18). There are those who have “pleasure in unrighteousness,” and they will be “damned” because of it (2 Thess 2:12). “Unrighteousness” is something from which we **must** be cleansed (1 John 1:9).

Now, here is the question before us – and it is a rhetorical one. Paul is not looking for an answer, for the answer is obvious. **What share does “righteousness” have with “unrighteousness.”** What is it that can pass from the realm of “righteousness” to the realm of “unrighteousness,” or vice versa? How can the two come together and work on the same project? **Can these two join together to obtain eternal life?** Or, can they be combined to fulfill the lusts of the flesh?

Those who, through some association, are yoked together with an unbeliever, or unbelievers, are trying to put righteousness and unrighteousness together. They are attempting to bring two irreconcilable things together – righteousness and unrighteousness. That may not be how they view their efforts, but that is how their activity is seen from heaven. That is a union that is impossible. No good can come from it.

Righteousness must be given to us, and unrighteousness must be taken from us. Is it not abundantly apparent that they cannot possibly be yoked together? It is not that such a yoke is improbable, it is that it is impossible. It simply cannot be done!

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LIGHT AND DARKNESS

“^{14c} . . . and what communion hath light with darkness?”



The “unequal” yoke is again addressed, confirming its impossibility, and the absolute folly of attempting such a thing. This is what those who are “unequally yoked” to do are attempting to do, and it is a totally vain effort.

COMMUNION

“ . . . and what communion . . . ” Other versions read, “fellowship,”^{NASB} “have in common,”^{NJB} “live with,”^{NLT} “what partaking is there,”^{YLT} “share,”^{IE} “and what partnership,”^{WEYMOUTH} “participate with,”^{WILLIAMS} and “share life with.”^{PHILLIPS}

The word “communion” comes from the Greek word *κοινωνία* (koy-nohn-ee-ah). Lexically it means, “association, community, joint participation . . . the share one has in anything, intimacy,”^{THAYER} “a relationship characterized by sharing in common, participation, fellow feeling,”^{FRIBERG} “an association involving close mutual relations and involvement,”^{LOUW-NIDA} and “partnership.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

While the emphasis in “fellowship” is sharing, the word “common” stresses partnership – two or more people **who have a vested interest in something**. In “fellowship” things pass from one person to the other, each one profiting from the other. In “communion” both partake of the same resources, and have the same access.

In this case, what is shared between the two parties is profitable, enhancing and profit each receiver.

LIGHT

“ . . . hath light . . . ” “Light” has to do with what illuminates, clarifies, and makes plain. Lexically, it comes from the Greek word *φωρι* (Pho-ti), and means “that which gives light,”^{THAYER} “a light-giving body, luminary, star,”^{FRIBERG} and “usually in relationship to some source of light such as the sun, moon, fire, lamp, etc.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Here, “light” refers to “believers,” emphasizing that they are a **source** of spiritual light among men. It is true that their “light” is borrowed from another, like the glory of God was reflected in the face of Moses. **Notwithstanding, a very real illum emanates from the child of God.** Jesus said of His disciples, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (Matt 5:14). The Epistles remind us that we are armed with “light” – “the armor of light” – as though we were surrounded with it (Rom 13:12). It is also affirmed that we have actually become light – i.e. a means of making the Person and life of God known. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but **now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light**” (Eph 5:8). Believers are also referred to as “children of light” (1

Thess 5:5), and those who have been “called out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

DARKNESS

“ . . . with darkness?” Other versions read “dark.”^{BBE} Regarding a person, “darkness” has to do with spiritual blindness and ignorance – **with being fundamentally unacquainted with God, His truth, and His ways, and with no appetite to gain such an acquaintance**. Prior to being in Christ, we were called “darkness” – “for you were once darkness”^{NKJV} (Eph 5:8). In respect to a realm, it is a place where the things of God cannot be seen or understood. Here, the word is applied to unbelievers, who are themselves ignorant, and dwell in the realm where He cannot be known.

What is there that light and darkness have in common? The answer is “nothing.” In the moral realm in which personalities are found, those who are “light” draw from resources that are inaccessible to those who are “darkness.” Those who are “darkness” obtain resources from the domain from which those in Christ have been delivered. Those resources promote spiritual ignorance, hide the things of God, and shut heaven out of human consideration.

Those who are “unequally yoked together with unbelievers” are attempting to bring the spiritual “ox” and “ass” together – even though neither of them can live on the resources from which the other draws. They are trying to share the holy and the unholy, which are mutually exclusive, and in no way can be made harmonious. Who could possibly defend the legitimacy of such an attempt!

CHRIST AND BELIAL

“^{15a} **And what concord hath Christ with Belial?**”

Now we come to the most fundamental of all divisions among

personalities. Whether men choose to acknowledge this or not, those who attempt to get under the yoke with unbelievers – whatever the objective may

be – are viewed as seeking to do what this text confirms is obviously impossible.

CONCORD

“And what concord . . .” Other versions read, “And what accord,”^{NKJV} “Or what harmony,”^{NASB} “What agreement does,”^{NRSV} “and what consent,”^{DARBY} “come into agreement,”^{NJB} and “agree.”^{IE}



“Concord” comes from the Greek word συμφώνησις (soom-fo-nay-sis), which means “agreement,”^{THAYER} “harmony, joint decision,”^{FRIBERG} “common ground,”^{UBS} “to come to an agreement with, often implying a type of joint decision – to agree with, agreement,”^{LOUW-NIDA}

This is the Greek word from which “symphony” is derived. It speaks of harmony, of which “concord” is an English synonym. Here this speaks of a **profitable blending** of personalities.

Here, the emphasis is on thinking alike, seeing things alike, having the same values, preferences, and perceptions.

CHRIST

“ . . . hath Christ . . . ” “Christ” is the Lord Jesus seen as the appointed Man – the One charged with the responsibility of reconciling the world to God. This is the Head of the generation of the godly, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form. In dealing with “believers,” we must bring “Christ” into the picture, for He is the One upon whom

they have believed. He is the One who bore their sins and carried their sorrows. He intercedes for them, and is coming again to receive them to Himself. They have been joined to Him (1 Cor 6:17), are His “brethren” (Heb 2:17), and in whom, their redemption is realized (Rom 3:24). “Christ” is the epitome of all good.

BELIAL

“ . . . with Belial?” Other versions read, “the Evil One,”^{BBE} “Beliar,”^{NJB} “the devil,”^{NLT} “Satan,”^{IE} and “Belial [the devil].”^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “Belial” comes from the Greek word Βελίαρ (Beel-i-ar), and means “worthless, wickedness,”^{THAYER} and “worthlessness.”^{FRIBERG} The word is also found in the Hebrew language, and is used sixteen times from Genesis to Second Chronicles (Deut 13:13; Judges 19:22; 20:13; 1 Sam 1:16; 2:12; 10:27; 25:17,25; 30:22; 2 Sam 16:7; 20:1; 23:6; 1 Kgs 21:10,13; 2 Chron 13:7). The Hebrew word used is בֵּלְיָאֵל (Be-eyah’-al), which means “worthlessness, good for nothing, unprofitable.”^{STRONG’S}

From both Hebrew and Greek, the word formed (“Belial”) is a transliteration (from Hebrew/Greek letter-by-letter to English letters) of the word, not a translation. **There is a reason for this. In Scripture, this is not a word describing mere character or disposition, but a person who is the very embodiment of all worthlessness – the devil himself.**

- “Children of Belial” (Deut 13:13; Judges 20:13; 1 Sam 10:27; 1 Kgs 21:13; 2 Chron 13:7)
- “Sons of Belial” (Judges 19:22; 1 Sam 2:12; 2 Sam 23:6; 1 Kgs 21:10).
- “Daughter of Belial” (1 Sam 1:16).
- “Son of Belial” (1 Sam 25:17).

- “Man of Belial” (1 Sam 25:25; 2 Sam, 16:7; 20:1).
- “Men of Belial” (1 Sam 30:22).

These were “children,” “sons” “daughters,” and “men” of the devil – people in whom Satan worked, and who belonged to him. Jesus referred to this category of people as “children of the wicked one” (Matt 13:38). He said to certain wicked people, “Ye are of **your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do**” (John 8:44). Paul called Elymas “**thou child of the devil**” (Acts 13:10). John referred to “Cain, who was **of that wicked one**” (1 John 3:12). He said of sin: “**He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning**” (1 John 3:8). In all of these cases, the reference was not merely to people of worthless character – although that was surely a proper description. The point is that they were “of the devil,” and that is what made them worthless.

The devil himself is “Belial” – the ultimate worthless one. Translations that offer the alternate readings of “corrupt men,”^{NKJV} “worthless men,”^{NASB} “wicked men,”^{NIV} and “scoundrels,”^{NSRV} have missed the point of those texts. **The point is not their character, but their progenitor.**

Here, the believer is linked to Christ, and the unbeliever is linked to Satan, or Belial. **There is no neutral territory.** The question is, is there any common ground on which both Christ and Satan can stand. Is there a subject on which they think alike? Do they have the same values? **If they do not, then how is it possible for their children to be yoked together, pulling the same plow, working on the same purpose, fulfilling the same objective?** Foolish, indeed, is the person attempting such a union.

A BELIEVER AND AN INFIDEL

“^{15b} . . . or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” The gravity of the situation is

confirmed by the manner in which the Spirit labors this subject. **When there is a form of repetition in the Spirit’s**

exhortations and reasoning, it is because of the obtuseness of the flesh. What we are seeing here is that sin

Strong faith produces strong reasoning, godly determinations, and fervent pleas to live properly– by Given O. Blakely

is unreasonable from every valid point of view. It can in no way be justified. The realm from which we have been delivered cannot be viewed as containing acceptable resources, or in any way being free from contamination or defilement.



PART

“... or what part hath...” Other versions read, “has in common,”^{NASB} “share,”^{NRSV} “what portion,”^{ASV} “what sharing,”^{NJB} “be a partner,”^{NLT} “what participation,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “what business can.”^{PHILLIPS}

The comparison here is to the division of an estate or inheritance. When entering the promised land, according to the commandment of the Lord, Caleb was given “a **PART** among the children of Judah... even the city of Arba... which is the city of Hebron” (Josh 15:13). When considering the offerings accomplished in the tabernacle service, the priests that offered the blood of the peace offerings, and the fat, “shall have the right shoulder for **his PART**” (Lev 7:33).

The point here is that there are basically two sphere’s of reality that are divided to their constituents. One is associated with righteousness, and the other with unrighteousness. One is connected to light, and the other to darkness. One is united to Christ, And the other to Belial.

Now, a sobering question that concerns the parts of these domains, and those to whom they are given.

HE THAT BELIEVETH

“... he that believeth...” Other versions read, “a believer,”^{NKJV} “one who

has faith,”^{BBE} “the faithful,”^{DOUAY} and “a Christian.”^{LIVING}

“He that believeth” is the person who **IS** believing. **This is the individual who presently trusting the Lord, and not leaning to his own understanding** (Prov 3:5). It is the one who is persuaded “that God is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). This is the soul who is living by faith – walking by faith, and not by sight. **This is a description of his present state, not a former one.** Our text is not speaking of a mere profession of faith, but of the precise description of the individual – a person who **is** believing, and consequently **is** faithful and trustworthy in God’s eyes.

The preciseness of this word (“he that believeth,” or “a believer,”^{ASV}) is seen in the promises made to such an one.

- “He that believeth on Him **is not condemned**...” (John 3:18).
- “He that believeth on the Son **hath everlasting life**...” (John 3:36).
- “... he that believeth on Me **shall never thirst**” (John 6:35).
- “... He that believeth on Me **hath everlasting life**” (John 6:47).
- “He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water**” (John 7:38).
- “... he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, **yet shall he live**” (John 11:25).
- “... He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, **but on Him that sent Me**” (John 12:44).
- “... He that believeth on me, **the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father**” (John 14:12).
- “... he that believeth on Him **shall not be confounded**” (1 Pet 2:6).
- “Who is he that **overcometh the world, but he that believeth that**

Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5).

- “He that believeth on the Son of God **hath the witness in himself**...” (1 John 5:10).

Such things could not be said if there was any ambiguity or uncertainty in believing. **If believing itself was not “the work of God” (John 6:29), Divine commitments of this magnitude could never be made.**

“He that believeth,” therefore, is the person whom God has “given to believe” (Phil 1:29) – the one who has “obtained like precious faith” (2 Pet 1:1). It is the individual who has “believed through grace” (Acts 18:27), and to whom “faith” was given “from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 6:23). This has had a calculated affect upon the “believer,” who now walks, or lives, by and in accordance with that faith.

AN INFIDEL

“... with an infidel?” Other versions read, “an unbeliever,”^{NKJV} “one who has not [faith],”^{BBE} and “one who doesn’t believe.”^{LIVING}

An “**infidel**” is an unbeliever – one who does not believe, and consequently is not walking by faith. Because I have already described these people extensively (“Be Not Unequally Yoked/Two Classes of People”), no further explanation is required here.

What “part” does a “believer” have with an “infidel?” **What is there in the habitat occupied by the “infidel” that is of any lasting worth to “a believer?”** What resources are available to the “infidel” that are of any worth to the person is living by faith? What does the domain of the devil, in which the “infidel” live, have that “a believer” would want?

Precisely what remains in the realm from which we have been delivered – “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4) – that will bring us some advantage before the Lord, or bring some benefit to us?

The Postulate

The postulate, or assumption, behind this question is that **both the**

believer and the infidel bring their resources with them. They are both united to the domain in which they live – the believer to the “heavenly places,” and the infidel to “this present evil world.” **A person cannot live independently of the one who rules him** – whether it is Christ or the devil.

The truth of the matter is that

the one who believers has no portion with the one who does not. In fact, such a portion is depicted as the ultimate curse. “But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware,

and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers” (Luke 12:45-46).

If God is going to ultimately separate the believers from the unbelievers, who can justify seeking to join them together now? What kind of mind-set would move a person to attempt such vanity?

THE TEMPLE OF GOD AND IDOLS

“ 16a *And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God.*”

**A SCRIPTURAL VIEW
OF ASSOCIATIONS**

**YOKED TOGETHER
FELLOWSHIP
COMMUNION
CONCORD
PART**

➔ **AGREEMENT**

Paul continues this extensive reasoning concerning the issue of attempting to forge an unequal yoke between a believer and an unbeliever. **The importance of this issue is seen in the thorough manner in which the apostles deals with it.** The absolute criticality of the subject is confirmed by the terms that are used in its exposition: “righteousness” and “unrighteousness,” “light” and “darkness,” “Christ” and “Belial,” “he that believeth” and “an infidel.” Not a one of those terms falls into things in consequential. All of them have a direct association with eternity.

AGREEMENT

“And what agreement hath . . .” Other versions read, “cannot compromise,”^{NJB} “And what union can there be,”^{LIVING} “exist next to,”^{IE} “what compact,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “What common

ground.”^{PHILLIPS}

The word “agreement” comes from the Greek word συγκατάθεσις (soongkat-ath-esis). Lexically it means, “a putting together . . . approval, assent, agreement,”^{THAYER} “mutual agreement, harmony, arrived at by group decision, as when there is a deposit of votes,”^{FRIEBERG} and “to work out a joint arrangement – ‘to agree on, to arrange together, joint agreement, joint arrangement, mutual agreement.”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Here, “agreement” means that two groups come together and arrive at the same conclusion – like a unanimous vote. The same values are entertained, and thus the same conclusions are reached. **They are not divided in their perspectives, and therefore are united in their judgments.**

The point here is that two people with different values cannot come into agreement on matters related to a value standard. Two groups of people that do not see things alike, cannot come into harmony concerning what they have seen.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

“ . . . the temple of God . . . ” Other versions read, “The house of God,”^{BBE} “God’s temple,”^{DARBY} “the sanctuary of God,”^{YLT} and “God’s temple sanctuary.”^{IE}

The “temple of God” will be more specifically defined in the next clause. **Here, the point is that God’s “temple” is where He dwells, or has taken up residence.** This is a view related to Him being active among His people, and being identified with them. It is not intended to suggest He limits His abode to a place upon the earth.

This concept was first developed in the commandment concerning the building of the tabernacle – a place that signified God abiding among men. Thus the Lord said to Moses, “And let them make me a sanctuary; **that I may dwell among them**” (Ex 25:8). Again He said, “And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to Me in the priest’s office. **And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God**” (Ex 29:44-45). There, in the inner part of the tabernacle, God said “**And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony**” (Ex 25:22; 29:42-43; 30:6,36; Num 17:4).

The same things were said of the Temple, which replaced the portable tabernacle, once Israel had settled in the promised land. It is said of that Temple, “And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in My statutes, and execute My judgments, and keep all My commandments to walk in them; then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father: **and I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel. So Solomon built the house, and finished it**” (1 Kgs 6:11-14). Although that “house” could not “contain” the Lord, either in His fulness, or in isolation of all other places (1 Kgs 8:27), yet it was associated with His Presence. Jesus referred to the Temple as “My Father’s house” (John 2:16). When Solomon dedicated the

Temple, it is written that He “*dedicated the house of God*” (2 Chron 7:5). Things brought into the Temple were said to have been brought “*into the house of God*” (2 Chron 15:18). “*The house of God*” and “*the Temple*” are also equated several places in Scripture (Ezra 5:14; 6:5; Neh 6:10; Dan 5:3).

All of this foreshadowed the time when God would dwell in His people. Under the Law, the Lord dwelt “*among*” the people. In Christ, He dwells “*in*” them (2 Cor 6:16).

IDLOLS

“... with idols?” Other versions read, “*with images*,”^{NJB} and “*with false gods*.”^{NJB}

“*Idols*” are associated with demons, not with God Almighty. “*But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils*” (1 Cor 10:20; Lev 17:7; Deut 32:16-17; 2 Chron 11:15; Psa 106:37-38).

Here, the unequal yoke of a believer and an unbeliever is likened to worshipping idols in the Temple of God. Such an absurdity would be the ultimate defilement. Manasseh attempted this by building “*altars for the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord*” (2 Kgs 21:5). There was a time when the kings of Judah placed idols of horses, “*given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the Lord*” (2 Kgs 23:11).

A Word that Needs to be Said

When the professed church attempts to wed the people of God with the ways of this world, they are trying to forge an unequal yoke. **When worldly ways are brought into the church, it is the same as bringing idols into the house of the Lord.** This is nothing less than bringing abominations into the presence of God, for “*that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God*” (Luke 16:15). Those ways can be found in appearance, sights, sounds, music, purported scholarship, forms of entertainment, the world’s way of analyzing people, mindless appeals to emotion, lording it over God’s flock, and a host of other things.

This practice – of seeking agreement with of the temple of God with idols – is now found in staggering proportions. There are extensive so-called “ministries” that forge an unequal yoke in which they imagine people are actually being brought to Christ.

YE ARE THE TEMPLE

“... for ye are the temple of the living God.” Other versions read, “*For we are the temple of the living God*,”^{NASB} “*for we are a house of the living God*,”^{BEBE} “*for ye are the living God’s temple*,”^{DARBY} “*ye are a sanctuary of the living God*,”^{YLT} “*For you are God’s temple*,”^{LIVING} “*For we are the temple of the ever-living God*,”^{ISV} and “*For we, remember, are ourselves*

The same perspective was declared in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*” (1 Cor 3:17).

Throughout Scripture, God’s relationship to people is spelled out with meticulous clarity. There were some people God “*rejected*” (2 Kgs 17:20; Jer 6:30; 7:29). Others were termed “*reprobate*,” or people God refused (Jer 6:30; Rom 1:28; 2 Cor 13:5). There were people who were “*wicked in the sight of the Lord*” (Gen 38:7). Some did “*evil in*

When worldly ways are brought into the church, it is the same as bringing idols into the house of the Lord. This is nothing less than bringing abominations into the presence of God, for “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”

living temples of the living God.”^{PHILLIPS}

“For”

The word “*for*” indicates that what follows is the foundation, or reason, for the statement just made: “*And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?*” Lest, as unspiritually disciplined men are prone to do, we are diverted into an endless and unprofitable controversy over God and temples, Paul puts the issue squarely before us. He will not allow us to sail up the dead-end tributary of philosophy.

“Ye Are . . .”

Whether one chooses the term “*you*,” or “*we*,”^{NASB} the meaning remains materially the same. **The idea is that God dwells with His people – and that is the point being made.** The word “*ye*,” or “*you*,” emphasizes that the **Corinthians** were not living in comportment with this fact. The word “*we*” underscores that Paul is speaking with regard to **all** of the people of God. Both views are correct. God is found among His people.

the sight of the Lord” (Num 32:13; Judges 11:2). Solemnly we are told, “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*” (1 Cor 6:9; Gal 5:21). Again, the wrath of God is going to be revealed “*against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold [back] the truth in unrighteousness*” (Rom 1:18).

How could any one possible defend receiving people whom God has rejected! What would prompt anyone of understanding to willingly accept an unequal yoke, forging an alliance between themselves and those whom God has rejected?

When a fornicator was found in Corinth, they were commanded to “*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (1 Cor 5:5). The word to them was clear and without any equivocalness: “*But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an*

extortioner; **with such an one no not to eat**" (1 Cor 5:11). Concerning people who had a defiling affect Paul wrote, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for

us" (1 Cor 5:7). Those words are to be taken serious by the church of our day.

Now the Spirit will confirm to us that God will not tolerate insolence and disobedience in this

matter. Those who insist upon being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" will, in fact, forfeit the presence of the Lord, and all the benefits that accompany it. This is a matter that requires the utmost sobriety.

WHAT GOD HAS SAID

^{16b} . . . as God hath said, **I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**"

Paul now buttresses the reference to the people of God being "the temple of God" by referring to a Divine utterance. This is a unique description of the people of God. **The true apprehension of what is revealed in this statement will serve to correct much, if not all, of the unacceptable behavior found within the churches.**

GOD HATH SAID

" . . . as God hath said . . ." Other versions read, "just as God said,"^{NASB} "as God said,"^{NRSV} "even as God said,"^{ASV} "according as God has said,"^{DARBY} "We have God's word for it,"^{NJB} "and God has said of you,"^{LIVING} "It is as God said,"^{IE} "just as God said,"^{ISV} and "as He has said."^{MONTGOMERY}

Sound spiritual reasoning will hold up under the most strenuous intellectual examination. It will also support the soul in all manner of difficulty and testing. It is never more firm, however, than when it is perceived as being founded on particular Divine utterance. **What God SAYS is a firm foundation upon which reasoning and hope can confidently rest.** It is also the one thing that faith can grasp, which consistently produces the "fully assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2). Reasoning is brought to its highest point when a specific word of God is given that specifically affirms the point being made. In this text, we have just such an affirmation before us.

I WILL DWELL IN THEM

" . . . I will dwell in them . . ." Other versions read, "I will live with

them,"^{NIV} "I will be living among them,"^{BBE} "I will dwell among them,"^{DARBY} "I will make my dwelling among them,"^{ESV} "I shall fix My home among them,"^{NJB} and "I will dwell in and with and among them."^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul draws from the vast reservoir of God's Word, unveiling the very heart of God, as well as His "eternal purpose." This dwelling was declared and prefigured in Israel, though not limited to them.

- "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God" (Ex 29:45).
- "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel" (1 Kgs 6:13).
- "And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places" (Ezek 43:7).
- "Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcasses of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever" (Ezek 43:9).
- "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD" (Zech 2:10).
- "And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me

unto thee" (Zech 2:11).

God's revealed intention is to be identified with a particular people – to dwell among THEM, and to be known in association with them. This passage strongly affirms that, and presses it into our conscience.

Unequal yokes not only are the result of failing to perceive this situation, they tend to erode it in the minds of others. In our time, the state of the church is such that hardly a living soul considers it to be the dwelling place of

A VOICE FROM THE PAST ON THE LOSS OF A CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE INDWELLING GOD

"The Apostolic churches owned no houses, but worshipped wherever it suited their convenience. We find them in Troas using a room in third story. What a pity the church didn't remain in this itinerant, belligerent attitude, free and unencumbered to go to the ends of the earth, waging everywhere an exterminating war against the devil! While needless ornamentation was justifiable in Solomon's temple, the wilderness tabernacle and the high-priest's regalia, as they lived in the symbolic dispensation, and all of those valuables taught important lessons appertaining to the gracious economy, we must remember that the types and shadows have all been verified in the great Antitype, and have no longer any pertinency in the Church of God; but now, as they are utterly useless, and even forbidden, they become idols and rivals of the glorious Antitype, who should to us be all things and in all. Here we are assured that God dwells among us in the sanctuaries we erect in His name and that He walks among us. Consequently there should be no idols in the form of needless expenditure of the Lord's money, nor gratifications of human pride and vanity, as even church pride is an abomination unto God. We should have nothing in our houses of worship calculated to divert the attention of the awful presence of the Almighty, who cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. How sad it is to see a modern church running after avast diversity of idols, worshipping water-gods, day-gods, creed-gods, festival-gods, money-gods and gods of wood and stone in the form of fine church edifices!" – *W.B. Godbey 1886 Commentary on the New Testament, Volume 4*

God. As a rule, that is not the first thing that comes into their minds when subjected to the various forms of religious

services being offered to the public. The hypothetical experience to which Paul alludes in the fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians would be considered a miraculous phenomenon in our time. *“If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that **God is in you of a truth**”* (1 Cor 14:23-25).

Keep in mind, this is Paul’s argument against the utter absurdity of attempting to yoke a believer with an unbeliever.

I WILL WALK IN THEM

“... and walk in them ...” Other versions read, *“walk among them,”* ^{NKJV} *“and walking with them,”* ^{BBE} *“and walk there,”* ^{GENEVA} *“and move among them,”* ^{NAB} *“live among them,”* ^{NJB} *“and walk about among them,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} and *“and will walk in and with and among them.”* ^{AMPLIFIED}

This was also promised to the

Although this promise was never brought to its intended end in ancient Israel, it was introduced through them. **It was His predetermined purpose to have a people among whom He could move about, working, speaking, revealing, and bringing glory to Himself.**

In this relationship, He again distinguished Himself from all false gods, which were nothing more than demons in disguise (Lev 17:7; 1 Cor 10:20). Other gods – false gods – did not **“walk”** among the people. **They were only found in lifeless images.** Thus the Psalmist declared, *“Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but **they speak not**: eyes have they, but **they see not**: noses have they, but **they hear not**: they have hands, but **they smell not**: they have hands, but **they handle not**: feet have they, but **they walk not**: neither speak they through their throat”* (Psa 115:4-7).

But it is not so with *“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (2 Cor 11:31). He is a walking, talking God, who moves about among His people. They are His temple, and thus have no business attempting to join themselves to unbelievers. **What sense does it make**

would be the situation with his seed: *“I will be their God”* (Gen 17:8). “Jeremiah revealed that this would be the result of the Lord’s own work. *“And I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart”* (Jer 24:7). Again he said, *“And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them”* (Jer 32:38-39).

Ezekiel foretold that this would be within the context of the people walking consistently in His statutes, and faithfully keeping His ordinances: *“And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God”* (Ezek 11:20).

The meaning is that the people will perceive the Lord to be their God. He will not be *“their God”* by creedal acceptance, but by spiritual perception. They will resort to Him because they know and love Him. What possible reason can be adduced for seeking an alliance with unbelievers when such a singular benefit is possessed?

THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE

“... and they shall be My people.” Other versions read, *“and they will be My people,”* ^{NIV} *“and they shall be to Me a people,”* ^{DARBY} and *“and it is they who shall be My people.”* ^{WEYMOUTH}

Again, this was prefigured in Israel. God said of them, *“ye shall be My people”* (Lev 26:12). God told them if they would only obey His voice, they would be His people: *“But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you”* (Jer 7:23; 11:4). Yet, He also promised a time when this would actually take place. *“And I will give them an heart to know Me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be My people”* (Jer 24:7). Again He promised, *“At the same time,*

They are His temple, and thus have no business attempting to join themselves to unbelievers. What sense does it make to seek satisfaction, love, joy, fulfillment, or companionship from the devil’s camp, when the God of heaven dwells among His people.

Israelites. *“And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people”* (Lev 26:12). **The idea is that God would become involved in their affairs, and would fulfill His good pleasure through them.** When He drove out the Canaanites, He would do so through them. When He spoke, He would do so through their prophets. When He wrought great wonders, it would be in association with them. He would also be accessible to them through specified means.

to seek satisfaction, love, joy, fulfillment, or companionship from the devil’s camp, when the God of heaven dwells among His people. Such an attempt betrays blindness and hard-heartedness. That is why Paul will speak so strongly to this matter.

I WILL BE THEIR GOD

“... and I will be their God ...” Surprisingly, all versions read the same.

God promised Abraham that this

saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people" (Jer 31:1).

Not only would the people confess God to be their God, He would acknowledge them as His people. With Israel, God had to say, "All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom 10:21). But this was not the condition God intended to maintain. In Christ what was said of a few faithful souls throughout the history of the world, would be said of all of all His people, "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb 11:16).

These last two points – "I will be their God," and "they shall be My people" are hallmarks of the New Covenant. Thus Jeremiah prophesied, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10). God would be identified with them, bless them, defend them, and work in their behalf.

Now, armed with this perception, who would seek to yoke a believer with an unbeliever? What professed believer would culture a relationship that would threaten the undoing of an identity with God? Who would nurture a friendship that militated against the faith, and moved one into the dreadful arena of "the flesh," where Satan moves about freely, and demons and lusts unite in an unholy conspiracy against the child of God? That is how serious this matter is! That is why the Spirit reasons so extensively with us about it! That is why we must thrust from us ungodly influences that tempt us to think unequal yokes are all right. They are not!

A WORD ABOUT EXISTING UNEQUAL YOKES

There are people who are presently in an unequal yoke that was formed prior to their acceptance in Christ. The yoke was made unequal when they began walking by faith. For the most part, this pertains to marriage, which yoke

cannot be broken without due cause. Other unholy alliances can be put from us with minimal inconvenience. However, in the case of marriage, it is not so simplistic.

The word of God does address this matter, and with amazing candor. **It does not attempt to paint a rosy picture, yet opens the door of hope.** Paul presents the situation of a believing husband with an unbelieving wife, and a believing wife with an unbelieving husband. "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that

your children unclean; but now are they holy" (1 Cor 7:14). In this case, great grace and mercy become evident. Under ordinary circumstances, the unbelieving defile the believing. **Yet, here is an instance where the unbeliever is sanctified by the believer.** If this was not the case, the children of that marriage would be "unclean." Now, however, because of the identity of the believer with God through Christ, the children are "holy" – that is, **they are considered as the offspring of the believer.** Timothy's mother, Eunice, was the sanctifying individual in Timothy's life –

Now, armed with this perception, who would seek to yoke a believer with an unbeliever? What professed believer would culture a relationship that would threaten the undoing of an identity with God? Who would nurture a friendship that militated against the faith, and moved one into the dreadful arena of "the flesh," where Satan moves about freely, and demons and lusts unite in an unholy conspiracy against the child of God?

believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him" (1 Cor 7:13).

Note, that in both cases, the priority of one's faith is evident. **It is not whether or not the believer is pleased to dwell with the unbeliever, but if the unbeliever is pleased to dwell with the believer.** The clear implication is that there will be no compromise in matters of faith in order to please the unbeliever. The unbelieving husband **cannot** bind matters upon his believing wife that have to do with her relationship with God. **His domestic authority does not extend into that area.**

Second, the validity of the marriage is found in the believer – not the unbeliever. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were

not his father. His father is simply identified as "a Greek," while his mother was identified as "a Jewess, and believed" (Acts 16:1). Yet, she faithfully taught Timothy, so that "from a child," he had "known the holy Scriptures" (2 Tim 3:15).

Third, if the unbelieving spouse is not willing to live peaceably with the believer, the believing spouse is under no obligation to remain with them. "Peaceably" means that there is no opposition to the faith of the believing spouse, for God does not give the believer the liberty of compromising their faith in deference to an unbelieving spouse. "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace" (1 Cor 7:15).

Fourth, in order to discourage hasty and foolish judgments in this matter, Paul affirms that **it is quite possible for the unbeliever to be**

saved by the believer. Such a marvelous work is not to be ruled out. “For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?” (1 Cor 7:16). For the believer, this is the obvious preference. That is why this appealing word is offered to those who are in the “unequal yoke.”

This, however, was a word to the married, **not to the unmarried**. The unmarried are to take the text we are discussing, and use it to work out their own salvation “with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). This very text will be brought up in the day of judgment, for God is going to be “justified in all of His sayings” (Rom 3:4). It is on the part of wisdom to

prepare for that day by not choosing to be yoked with an unbeliever!

After reasoning with us concerning the absolute absurdity of attempting to yoke a believer with an unbeliever, the Spirit now moves Paul to deliver a most sobering and stirring exhortation.

COME OUT, AND BE RECEIVED!

“¹⁷ Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”

This word will not blend with neither the current trend nor emphasis of the modern church. There is a certain

preceding verses.

- Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.
- What fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness?
- What communion has light with darkness?

from their midst,” ^{NASB} “Come out from the midst of them,” ^{DARBY} “go out from their midst,” ^{ESV} “come forth from them,” ^{NAB} “Get away from them,” ^{NJB} “go ye forth out of the midst of them,” ^{YLT} “Leave them,” ^{LIVING} “come away from them,” ^{IE} “Come out of company with them,” ^{WILLIAMS} and “come out from among [unbelievers].” ^{AMPLIFIED}

This word is given because of the irreconcilability of believers with unbelievers. It is speaking of those who are involved in an unequal yoke “with unbelievers.”

This word will not blend with neither the current trend nor emphasis of the modern church. There is a certain theological and practical weight to it that will arrest our attention. This is not a casual suggestion, but something directly related to God receiving us. I hardly see how anything could be more serious.

Here is the word, and it comes from the Lord Himself – “saith the Lord” (17b). **“COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM!”** This exhortation is taken from Isaiah 52:11: “**Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD**” (Isa 52:11). Earlier Isaiah said of those who remained in Babylon, “Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans” (Isa 48:20). Jeremiah gave the same exhortation: “Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans” (Jer 50:8). And again, “Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul” (Jer 51:6). And again, “My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD” (Jer 51:45). Zechariah issues the same call: “Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon” (Zech 2:7).

theological and practical weight to it that will arrest our attention. This is not a casual suggestion, but something directly related to God receiving us. I hardly see how anything could be more serious.

WHEREFORE

“Wherefore . . .” Other versions read, “Therefore,” ^{NKJV} “For which cause,” ^{BBE} “That is why,” ^{LIVING} and “So.” ^{IE}

The use of this word – “wherefore” – emphasizes the reasoning nature of the new man. In view of what has been said in the preceding three verses, the following is the only acceptable response. Let me briefly state that has been said in the

- What concord has Christ with Belial?
- What part has a believer with an infidel?
- What agreement has the temple of God with idols?
- We are the temple of God.
- God has said He will dwell in us and walk in us.
- God has said He will be our God, and we will be His people.

COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM!

“ . . . come out from among them . . . ” Other versions read, “Come our

The prophets’ warning concerning remaining in Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon were said against the backdrop of Israel’s

limited stay there – seventy years. **Once that seventy years had been consummated, they were not to remain in that defiled realm.** The only exception appeared to be Daniel, through whom God continued to work in that area.

One parallel is found in our deliverance from *“this present evil world,”* a significant part of which were the personalities who were dominated by that realm. **Our deliverance from the world included the severance of our ties with its citizens.** While we cannot get completely away from the world, we are obliged to cease unequal connections with it and its manners.

Religious Corruption

Aside from *“the unbelievers”* as ordinarily conceived, Paul admonished Timothy to come away from false teachers – teachers who represented themselves as being from God, yet did not preach His Gospel. *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”* (2 Tim 2:16-21).

We are also warned about *“perilous times”* in which men will profess a Christian identity, yet maintain the ways of the world, having a *“form of godliness,”* yet rejecting its power, which delivers one from the ways of the world. *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of*

those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim 3:1-5).

When worldly ways are found in the church, it is because the world has crept into it – the very world from which Jesus has delivered us (Gal 1:4). When these kind of people are

AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev 17:3-5). She is said to have shed *“the blood of the martyrs of Jesus,”* and when John saw her he *“was greatly astonished”*^{NASB} (17:6).

The fact that this work of the devil is called a “whore,” and is associated with “fornication” confirms it is something that represents itself as being from God. Spiritual adultery and fornication are not

The point made by both Jeremiah and the Revelation is that coming out of the Babylon of reference is essential to avoid destruction. God judged Babylon of old, and warned His people to get out of it before He brought it down, else they themselves would be destroyed in the destruction.

found among believers, an *“unequal”* yoke is being formed. It must be severed, for God will not permit those who are being conformed to the image of His Son to be closely allied with those He has said He is going to thrust from Himself, consigning them to outer darkness.

The matter of religious corruption is also developed in the Revelation given to John on the isle of Patmos. That message was delivered *“to the churches”* – not the world: (1:4,11,20; 2:1,7,8,11,12,17,18,23,29; 3:1,6,7,13,14,22; 22:16). Jesus revealed an aggressive campaign, launched by the devil himself, and focused upon the church (12:12-17). Part of that initiative resulted in a false church – Satan’s fabrication of a likeness of the church of the living God. That corrupt church is depicted as *“the great whore,”* who had formed an alliance with the world (Rev 17:1-2). A holy angel escorted John *“into the wilderness,”* where he received further insight into this spiritual monstrosity. Names *“of blasphemy”* were found throughout the depiction. She was arrayed in impressive attire, but held in her hand a cup filled with *“abominations and filthiness of her fornication.”* She had a name emblazoned on her forehead that read, *“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS*

said to be committed by those who have no professed connection with God. These are words to professing Christians who are really of the world, and not God.

There is a word issued to *“the churches”* concerning this spiritual entity called *“Babylon the great.”* The call almost exactly parallels our text, and does precisely parallel the prophetic text to which our text alludes. *“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities”* (Rev 18:4-5). Jeremiah said to Israel, *“Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD’S vengeance; He will render unto her a recompense”* (Jer 51:6).

The Point

The point made by both Jeremiah and the Revelation is that coming out of the Babylon of reference is essential to avoid destruction. God judged Babylon of old, and warned His people to get out of it before He brought it down, else they

themselves would be destroyed in the destruction. In the Revelation, precisely the same picture is presented. God has also determined the fall of spiritual Babylon. It was announced in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation as though it had already happened. *“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication”* (Rev 14:8). And again, *“And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath”* (Rev 16:19).

Let no informed soul think

however, is not an acceptable state! Those who are in Christ are to put a distance between themselves and the unbelievers – a distance that can be observed in their ways and manners.

Israel was a picture of this kind of separation. God chose them out of all of the people of the world, and they became distinct. Moses appealed to this distinction when he plead with the Lord to go with them in their journey to Canaan. *“For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth”* (Ex 33:16). This is also why He gave

Thus we are commanded, *“be ye separate!”* Do not seek to blend in with those who do not know the Lord. Do not make it your aim to be one of them, or imagine that you can mingle with them without becoming like them.

TOUCH NOT THE UNCLEAN THING!

“ . . . and touch not the unclean thing . . . ” Other versions read, *“Do not touch what is unclean,”* NKJV *“Touch no unclean thing,”* NIV *“Touch nothing unclean,”* NRSV *“and let no unclean thing come near you,”* BBE *“and touch not what is unclean,”* DARBY *“do not touch anything unclean,”* NJB *“Don’t touch filthy things,”* NLT *“and an unclean thing do not touch,”* YLT *“don’t touch their filthy things,”* LIVING *“Don’t touch what is not pure,”* IE *“touch nothing impure,”* WEYMOUTH and *“And stop touching what is unclean.”* WILLIAMS

Under the Law, those who carried the vessels of the Lord were to be clean, refusing to touch any unclean thing. *“Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD”* (Isa 52:11). For those in Christ, that means not touching the thing God has cursed. **Whatever defiles the soul is not to be handled by the child of God!**

It ought to be obvious that there is such a thing as *“the unclean thing”* – something that defiles, contaminates, destroys, and arrests spiritual development. **There are doctrines that eat at the soul like cancer** (2 Tim 2:17). **There are roots of bitterness that cause pervasive defilement** (Heb 12:15). There are people who have a polluting influence (Eph 5:5). David would speak of such associations in this way: *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful”* (Psa 1:1).

The church is said to be *“the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Tim 3:15). It is, so to speak, carrying the vessels of the Lord. **For that reason, it is not to “touch the unclean thing,”** dabbling in the things of the world, or keeping in its possession things that sully the soul and tarnish the mind.

Let no informed soul think themselves to be in a place of safety when they are joined to those whom God has cursed! This will become increasingly apparent as this text continues.

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BE YE SEPARATE!

“ . . . and be ye separate, saith the Lord . . . ” Other versions read, *“And be separate says the Lord,”* NKJV *“and be separate from them, says the Lord,”* NRSV *“and be separated, saith the Lord,”* DARBY *“and separate yourselves, saith the Lord,”* GENEVA *“purify yourselves, says the Lord,”* NJB *“Be separate! Says the Lord,”* IE and *“and separate (sever) yourselves from them, says the Lord.”* AMPLIFIED

Obviously, there is some sense in which separateness is imperative. **A distinction between the believers and the unbelievers is to be apparent.** If separation is not apparent, it must be that it does not exist. That,

Israel their own land. *“But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the LORD your God, which have separated you from other people”* (Lev 20:24).

This is also one of the reasons for the distinctions between clean and unclean beasts were found in the ordinances of the Law. *“Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowls and clean: and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beast, or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean”* (Lev 20:25). He was tutoring them in the irreconcilability of things approved with things unapproved. **That distinction reaches an apex in the separation of believers from unbelievers.**

How appropriate this word is for our day! For example, this is a time when it is not at all unusual to hear of leaders in the church subjecting themselves to pornography. **They are touching the unclean thing.** We do not want to hear an explanation for such things, or contrive accountability groups to work with people on avoiding pornography. **It is time for such people to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.** *"Touch not the unclean thing!"* If you are tempted to do it, put up the shield of faith and quench that poisonous dart. Do not run to your brethren, take up the shield of faith yourself, together with *"the whole armor of God"* (Eph 6:10-18). That is what you are to do! As soon as you set out to do it, you will receive the power to accomplish what is required of you. Until that is done, you are only playing a game that you cannot possibly win!

This very point – touching not “the unclean thing” – is a word for the younger generation of professing believers. This is a day when *"unclean"* has been smeared over an entire generation, and the name *"Icabod"* has been suspended over it. Those of this generation have been encouraged to bring the fashions and expressions of the world into the church, and the church has given them a forum to do so. But the word is delivered to the young as well as the old – *"touch not the unclean thing."* **You cannot sanctify something that is “unclean.” There is no way to dignify it or makes it suitable for the child of God.** That is why we are told, *"Touch not the unclean thing!"*

This word is stated so that each believer becomes responsible for their own evaluation. I have mentioned some things that ought to be very apparent. However, this is not an area for law-making. Each believer is charged with the solemn

obligation of doing this. It is not to be neglected. This will be apparent by the word that follows.

I WILL RECEIVE YOU

"... and I will receive you" Other versions read, *"And I will welcome you,"* NASB *"then I will welcome you,"* NRSV *"and I*

can remain like, of, and with the world, and still be accepted by God.

However, the Lord will not permit us to entertain such imaginations without declaring the real situation. When He says, *"I will receive you!"* He means that those

This very point – touching not “the unclean thing” – is a word for the younger generation of professing believers. This is a day when “unclean” has been smeared over an entire generation, and the name “Icabod” has been suspended over it.

will take you for Myself," BBE *"Then I will accept you,"* IE and *"then I will receive you kindly and treat you with favor."* AMPLIFIED

This word is not spoken to Caesar, but to *"the church."* It is not delivered to the world, but to the *"washed."* These words are not addressed to the *"unsaved"* who were visiting the assembly in Corinth, but to the people who comprised the church itself.

How seriously are we to take the word to not be *"unequally yoked with unbelievers?"* Are we to consider it nothing more than a suggestion to *"come out from among them,"* *"be ye separate,"* and *"touch not the unclean thing?"* **Is there really a place in heaven for those who refuse to do this?** Does a person really maintain the status of Divine acceptance, even if they fail to do what this text has said? One might be led to imagine that such things are possible. Some have even invented doctrines that declare that is, in fact, the case – that you

attempting to yoke themselves with unbelievers will **not** be received by Him! The person who refuses to *"come out from among them"* and *"be separate"* will **not** be blessed with Divine approval! The one who insists on touching *"the unclean thing"* will, because of that insistence, **forfeit** God's acceptance.

Do you want God's approval? Then you cannot accept those whom God rejects. You cannot form an alliance with those from whom He delivers. You cannot continue to *"touch"* things that cause the very defilement from which you must be *"washed."* This is all rather straightforward, and should require no further elaboration. However, because of the hostility of the carnal mind, and the inability of *"the natural man"* to receive *"the things of the Spirit of God,"* the Lord says more on this matter. He does so to dissolve any doubts about the necessity of these things being done. He will confirm to our hearts that being received by God Himself is the issue that is at stake.

A CONDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP

"¹⁸ And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

This is an extended commentary

on *"and I will receive you."* This is said in keeping with the nature of *"the day of salvation"* and *"the accepted time."* **Being received by God is not a sort of spiritual luxury, suggesting that**

you can be saved even though you are not received by Him. Such a thought is so utterly absurd one wonders how anyone could embrace it. Yet, Satan can subtly lead people into this kind of

thinking, without them knowing what has happened. He did this with Eve who was led to believe what God had forbidden could actually bring her some advantage: *“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat”* (Gen 3:6). Once Eve, together with Adam, ate that fruit, touching the unclean thing, **they could no longer live in the Garden.**

Now the Lord holds before us a gracious incentive for doing what is right – coming out of unbelieving environments, being separate, and touching not the unclean thing.

I WILL BE A FATHER UNTO YOU

“And will be a Father unto you . . .” Other versions read, *“I will be a Father to you,”* ^{NKJV} *“and will be your Father,”* ^{NRSV} and *“and I will be to you for a Father.”* ^{DARBY}

There are allusions to this promise

God of Israel, our Father” (1 Chron 29:10). He also confessed to God, *“Thou art my Father, my God”* (Psa 89:26).

One of the names by which the Messiah would be known was *“The everlasting Father”* (Isa 9:6).

Speaking for Israel, **Isaiah said, “Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our Father, our redeemer; Thy name is from everlasting”** (Isa 63:16; 64:8).

Speaking of the restoration of Israel the Lord said, *“But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call Me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from Me”* (Jer 3:19).

Through the prophet Malachi, God upbraided Israel for not honoring Him as a Father. *“A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a Father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the*

God as “Father” – 15! In the Gospels alone, there are one hundred and eighty-one! In Acts through Revelation there are seventy-nine – a total of two hundred and sixty! We read of as such as:

- ☛ Learning from the Father (John 6:45).
- ☛ The Spirit of truth proceeding from the Father to men (John 15:26).
- ☛ Good and perfect gifts coming down from the Father (James 1:17).
- ☛ Grace and peace coming to us from the Father (Gal 1:3).
- ☛ The Father giving us *“the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him”* (Eph 1:17).
- ☛ Having *“access”* to the Father (Eph 2:18).
- ☛ Peace and *“love with faith”* coming to us from the Father (Eph 6:23).
- ☛ The Father has qualified us to be *“partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light”* (Col 1:12).
- ☛ There is such a thing as *“fellowship . . . with the Father”* (1 John 1:3).
- ☛ We have an *“Advocate with the Father”* (1 John 2:1).
- ☛ We can *“continue in the Son, and in the Father”* (1 John 2:24).

From Genesis through Malachi, there are only fifteen references to God as “Father” – fifteen! In the Gospels alone, there are one hundred and eighty-one! In Acts through Revelation there are seventy-nine – a total of two hundred and sixty.

in the Old Testament Scriptures, although it is not found word for word. God promised David He would be a *“Father”* to Solomon: *“I will be his Father, and he shall be My son”* (2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chron 17:13; 22:10; 28:6).

Jeremiah also spoke of this kind of relationship to Israel: *“They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn”* (Jer 31:9).

David referred to God as *“Lord*

LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?” (Mal 1:6). Again, referring to the origin of all peoples Malachi confessed, ***“Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?”*** (Mal 2:10).

Our text does not refer to Divine Fatherhood in the sense found in Israel. This is a more exalted association – like that realized between the Father and the Son. **From Genesis through Malachi, there are only fifteen references to**

Such things were never said of anyone prior to Christ’s enthronement in glory. This speaks of a closeness to God that could not be realized until sin as *“put away”* (Heb 9:26), the devil *“destroyed”* (Heb 2:14), and a *“word of reconciliation”* proclaimed (2 Cor 5:19). Christ accomplished those things, and any others that were required for these benefits to be realized.

However, they do not happen automatically. All of them presume a very real separation from the world. They postulate one’s removal from defiling influences, and a refusal to touch the unclean thing. **Where sin is preferred, and the individual insists on remaining among unbelievers, not**

separating from them, these benefits are forfeited. This accounts for the remarkable absence of spirituality within the professed church. Where these Fatherly benefits are not evident, it is only because the conditions of our text have **not** been met.

YE SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS

“. . . and ye shall be My sons and daughters. . .” Other versions read, “*And you shall be My sons and daughters,*”^{NKJV} “*And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,*”^{NASB} “*and you shall be to Me for sons and daughters,*”^{DARBY} and “*and you will be sons and daughters of Mine.*”^{WILLIAMS}

Prophetically, the Prophets referred to a time when God’s people would be His “*sons*” and “*daughters*” (Isa 43:6; 49:22). In all of Moses, those are the only places God refers to “*My sons*” and/or “*My daughters!*” Hosea prophesied a time and place where it was said unto people, “*Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God*” (Hosea 1:10). The words “*children of God,*” are **not** found in Moses and the Prophets. There are sixteen such references in the New Covenant Scriptures (Matt 5:9; Lk 20:36; John 1:12; 11:52; Rom 8:14,16,19,21; 9:8; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; Phil 2:15; 1 John 3:1,2,10; 5:2).

When we are “*born again*” (John 3:3,7; 1 Pet 1:23), we are “*begotten of God*” (1 John 5:18), having been given “*power to become the sons of God*” (John 1:12). This is **not**, however, the perspective of this text. **These words refer to our continuance in the faith, not our initial reception of faith.** Contrary to the opinions of some, our relationship with God is not cast in stone when it is initiated. **The continuance of spiritual life depends upon it being sustained from above, and that is done by God being our “Father,” and we being His “sons and daughters.”** When we walk “*as dear children*” the spiritual passageway between us and the throne of God is kept clear. Then, and only then, can a free flow of requires resources be realized.

This is by no means a system of salvation by works. It does, however,

emphasize that the “*Father of lights*” (James 1:17) will **not** deposit His goods with those who walk in darkness. **He who mandated the removal of sin through His Son is not apt to pour forth His mercies on those who insist on remaining where sin dominates.** The One who separated us from the world cannot walk with us if we insist on returning to that realm of alienation.

We will be treated as God’s “sons and daughters” only when we cease all attempts to be yoked with unbelievers, come out from among them, be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. If one wonders what will result from the severance of such a relationship, spiritual life cannot be sustained without it!

This is the only place in Matthew through Jude where the word “*Almighty*” is used. It is found eight times in the Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:15; 21:22). It is found forty-eight times in Genesis through Malachi: Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25; Ex 6:3; Num 24:4,16; Ruth 1:20,21; Job 5:17; 6:4,14; 8:3,5; 11:7; 13:3; 15:25; 21:15,20; 22:3,17,23,25,26; 23:16; 24:1; 27:2,10, 11,13; 29:5; 31:2,35; 32:8; 33:4,10,12; 35:13; 37:23; 40:2; Psa 68:14; 91:1; Isa 13:6; Ezek 1:24; 10:5; Joel 1:15).

As it is used here, the word “*Almighty*” means, “*He who holds sway over all things; the ruler of all,*”^{THAYER} and “*The Almighty, the All-Powerful, the Omnipotent (One).*”^{FRIBERG}

Doctrinally, this is stated as

He who mandated the removal of sin through His Son is not apt to pour forth His mercies on those who insist on remaining where sin dominates. The One who separated us from the world cannot walk with us if we insist on returning to that realm of alienation.

If there is any question about this matter, consider that God has nowhere pledged His grace to those who do not want it. He demonstrated in the Gentile world that had no law, and the Jewish world who did have a Law from Him, that He will **not** continue to bless those who choose to ignore Him in favor of courting His enemies.

THE LORD ALMIGHTY

“. . . saith the Lord Almighty.” Other versions read, “*Says the Lord, the Ruler of all,*”^{BBE} “*says the almighty Lord,*”^{NJB} “*says Almighty God,*”^{IE} and “*The Lord Almighty said.*”^{WILLIAMS}

And who is it that has said these things? It is **the Lord Almighty, who rules over all. He can give, and He can withhold. He can cause to live, and cause to die. He can lift up, and He can cast down.** Is it possible to ignore this word, and still be received by Him? Who dares to embrace or declare such a postulate?

follows.

- ☛ “*Neither is worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things*” (Acts 17:25).
- ☛ “*One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (Eph 4:6).
- ☛ “*For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen*” (Rom 11:36).
- ☛ “*There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*” (James 4:12).
- ☛ “*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto*

This is the most elementary view of God, and thus was more frequently affirmed prior to the enthronement of Christ. However, when professing believers begin to live at a distance from the Lord, they must again be reminded of this very real perspective. This is because no person can violate the will of the Lord, or proceed to do what He has forbidden, unless they forget that they are in His hands.

dishonor?" (Rom 9:20-21).

This is the most elementary

view of God, and thus was more frequently affirmed during the era

of the Old Covenant – prior to the enthronement of Christ. However, when professing believers begin to live at a distance from the Lord, they must again be reminded of this rudimentary, yet very real perspective. This is because **no person can violate the will of the Lord, or proceed to do what He has forbidden, unless they forget that they are in His hands.** Thus Jesus said, *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Mat 10:28). As is very apparent, that is a sobering word coming from the mouth of the Savior. See to it that you embrace it.

CONCLUSION

This teaching of this passage was necessary because of the carnal state into which the church in Corinth had drifted. Although they apparently had many gifts, coming behind in none of them (1 Cor 1:7), and were given extended teaching by the Apostle to the Gentiles – both personal and literary – they came miserably short of where they should have been in Christ Jesus. Among other things, this confirms the craftiness of the wicked one, and the vigor with which he is attacking the church.

No person or doctrine should lead the people of God to have a simplistic view of their adversary the devil. Such a perspective depletes the strength of the believer, causes to imagine he has no need of the whole armor of God, and lulls the

soul to sleep in the midst of an inferno. Under such conditions the watchmen of God shout from the walls of Zion, *“Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Eph 5:14-17).

Awaking and rising from the dead is equivalent to not being unequally yoked together with unbelievers – those in whom the devil is working, and upon which the wrath of God is abiding. What person of sound mind would culture such a relationship? Who would dare to be identified with the one who has been

expelled from heaven?

There is nothing about salvation that allowed for their condition. The New Covenant made no provision for it. The intercession of Jesus made no room for it. The Gospel of Christ could not produce such a state. The Holy Spirit of God could not possibly move them in that direction. This was the pure and simple result of carnality, and carnality is the result of quenching and grieving the Spirit of God, and neglecting *“so great salvation”* (Heb 2:3).

Suffice it to say, there is no valid cause for the reasoning of this text to become obscure. That can only happen when the conditions it declares are embraced in spite of this warning.

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 6/10/2005. In this session, we continue our current series of lessons on the Epistle of Second Corinthians. The twenty-ninth lesson will cover verses one through four of the seventh chapter: “A PROPER RESPONSE.” How are we to respond to the affirmation of the irreconcilability of righteousness and unrighteousness? Or Christ and the devil himself? This passage unfolds the only response that is proper – the only response that grace will produce – the only response that God will receive. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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**REFRESHING WATERS
RENEWAL NUMBER 16**

Please be praying for this gathering, and plan to attend all of the sessions. We are asking for the Lord to make this a spiritual high point for all of us.