

Title: Be Not Unequally Yoked

Text: 2 Corinthians 6: 11-7: 1

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2 Corinthians 6: 11: O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

The apostle addresses the whole congregation at Corinth. He said, "Our mouth is open unto you." It means he held back nothing profitable. He spoke in plainness of speech. And he spoke faithfully. When he says, "Our heart is enlarged" it means he spoke this to them because he loved them.

Application: Brethren, this same love for you is what opens my mouth toward you, for I desire your eternal good.

2 Corinthians 6: 12: Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

"Ye are not straitened in us" means Paul's heart was not narrow for them. His heart was open wide to all his brethren at Corinth. "But ye are straitened in your own bowels." Paul says, "It is your hearts that are too narrow to receive us."

The trouble the Corinthian's were having with hearing the truth spoken by Paul was because they were being influenced by those who were not God's messengers and they were being influenced by the world. They had been made to doubt if Paul was an apostle. Also, Paul had rebuked them to turn them from their error, therefore they found it difficult to accept Paul and to accept the word of the Lord.

Application: Brethren, whatever God's true preacher declares to you, he will back it up with scripture. But when he does, sometimes the word of God rebukes us. We are apt to tune out that which goes against our fleshly desires and the lust of our eyes. They were saying, "O, that's just Paul speaking." The Galatians had this same problem with Paul. He said,

Galatians 4: 15: Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. 16: Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Never let your hearts become too narrow to receive the truth of God. It is by the word of God that God will sanctify us and keep us from falling away with this ungodly world.

James 1: 19: Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: 20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. 21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth *therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

2 Corinthians 6: 13: Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

Paul says, "Since I am speaking to you because my heart is open wide to you in love, now, you return to me the same recompense; repay me with a heart opened wide in love." He says, "I speak to you as unto my own children."

Application: Brethren, have we been together long enough that you understand what I mean when I say that you are on my heart like my own children are on my heart? As a father I detect what my children need and that is what I teach them. As your pastor, I do the same with you. When Brother Don was here we were talking about the last

message from Isaiah 52. I said, “I am not sure if our young people, perhaps even some the older brethren, understand the dangers of being unequally yoked with unbelievers.” Don said, “I am sure that MOST to whom we preach everywhere do not understand the importance of it.” So because I do love you, I want to speak on this important subject.

Title: **Be Not Unequally Yoked**

2 Corinthians 6: 14: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:

This is a metaphor taken from the yoke worn by animals that pull side by side in the same direction on a farm. (Deuteronomy 22: 10) Commonly, this is applied to believers not marrying unbelievers—that is definitely one application but it is wider than that.

Proposition: The text prohibits every kind of union in which the character and interest of the believer loses our distinctiveness and our integrity.

Illustration: Let me try to illustrate the danger of a believer being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. There is a muddy river back where I grew up called the Ouachita River. Below Alabama Landing there is a clear creek that runs into the Ouachita River from Lake D’arbone. The river is muddy but the creek is clean and clear. Where they meet, for about a hundred yards, they flow side-by-side, so that you can easily distinguish the clear water from the muddy water. But eventually, the clean water became muddy by the other river so that you could not tell them apart. That is the danger of a believer being unequally yoked with an unbeliever.

I. FIRST, WHAT KINDS OF UNION DOES THIS APPLY TO?

It applies to religious fellowship. The apostle had occasion to warn the Corinthians against fellowship with idolaters. This is the chief application. The church of God, believers in particular, can have no union with those who preach and promote salvation by man’s will rather than by God’s will. Those who preach law and works rather than grace are not one with us who preach salvation by grace rather than by works. We must protect the union we have with believers in the church of God. Next, to Christ himself, a brother and sister in Christ is the greatest gift God has given us in this world. “Behold, How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” (Ps 133: 1)

Our text applies to marriage. For a believer the first and primary consideration ought to be whether or not the other person worships: God the Father who elected his people unto salvation before the foundation of the world—the God who saves on purpose; God the Son who accomplished the redemption of his elect and purged us of our sins by his doing and dying, apart from any help from the sinner; and God the Holy Spirit by whom we must be regenerated to life and given all things that pertain to true godliness. “Whose praise is of God and not of men.” Even when dating someone, before you give your heart away, bring up this question first. It is much more difficult to sever ties once they have stolen your heart.

Sadly, most of the time, this question is of least importance. On that first date you ask a thousand questions that don’t amount to a hill of beans. Why should a believing man bother to ask the consent of the earthly father, if he is ignoring the heavenly Father?

If you want a marriage made in heaven then seek it with one whom God has loved from everlasting, one for whom Christ became Surety from before the foundation of the world, one whom he has chosen and caused to approach unto him, one who delights in the true and living God, in Christ and him crucified. You want a husband who seeks to give himself as Christ gave himself for us; you want a bride who is in subjection as the church is in subjection to Christ.

Our text applies to business partnerships. Men united in business contracts must have very much in common. It will be misery to be in a partnership with someone whose life is not governed by the same godly principles as yourself. You will be yoked to the devil.

Our text also applies to friendships. A wise man chooses his friends with care. The power and influence of friendship is great, either for good or for evil. 1 Cor 15:33: Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. We would not trust our property to a man whom we did not know, or our child to an education that we had not carefully selected, so we would not open our hearts to one whom we were not sure we can fully trust.

Our Christian spirit is greatly influenced by an unworthy friend. He may be a scoffer. Perhaps she is one who sneers at all we love and seek. Maybe it is an indulgent lover of pleasure. Whichever the case, they will nourish the worldliness of our old fleshly man.

On the other hand, few things help us more than a well-chosen Christian friendship. Many a doubt is scattered by the contact of a friend's faith. Many a sliding step steadied by the influence of a friend's firmness. Wouldn't it be better to have a friendship that even death cannot sever?

Those are the four applications for our text: religious union, marriage union, business union, and the union of friendship.

Let me add one more thing before we get into our text. Our text does not forbid all contact with unbelievers in civil society, conversation, or vocation. If that were true, the believer would have to leave the world. Also, God put us in the world as salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16) to witness to all men and to be an example of his grace, even to those who despise his name. We are to do so graciously and lovingly as we can.

Nor does it apply to those who the Lord saved after you were married but he did not save your spouse. Scripture tells the woman in such case to be in subjection to her husband, that you might win them over by your godly conduct—win them over to at least attending the preaching of the gospel.

II. WHY SHOULD A BELIEVER NOT BE YOKED WITH AN UNBELIEVER?

Number one, it is forbidden by God. Paul is speaking under the inspiration of the Spirit of God when he says, in verse 14: Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. God who knows what is best for you who believe said it. That is enough.

Secondly, God says in verse 14: “for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?” Believers are fellows in the same ship. We have fellowship first of all, with Christ Jesus himself.

1 John 1: 6: If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7: 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 us from all sin.

We have fellowship with fellow believers born of the same Spirit.

Notice it says, “what fellowship hath righteousness.” By his blood, the believer has been made the righteousness of God. God requires us to be perfectly righteous to have fellowship with him. We have it! Believers are justified before God by the blood of Christ—all our sins have been paid for.

Not only that but God gave us a hunger and thirst after righteousness—after that which is right. We delight in the law of God after the inward man. Believers want to serve God and please him. We hate our sin and all sin that is against God because it is against the one who loved us and gave himself for us.

But the unbeliever, who has not been united with Christ, is unrighteous. He is guilty before God. He is iniquity and all he knows is iniquity. The unbeliever has no concept of equity because he knows not God and how God can be just and the Justifier of his people.

Therefore, the believer who is righteous will have no fellowship with the unbeliever who is unrighteous.

The next reason is in verse 14: and what communion hath light with darkness? The believer has been born of the Spirit of God and given light. Christ is our Light. We are children of Light! But the unbeliever is darkness. His carnal mind is enmity against God. (Rom 8: 7) Believer, you are light and the unbeliever is darkness, therefore you have no common union—no communion in Christ.

1 Corinthians 2: 12: Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Application: At the end of a long hard day, the most comforting thing in the world is to have a spouse who can comfort your heart by reminding you of what Christ has done and is doing. Or a brother in Christ or a business partner who can help you take the hard knocks by a common union you have in Christ.

Fourthly verse 15 says And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Believer, Christ dwells in you and you in Christ.

John 15: 3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. 5 I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

The unbeliever is under the dominion of “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:” (Eph 2: 2) Belial—Satan—has control over the unbeliever. No unbeliever can free himself from the chains of the strongman!

Application: Believer, you can't do it—and especially by uniting with them. That only gives them credibility in their rebellion against God. Only Christ can free such a one! But we would be foolish to attempt to have agreement with such a person when God says, “What concord—accordance, agreement—hath Christ with Belial?” Is it really that bad, preacher? Yes. It is that bad. Attempting to unite a believer with an unbeliever is like trying to unite Christ with Satan.

The fifth reason God gives is verse 15: or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? An infidel is one who does not believe, and who avowedly rejects the testimony of Divine revelation. Some are Deists who believe in the Divine existence and a future state of being, but who refuse the authority of the Bible. Others are atheists, who deny the Divine existence; who proclaim that: the world was formed by chance or that it is eternal; who think man evolved, who think death is the end of all being.

Application: Believer, will you say that you can have part, a portion, participation, with such a one? God says, “What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”

The next reason God gives is this in verse 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. Believer, let that sink in, ye are the temple of the living God; God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ephesians 2: 22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

John 6:56: He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

Believer, are you in agreement with the person who holds to the idolatrous lies that God chose us because he foresaw merit in us?—that is idolatry; man worship. Do you agree with the lie that Christ died for all men without exception so it is up to man to make his blood effectual? That is idolatry; man worship! Do you agree with the lie that the Spirit of God cannot quicken whom he will or that he only works in joint effort with man or that man by his will makes himself born again? That is idolatrous man worship!

Application: Believer, if you really think you can live in agreement with such an idolator whether it be in the church, in marriage, in business, or even in friendship you are saying you have agreement with them.

See the issue here is what God has done for us. God has separated the believer from unbelievers—we did not separate ourselves. Christ the Light has separated the believer from the darkness of our natural man. Christ our Head has severed the members of his body from being members of Satan and made us members of Christ. The Spirit of God has given us faith so that we are not infidels. We once worshipped the creature more than the Creator but the true and living God has made us worshippers of God, not worshippers of the works of our hands.

The issue here is communion—oneness.

- No fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness.
- No communion between light and darkness
- No concord between Christ and Belial
- No part for a believer with an infidel
- No agreement between the temple of God and the temple of idols.

Application: You may think you can convert the unbeliever but the evil generally triumphs because the believer has robbed himself of power because by uniting with the unbeliever he has disobeyed God. God said,

Joshua 23:12 Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: 13 Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

Exodus 34: 16:...their daughters [will] go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

Application: Can you imagine trying to raise children, teach them the gospel, with someone who hates God?

III. FOR OUR THIRD POINT, LET'S LOOK AT WHY WE SHOULD NOT UNITE WITH UNBELIEVERS, BY LOOKING AT THE POSITIVE SIDE.

The resolve not to be unequally yoked sometimes involves large sacrifice. But we are never the loser for obeying God. If we imagine we have lost anything, just remember this is what we gain. Here are the promises of our God.

First, God will receive you--2 Corinthians 6: 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. The believers in Corinth were not to leave that city, but to preserve their callings in that city, by diligently avoiding contamination of idolatry and vice. So should we continue in the world, yet not be conformed to it. We should continue where God has put us. But we are to separate ourselves from all that is unjust or unholy. "Touch not the unclean," means all that is unholy, and

out of harmony with the purity of God.

Now, God is not our Father because we separate ourselves from worldly alliances. He is our Father by grace, by adoption, by his own will in Christ. And if we do separate ourselves it will be because he has worked his will in us and made us willing to do so. But if we do, **he will receive us**. Christ said,

John 6:37: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Secondly, God will care for us as a father cares for his children in our every need--v18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Child of God, your heavenly Father knows what you have need of. He can give you what no ungodly mate can give you. Lose the creature, gain the Creator. While others are ungracious, God will be gracious. The stream may fail, but never the Fountain. Therefore, “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Mt 6: 33)

When the Lord saved me by his grace, the gospel cost me the love of one I thought I could not live without. It hurt badly. But God gave me a true love. One who loves Christ and puts him first, even over me; one who loves Christ and therefore is a faithful bride, a faithful mother, and a faithful pastor’s wife—faithful to each of you! Now, I know, what I thought was loss was no loss at all. I did not lose anything. And whatever the case may be with you, you will find it true as well.

Philippians 3: 7: But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ, 9: And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Now back to our text. What shall we do, brethren? 2 Corinthians 7: 1

2 Corinthians 7: 1: Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Amen!