Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Separating from Unbelievers, Part 1
Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:14
Code: 47-44

Separating from Unbelievers

This morning in our ongoing study of 2 Corinthians, we come to one of the most basic and one of the most foundational doctrines of the Bible. Indeed what we're going to learn in the text this morning is a cornerstone in all Christian understanding and all Christian conduct. We're going to be identifying a principle today that is expounded by the Apostle Paul that has far-reaching and crucial implications for our usefulness, for our blessing.

I want you to open your Bible to 2 Corinthians chapter 6. And I'm not going to spend a lot of time introducing the message, I want to get right into the principle here because it is so very, very important. Second Corinthians chapter 6 verse 14, let me read the paragraph that follows from verse 14, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers, for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness or what fellowship has light with darkness, or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or Satan, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, just as God said, `I will dwell in them and walk among them and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord, `and do not touch what is unclean and I will welcome you. And I will be a Father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' says the Lord Almighty. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Probably this is the most familiar portion of Scripture found in 2 Corinthians. The statement that begins verse 14 may be one of the most oft quoted portions of this marvelous epistle. It says, "Do not be bound together, or unequally yoked with unbelievers." And that is the principle which is so foundational, so much a cornerstone of Christian living that we have to give our attention to it very, very carefully.

Now just at first reading it is clear from this passage that the Apostle Paul identifies two opposing worlds, two opposing realms or spheres or kingdoms or dimensions of life. One is described and characterized by righteousness, light, Christ, believers and the presence of God. The other is characterized, or described as lawless, dark, satanic, occupied by unbelievers and the presence of idols. Two societies, two realms, two spheres utterly different, utterly distinct, completely incongruous and incompatible. And the Apostle says there is no possibility for people in these two kingdoms to be

bound together in common work, no partnership, no fellowship, no harmony, no commonality and no agreement does or can really exist.

Years ago there was a ballad titled, "Two Different Worlds," and the first line simply said, "We live in two different worlds." And that is precisely the case here. Two different worlds that have utterly nothing in common. No one really lives in both. Some people try unsuccessfully but they are two distinct. One is old, the other is new. One is earthly, the other is heavenly. One is deadly, the other is life giving. One is material, the other is spiritual. One is filled with lies, the other is all truth. One relates to the unclean and the other to the pure. And Paul's message in this text is intended to make it very clear to all Christians that there is no possibility of living in both or shuttling back and forth.

You say, "Why does he address that here?" Answer, because the Corinthians were endeavoring to live in both or at least to shuttle back and forth. They had come to Christ. In chapter 5 and verse 17 the Apostle Paul had stated that if any man is in Christ he is a new creature. The old things passed away, behold new things have come. Salvation is called newness of life. And the Corinthians had entered into that newness. They had come to the new and the heavenly and the life giving and the spiritual and the true. They had come into the kingdom that is characterized by righteousness, light, Christ and the presence of God. And there was no possibility of having a relationship of any intimacy with what was old and earthly and deadly and material and filled with lies, what was lawless and dark and satanic and idolatrous. They had been made pure and they could have no further fellowship with what was impure.

That's Paul's message and the Corinthians needed to hear it. Why? Because they were moving back and forth between the two incompatible, incongruous realms. Like the Thessalonians of whom Paul says, "You turned to God from idols," 1 Thessalonians 1:9, they had done that. The Corinthians had turned to God from idols but because of the influences of the pagan culture they were in they kept going back to the old idolatry. And there was really no possibility of any agreement, any harmony, any partnership, any fellowship with that old kingdom. They were allowing themselves because of the influence of their culture to get sucked back into the forms of their old idolatry.

And to make matters worse, into their midst had come false teachers who brought a syncretistic eclectic kind of religion that took Christianity, Judaism and the most popular forms of pagan idolatry and melted it all together to form a false and satanic and damnable heresy which had had a great influence in the Corinthian church to the degree that some of the Corinthians had even turned against Paul in favor of these false apostles and lying teachers who had come with their doctrine of demons, their satanic concoction and now they were trying to link Christianity with this new stuff and link Paul with these false apostles and such was an absolute and utter impossibility. And more than just being impossible, it was frighteningly damaging, as we shall see.

So Paul has to address himself to this problem in Corinth. It was there when he wrote the first letter, 1 Corinthians, to them. It was there before 1 Corinthians when he wrote his initial letter which doesn't appear in the Scripture. It is still there and it has been exacerbated now because of the arrival of the false teachers who have brought in another form of pagan religion mingled with perhaps Judaism and somehow Christianity to make it more palatable and so here are these erstwhile Corinthians, flopping back and forth from Christ to their pagan religion of the past, sometimes unwittingly. And so Paul makes a direct statement in verse 14 that is the command, the mandate, the standard and the principle which is elucidated in the rest of the text. It is this, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers."

That is a classic statement. As I said, probably the most familiar statement out of this entire letter. It is a classic call by the Apostle to separation from unbelievers. And, in fact, that is the greatest challenge that you as a Christian have, and me too. Not to be bound together with unbelievers is our greatest challenge, to live a separated life is a tremendous challenge, particularly in a culture which is bombarding us with all of the elements of paganism.

It is not only our greatest challenge, it is our greatest source of joy and usefulness when we obey that command. The pure and the polluted share nothing in common ultimately. And the people of God cannot form intimate relationships with those who don't belong to God. All relationships like that are superficial. You cannot make a meaningful relationship with an enemy of the gospel. They live in a different world with a different and completely hostile and antagonistic leader.

Now what does that mean? What are the implications of that? Well first of all, the term "bound together" is usually translated "unequally yoked" because it comes from a Greek term that can have that implication. In fact, the Greek term, the Greek verb that is sometimes translated "unequally yoked," heterozugeo, can be used of yoking up in a common effort. Paul draws this analogy, however, not from the usage of the Greek term but from a concept back in Deuteronomy 22:10. When God was laying out prescriptions for the conduct of His people, He gave them a lot of prescriptions that on the surface are not particularly spiritual, they had to do with the uniqueness of Israel's life. But some of them were very practical and wise and one of the things that He instructed them, recorded in Deuteronomy 22:10 is that they were not to plow with an ox and an ass yoked together. And the reasons for that are obvious. Those two animals have two different natures. They don't have the same gait, they don't have the same disposition, they don't have the same strength. They don't have the same kind of instincts, completely different natures. You can't yoke them up and expect a straight furrow. And Paul is borrowing off of that analogy and using a Greek term that was used in that same kind of way, speaking of unequal yokes or equal yokes. In fact, in Paul's time that very verb was used to refer to teachers linked up in a common religion or common philosophy or a common school who did not agree and they were said to be unequally yoked.

And so, Paul is borrowing from the Hebrew analogy of the Old Testament, and as well borrowing from some of the Greek usage of that very term because it does mean to be yoked...to be involved in a common enterprise linked together. And to have to do the same thing in perfect harmony is an utter impossibility if we are talking about a believer and an unbeliever. Do not allow yourself to be bound together in a yoke with an unbeliever.

Now that opens up all kinds of possibilities. What in the world does Paul mean when he says, "Don't be bound together with unbelievers? How are we to understand that because the implications of that have all kinds of significance for our lives?"

Now somebody is going to come along and say, "Well look, in the purest and truest sense it's really calling you to the monastic life style. Well what it's calling you to is that you should do like those monks of centuries ago, put on some dirty clothes and find a cave and stay there till you die. And you know, just stay up there and get dirtier and dirtier and read the Scripture and contemplate your navel and don't let anybody influence you. Just isolate yourself."

That's really...it was the misinterpretation of this that was behind the monastic mentality. And some of us in a more modern environment might say, "Well what it really means is you better be sure that you buy your home from a Christian real estate agent. And you buy your car from a Christian car dealer. And that you make sure you've got Christian neighbors. And you make sure that you have your kids in a Christian school. And you make sure you buy your insurance from a Christian agent. And you make sure you find a Christian butcher," and on and on and on, ad infinitum. "And we just cannot get into any kind of thing and make sure, boy, you don't want to be in a mutual fund, boy, then you're really linked up with unbelievers. You better be careful who's putting money in your bank." I mean, it goes on and on and on.

Where do we draw this line here? How far does this go? What about dating? What about marriage? What about a partnership? What about being on a team? What about working together with someone? What about recreating together with them? What about a mutual fund? What about a common business? What about a partnership? What about a limited partnership? What about...what about? Where do we draw the line here? What are we talking about? Are we supposed to go out of the world?

Well that's kind of hard because the great commission says go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature, right? So we're not supposed to go out of the world. In fact, look what Paul said to the Corinthians. They would understand that statement in the context of what he had already said to them. So let's go back to 1 Corinthians and see how Paul defines what he means by that. And he sets some very clear parameters so that we don't have to be confused.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 9, and we're going to kind of look at a few Scriptures in 1 Corinthians. I hadn't intended to really develop this this way but that's the way it turned out in the first service so that's the way it will turn out here. In fact, I told the people that...that I spent hours and hours and days and days preparing all of this and covered what I wrote in five minutes. And that's the adventure of preaching. I'm interested to hear what I'm going to say, and if I can remember what I said to them, I'll say it to you.

First Corinthians chapter 9 verse 20, now Paul...verse 19 really sets it up, "Although I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all that I might win them more." Now Paul is saying, "Look, I'm free from all men, in one sense, I have been catapulted into the kingdom of light, there's no encumbrances in this world, but I have made myself consciously and purposely a slave to them all for evangelistic purposes." So Paul didn't want to pull out of the word...world, he was anything but a monastic. I mean, he was in the middle of everything. He was in the middle of every crowd there was. He was like Jesus, he created crowds. He went where the sinners were for the purpose of evangelism. And he says, verse 20, "To the Jews I became as Jew that I might win Jews, to those who were under the law as under the law, though not being myself under the law that I might win those who are under the law." He became a Jew and to those fastidious law-keeping Pharisees, he even followed their path, if need be, to win them.

And to those who are without law, Gentiles, verse 21, he "...became as without law though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men that I may by all means save some and I do all things for the sake of the gospel that I may become a fellow partaker of it," another way of saying that I might have partners in this deal, I want to win people to Christ.

So, look, Paul didn't leave the world. He didn't run from it. He got right in the middle of it for the purpose of leading people to the knowledge of Christ. He is not calling for isolation. There's no place for isolation from unbelievers. If God wanted us isolated from unbelievers, He would have saved us and instantly catapulted us into heaven. He is not calling for isolation. In fact, we are mandated to intersect with the unsaved all the time.

Now let's follow this and see where Paul really sets his limits. Let's begin by going back to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, 1 Corinthians chapter 5. Somebody is going to say, "Well, I'll tell you right now, I...I'm going to limit my association with worldly people, I'm just not going to associate with...with really the riff-raff, I'm not going to associate with the bad ones. I just want to stay away from that. Is that where I draw the line?" Well, 1 Corinthians 5:9, "I wrote to you in my letter, previous to 1 Corinthians he had written them a letter, I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people."

And somebody is going to say, "That's it, there it is, that's the proof, I'm not associating with them." But, verse 10, "I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world." I'm not talking about unregenerate immoral people, or covetous or swindlers, or idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. And the implication would be to do that would be...what?...sinful, wrong, shirking your responsibility. I don't want you to go up in a cave. Paul says, "No, no, I'm not talking about not associating with immoral people in the world," verse 11, "I'm talking about associating with so-called brothers who are immoral, covetous, idolaters, revilers, drunkards, swindlers." I'm not talking about immoral people in the world, I'm talking about immoral people...where?...in the church. You've got to deal with those people. They'll pollute the fellowship. They're like leaven, you've got to put them out, you've got to turn them over to Satan, you've got to deal with them, don't eat with them. If they're heretics, admonish them a few times then dismiss them.

Verse 12, "For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside God judges." What I'm concerned about, Paul is, those who are outside...Paul says...are going to fall into the judgment of God and I need to reach them with the gospel. So whatever it means not to be joined together or unequally yoked with unbelievers, it doesn't mean that we are to cut ourselves off from sinful unbelievers. Then we would have to go out of the world and going out of the world would defeat the very purpose for which God has left us in the world and that is to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And what was the highest level of accusation ever rendered against Jesus from the religious establishment? They said he is the friend of...what?...sinners, he hangs around drunkards and wine bibbers and prostitutes and etc., etc. Sure, cause that's why he came. He didn't come for the righteous, but he came for sinners.

So whatever it means not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, it doesn't mean that we are to cut off all association from them, otherwise we would have to go out of the world and that would be defying the very purpose for which the Lord saved us and left us and that is to go into the world. We need to be where they are.

Well somebody else is going to say, "I know what it means. I know what it means. It means that if...that if you're married to an unbeliever, you get to get a divorce. You've got to get rid of them because, I mean, if you can't have any kind of fellowship at the most intimate level, how can light have any fellowship with darkness? I mean you can't...how you going to have a marriage? So dumped that unsaved partner, find yourself a nice Christian guy, nice Christian lady." Is that what it means?

Turn to 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 7 verse 12, "Paul says to the rest, I say not the Lord," please understand what that means, it doesn't...it's not a divine disclaimer, all he's saying here is I'm not quoting Jesus anymore, he is inspired by the Holy Spirit to say what he said, it's the truth of God, but he is no longer drawing from the teaching of Jesus. So he says, "If any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever and she consents to live with him, let him not...is the technical word for divorce." If you

have an unsaved wife and she wants to stay married to you, then she's to stay. God hates divorce, any kind.

And the same is true in verse 13, "A woman who has an unbelieving husband and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away." Because it might have been a natural implication of the gospel and all things being new and entering into the kingdom and into the light from the darkness and having a new master, namely Christ, and realizing that you no longer could have the kind of intimate relationship that makes life rich and meaningful and makes marriage what God designed it to be, because you are now married to an unsaved person and you are absolutely living in two completely different worlds at the most profound level of your being and so the right thing to do would be to dump that person and find a Christian so you could really fulfill life. And the Bible says no, absolutely not.

So what does it mean? It doesn't mean dump your unsaved partner. It doesn't mean cut yourself off from all the bad people in your society. What does it mean? Where are the limitations to be drawn.

Let's take another text, 1 Corinthians chapter 8. And again, remember now, the Corinthians would have this letter and they had an understanding of this letter with which to create a context to understand Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 6:14. In 1 Corinthians chapter 8 Paul is talking about some limits here. Now...now let me just follow this. You say, "Well, look, we're supposed to go in to the world and we're supposed to reach the unbelievers. Okay, I'm willing to do that."

And, you know, all those unbelievers are gathering all the time at the pagan festivals. You know, life in the ancient world revolved, particularly in Corinth, around the paganism of the time, around the worship of the god Aesculapius and all of the rest of the stuff that went with it. And all these pagan things were going on, ceremonies and festivals, the whole of life surrounded that idolatry. And if you wanted to go where the unbelievers were, you would go there and that would be a great place to meet a bunch of pagan people. They all assembled there. And so, perhaps some of the believers would go there. And you have absolute and unmitigated and complete freedom to go there and say, "Look, I'm free in Christ, I'll go and I'll kind of watch. In my heart and soul I won't participate, I'll do those things that are not consequent...have no consequence morally, but it will keep me there, it will kind of keep the connection going there. And that will be fine and I'll be able to reach these people."

You've got a little problem here in verse 10, "If someone sees you there who has knowledge." What does that mean? I think saving knowledge, someone who is a believer and sees you dining in an idol's temple. "Will not his conscious if he's weak be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols?" Here's a new Christian, baby Christian, who is called the weaker brother also in Romans 14 and 15, same kind of discussion, and he looks at this strong Christian and the strong Christian is over at the Bacchus festival. And he's in there and the sexual stuff is going on, the temple prostitutes are doing their thing, the drunkenness is going on, they're feasting and gorging themselves and they're having

this wild time. And he's going over there, ostensibly, to witness. And he sits down and he eats the meal, I mean, he just eats the meal...the meal is there and it's part of the deal and he eats and an idol is nothing, 1 Corinthians 8 early in the chapter, what's an idol? An idol is a nothing. Something offered to an idol is nothing, it doesn't mean anything, it's pointless because the idol is nothing. So he just eats the food.

But there's a Christian who is a new Christian, weak. He's just been saved out of idolatry. He sees his mature brother doing this. He says, "Oh boy, I'm free to go there, wow...I'm free to eat that stuff...whoa...this is wonderful." He goes, he's too weak, he gets sucked right back in to his old paganism. He doesn't have the spiritual strength to cope with that liberty.

What has happened is, the stronger brother has used his freedom to cause the weaker brother to stumble, right? So he's got to guard his life. He can go into the world and he can reach the world but he's got to be all the time very, very aware that somebody may be watching him and watching him legitimizing whatever kind of behavior he is conducting and seeing that that behavior is okay for him, plunges into that same behavior without the spiritual strength to cope with what's coming around at all the trappings. Pretty soon, he's sucked right back into the vortex, right back into the hurricane.

And here's this well-intentioned stronger brother wanting to win some idolater to Christ and in so doing he's overstepped the line and caused his brother to stumble who is weaker. And he says he becomes strengthened in verse 10 to eat things sacrificed to idols because he sees you do it, but through your knowledge, he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died, and thus by sinning against the brother and wounding their conscience when it is weak you sin against Christ. In verse 13, "Don't do anything to cause your brother to stumble."

Now here we have some limits, then. We're going to reach into the world but there's some limits and the first limit we see in this particular text is the limit of what might be a liberty expressed that would cause a weaker brother to stumble. So we have to guard the conduct. Yes, we want to reach out to the world. Yes, we want to touch the world. Yes, we want to lead them to Christ. But we have to stop short of a full identification with that life style which could cause a weaker Christian thinking he's free to do that to step into that and plunge into some kind of spiritual disaster.

Go to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and let's find a similar kind of limitation on our freedom. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 we have a scenario that is given to us and it's a very simple scenario. Verse 27, one of the unbelievers invite you...boy, that's a great thing, isn't it? When an unbeliever invites you to dinner? We wish we didn't always have to do the inviting. Here's a scenario where an unbeliever invites you to his home and you wish to go. It works out, you're going to go. "Eat anything that is set before you." Is that not good? You don't want to offend the guy, right? So he comes and he brings you this meat. Don't ask questions, eat it...without asking questions for conscience' sake.

If something in your conscience says, "You know, this...this...this might have been meat offered to idols because the best place to buy meat in every idolatrous city was at the temple butcher shop...because the prices were low. Why were the prices low? Basically because they didn't have to buy it on a wholesale market. Worshipers came to the temple and presented a sacrifice. A portion of it was burned, some of it was consumed by the priests who operated the place, but obviously you've got the whole population bringing sacrifices at a fairly rapid rate. They can't consume all that so they just took it out the back, opened up a butcher shop and sold it to people. I mean, with the elimination of the wholesale market, the elimination of the middle man, you get the best buy...people buy their meat there.

Now you're going to say, "This is meat offered to idols." "Don't ask any questions for conscience' sake, just sit there and eat the meat."

"But...verse 28...if anyone should say to you," let's say you've got....the scene is obviously there's several believers there and one of those believers says to you, "Look, this is meat sacrificed to idols."

"I know...I know where he got this." Oh brother, now you've a problem. You're going to offend somebody. If you eat you'll offend your brother who is weak and who can't handle the fact that it's like a...it's like a brand new person today converted out of orthodox Judaism and he comes over to your house for his first meal with a Christian and you offer him pork chops. He can't deal with that. Somebody saved completely out of paganism for whom meat offered to idols connoted a whole gross idolatrous immoral religious structure and you give him meat offered to idols and it's more than his conscience can bear. You don't want to push him because you don't want to train him to ignore his conscience, right? And you don't want him to do something that will cause him to violate his conscience which is training him how to ignore it and you don't want to get him into something that's going to suck him down into the vortex of his old life. So, you've got a problem.

Here's a weaker brother...he says, "This is offered to idols, I can't eat this."

And you're sitting there and you're saying, "Oh brother, if I...if I don't offend you, I'm going to offend this guy who's an unbeliever and we're trying to win to Christ." So what do you...you're caught between a rock and a hard place, what do you do?

Verse 28, "Don't eat it...don't eat it." Why? "For the sake of the one who informed you and for his conscience' sake."

Listen to this, you're better off to offend the non-Christian. You have a far greater obligation to your brother. This is the family, folks. This is the kingdom. Far better to offend that unbeliever. And you know what that unbeliever will conclude? Those Christians love each other, those Christians care for

each other. If you offend your brother and you don't offend the unbeliever, the unbeliever will conclude it is better to be an unbeliever, they treat you better. We have a profounder obligation, amazingly enough, to those within the family not to cause them to stumble. In fact, Jesus in Matthew chapter 18 said, "When you think about causing another believer to fall into sin, think about this...if anyone causes one of these who believe in Me to sin, he would be better off if a millstone were hanged around his neck and he were drowned in the sea."

In other words, you'd be better off dead then to offend a believer. Don't offend a believer. So back off of that desire to reach out to that unbeliever for the sake of love to that brother and to make sure he doesn't stumble. Why? Because God, listen to this, is far more concerned about His own then those who aren't His own. They are His beloved sheep and the reaching of those who aren't His own is dependent upon the virtue and the godliness and the character of those who are. So you don't do what causes them to stumble into sin.

So all of that simply to say there's a context in which we are to understand this. It doesn't mean we go into a cave, it doesn't mean we dump our unsaved spouse or get rid of our unsaved friends, it doesn't mean that we move out of our neighborhood because we're surrounded by unbelievers. It doesn't mean we leave school because there are non-Christian teachers there. It doesn't mean that at all. What it does mean is we cannot over-indulge ourselves in their world to the detriment of our testimony within the body of Christ. That's what it means. Even Jesus was the friend of sinners, ate with the wicked, went to their houses.

What is Paul talking about here? Is he talking about marriage? Is he talking about dating, business, work, team, politics, education, entertainment, recreation? What's he talking about?

Well, we've already seen some of the limits that the Corinthians would have understood. Let me take you further to something they would well have understood. Paul has one thing in mind, folks, one thing in mind...the Corinthians were all messed up with false teachers teaching them a corrupted religion, corrupted by paganism. And if that weren't enough, they were surrounded by paganism...to "Corinthianize" meant to go to bed with a prostitute, that's how identified their city was with wickedness. And what the Apostle is saying to them is, "You cannot link up with false teachers and false apostles and false religion, that is the issue." That is the issue.

Let's go to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 again and I want to show you this because it's so important to understand the issue here. Paul starts the tenth chapter of 1 Corinthians with an illustration about Moses and the children of Israel, how there was tremendous solidarity, they were all brought collectively under the cloud, they all passed through the sea, they were all immersed into the leadership of Moses. They all had the same spiritual food, the manna from heaven, the water. They all drank that same spiritual drink. They all drank, you know, from the provision made for them by Christ. And they were all...they were all cared for by God but in verse 5 God wasn't well pleased with

them. You remember why, because they got involved in idolatry, verse 7, "Do not be idolaters as some of them were," and it tells about their idolatry, reminding us that they sat down to eat and drink and stood up to play, defining their idolatry and they acted immorally, 23,000 of them had to be killed, destroyed by serpents...a terrible, terrible tragedy. Here was the story, follow this.

Children of Israel collectively in Egypt. God comes and works a work of redemption, they're brought out of Egypt. They are now a redeemed people. They come into the wilderness, they're headed for Canaan. They get into the wilderness and they start to worship in an idolatrous fashion. They make a golden calf. They fall into wicked immorality and idolatry and they all die in the wilderness.

Why? Though they had been liberated out of captivity. They had gone through the redemptive provision of God. Instead of remaining pure, they went back to paganism. Where did they learn about a golden calf? You tell me, where did that come from? Egypt. They went back, it's exactly what the Corinthians were doing, going back to idolatry and with it that horrible immorality with those temple priestesses.

So in verse 14, after that illustration, Paul says to them, "My beloved, flee from idolatry." Don't go back. And then he tells them why. "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ, is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? And since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread." Look at the nation Israel, are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?" Again he's talking about we're one people, we're all one people, we've all been redeemed.

What do I mean then, that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No. I'm not saying an idol is anything, but I say, ."That the things which the pagans sacrifice they sacrifice to demons." That idol is a nothing. There is no such god. No such god exists, but there is a demon behind that false idol, impersonating that god, it is a demonic false religion and Satan is involved in it and demons are involved in it. And the end of verse 20, "I do not want you to become sharers in demons." You can't just casually go back to that. "You can't drink...verse 21...the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You can't partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. What do you want to do...verse 22...provoke the Lord to jealousy like Israel did?" Do you think you're stronger than He is? It's the same warning.

They were still toying with idolatry in Corinth. They were still being sucked back into that old life. And that was being exacerbated by a...a paganized form of religion brought to them by the false apostles..false teachers disguised as angels of light who were messengers of Satan, he calls them in 2 Corinthians 11.

This got so corrupt that they would come into the church and they would supposedly be speaking in tongues and it was nothing more than the pagan gibberish they used to do. And they were cursing

Jesus Christ and thinking it was the Holy Spirit doing that. That's what chapter 12 verse 3 says. They were being led like as they were led away to dumb idols and they were saying Jesus is cursed. And he says the Holy Spirit isn't telling you that.

Chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians, here's the immoral part. "Don't you know...verse 15...your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?" You can't take Christ and just go out to that thing and join yourself to a harlot because you join Christ to the harlot. You're one spirit with the Lord, verse 17, then verse 18, "Flee immorality, flee idolatry," the two "flees" in 1 Corinthians. So you get the picture of what they were doing, don't you? I mean, they were just going back to the old immorality, back to the old idolatry, confused by false teachers and false teaching and sucked into a culture of pagan religion.

When Paul then says, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers," he is calling for separation...listen carefully...at the religious level. That's what he means. At the spiritual level. And, frankly, nothing is a greater spiritual enterprise than a marriage because it is in a marriage where we literally depict Christ and His church. But that's what he's talking about.

He's talking about in a spiritual enterprise. You can't...you can't play with false religion, you can't yoke up true teachers and false teachers, you can't take true Christianity and link it to a false, damnable demonic lie. You can't do that. You have to separate yourself from all of that.

Now Paul talked further about this important point. Turn to 1 Timothy chapter 1 just briefly. In 1 Timothy chapter 1 Paul in verse 18 says, "The command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you that you may fight the good fight." Then he says this, listen carefully, verses 19 and 20, "Keeping faith...hold on to the faith...and a good clear conscience which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I have delivered to Satan that they may be taught not to blaspheme."

Paul had to go into that church and literally throw out the false teachers who were teaching blasphemous heresy, who were shipwrecking people's faith. He'd turn them over to Satan. You can't allow that in the church. You can't link up with that.

Over in chapter 4 he talks about hypocritical liars seared in their own consciences who teach the doctrines of demons and are energized by deceitful spirits. In chapter 6 verse 3 he says, "When anybody like this comes along with a different doctrine that doesn't agree with sound words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited, understands nothing, has a morbid interest in controversial questions, disputes about words, operates out of envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicion creates constant friction. They're men of depraved mind, deprived of the truth."

The point is to have nothing to do with them. Verse 20 of that same chapter, chapter 6, "Avoid worldly and empty chatter, avoid the opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge which some have professed and gone astray from the faith."

Listen, Satan's number one assault on the church is to infiltrate with error. To get in the church and teach lies, error, bad theology, to bring in syncretistic subtleties, to bring in stuff that sounds good on the surface but it is doctrine of demons. That's how he operates. And he had done it in Corinth and Paul says you can't do that, it is disastrous.

Look at 2 Timothy chapter 2, one last look at the words of Paul. In 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 15 he...he says we have to be diligent, studying to present ourselves approved to God as a workman, not needing to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of truth...handling it accurately, handling it precisely. We have to avoid worldly and empty chatter, it just leads to further ungodliness and that kind of stuff spreads like gangrene. Among such are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth. They said the resurrection has already taken place. They have upset the faith of some. So what have you got? You've got people in the church at Ephesus where Timothy is when he gets the letter, and they are teaching lies and they are teaching heresy and teaching error. He says handle the Word accurately, stay away from that stuff it is like gangrene, it just deadly eats away at the body of Christ.

And then down in verse 20, "In a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels but vessels of wood and earthenware, some to honor and some to dishonor." Now you remember our discussion of this when we talked about the clay pots in chapter 4. In those houses there were certain containers and some of them were used for honorable uses and some for dishonorable ones. Dishonorable meant waste, really dishonorable. The closest thing I can identify with is growing up as a kid before the day of garbage disposals, I can remember my mother many times saying to me, "Johnny, take out the garbage." Now we call it trash cause it's all plastic and tin and paper. But it didn't use to be. It was garbage. We didn't have any way to dispose of the garbage, we had a container that we kept in the house until it began to dominate the house. And when it began to create the culture for all the house to enjoy, my mother would say, "Johnny, take out the garbage."

And then I would take it out and put it in a barrel, one of those kind of metal barrels that we used to have and I'd just keep dumping it in there. And, you know, it was always full of flies and fly larva...you know how that was in those days. And about a few days into the week, of course, my mom would begin to realize that this garbage was having an impact on the whole neighborhood. And so it would be time to take the garbage to the curb and the garbage man would come. And then the garbage men would take it to El Monte because...no, no, I mean this in a serious way, because in El Monte...any of you from El Monte took that personally, didn't you? In El Monte they had a huge pig farm where I worked in the summer and all the garbage would be boiled and then dumped out in the

huge pig farm for the pigs to eat. And that's how they fed the pigs with that boiled stuff and that was a whole process...there was a thing we always took the garbage out in, I can see it to this day. And she never served roast on Sunday in it. I mean, it was a despicable thing, used for no other purpose.

And it's that way in those ancient houses, there were those kinds of things for the waste of the house. And look what Paul is saying, "Look, in the house there are vessels that are unto honor and they're made out of those precious metals. And then there's that stuff made out of the common material, wood and pottery. And if you want to be a gold and silver useful vessel, then cleanse yourself from these. These what? False teachers, error, lies, heresy." You can't coexist with it. It ruins those who listen. It shames those who teach. It leads to ungodliness. It spreads like gangrene, it upsets faith.

What we're talking about here is any linking together with an unbeliever in any religious or spiritual enterprise. That's what we're talking about. We're not talking about mutual funds, you can rest easy. We're not talking about you should quit your job cause you work with non-believers. We're not talking about Christian pulling out of the school because he doesn't have a Christian teacher. We're not talking about leaving your neighborhood. We're not talking about any of that. We're talking about a spiritual enterprise, worship, ministry, evangelism.

Religious cooperation between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light is ridiculous. Why would we want to give Satan access? You say, "Is this...is this a problem?" Is this a problem? This is Satan's number one ploy. I remember when I was a student in college, 1955, I was first confronted with the fact that huge massive evangelistic endeavors were being held in America and the committees were made up of Christians and non-Christians, people who believed the Bible and people who denied the Bible and were theological liberals. And I wasn't particularly profound, believe me, at that age. I was still in high school actually in '55, I didn't graduate till '57. But it was in those years and I was asking, "How can they do that? I don't understand how you can bring unbelievers and believers together in a common spiritual enterprise." It doesn't make any sense. I mean, why would you invite Satan in?

We still have that today. Satan still endeavors to encroach. Recently we had the Promise Keepers event in Los Angeles. And right around the time of the Promise Keepers I picked up the Los Angeles Times and found that the Cardinal--the Catholic Cardinal, had affirmed everything about the Promise Keepers and encouraged all the parish priests to take all their men. That was followed in an article, I think a day later, by the local Mormon bishop who said that he was encouraging all the Mormons to go. What does that say about Promise Keepers? Nothing. What it says about Satan is everything. That's always been his approach. He doesn't want to fight it, he wants to...what?...he wants to join it. When he fights the church it explodes and the blood of the martyrs becomes the seat of the church. When he joins the church it dies. And he always wants to get involved in it. And witless, reckless, undiscerning believers think that's an evangelistic strategy and embrace it.

What folly. It's not an evangelistic strategy, it's slow suicide. Unbelievers and believers cannot be yoked in common spiritual enterprise. Truth and error cannot go together. They are opposite in nature, they are pulling in opposite directions, they are headed toward opposite goals, they are motivated by opposite desires, and they're controlled by enemy leaders. We have to separate from non-Christians in every...every activity that has anything to do with the advancement of the gospel...they can have no part...no part at all. They can be on the receiving end, that's it.

You say, "Well, Satan...Satan comes in, how do you get him out?" Well the first thing you could do is identify them overtly as Satan's infiltrators. You say that might offend them? Yeah, it might, better to offend them than to destroy the fellowship, right? Because the fellowship is the key to everything. You let them in and you know what they'll do? They'll eat like gangrene and some Christians will get ruined in the process.

The heathen who do not know Christ, who do not have a genuine place in the Kingdom of God cannot join the enterprise of the church. A lot of them are completely pagan on the outside. The ones you have to watch for are the most religious, and watch this one, the most subtly like Christians. Satan is wily, covert, subtle and crafty.

And it's not popular again to take this particular viewpoint but it's fairly safe because it's in the Bible. And I feel real comfortable there. And I hope you do as well. And in the end all of this spiritual ministry, integrity is for the sake of the purity of the church, the power of the church, the clarity of the truth of the church to ultimately reach the lost who are duped by Satan in these false systems. Any embracing of them at all sends the message that the people who belong to them are okay. What kind of damning heresy that is.

So there's no place for compromise. Obviously you don't want to marry someone who is not a Christian. First Corinthians 7:39 says, "Marry only in the Lord," but that is not the issue of 2 Corinthians 6. But I'll tell you, for a Christian it has implications in all the relationships that you build because you cannot build lasting strong deep relationships with spiritual purpose with anybody other than a believer. And so, with that commitment to the integrity and the purity of the church, we have some clarity and some power and some purity that can have an impact on the unsaved world. And we keep Satan away. That's what Paul is calling for.

Now, that's only the first...that's only the first statement in verse 14. We say, "What's the rest of it about?" Well I'm going to tell you that in the future. There are five reasons, I'll give you the five and that's what we're going to cover. For believers to be linked to unbelievers in an kind of spiritual enterprise is irrational. Secondly, it is sacrilegious. Thirdly, it is disobedient. Fourthly, it is unprofitable. And fifthly, it is ungrateful. It is irrational, sacrilegious, disobedient, unprofitable and ungrateful, those five points will unfold as we complete our study of this text.

Well, just the beginning. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, again as we have looked into Your Word we have been lifted above the mundane and the trivial, we have been transported into the supernatural, the divine. We have grasped profound realities that escape completely the thinking of the wisest of the world. Lord, we are so grateful of the richness of truth which Your Word contains. And, Lord, we would follow the instruction, the injunction, the mandate, the command for indeed it's an imperative not to be bound together with unbelievers in any enterprise that names Your name, any spiritual enterprise. We don't want Satan having the door throne wide open for him.

And, Lord, help us to be faithful and to do what verse 1 of chapter 7 says, "Cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Lord, make us holy, separate. Keep Your church separated so that our testimony and our proclamation is pure and clear. And may You be glorified in Your Son's name. Amen.

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