

Separating from Unbelievers, Part 3

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:17-18

Code: 47-46

We have been for many months studying Paul's marvelous epistle to the Corinthians called 2 Corinthians. And we return to that epistle and chapter 6 for our study this morning. We systematically go through the Word of God emphasizing these New Testament books because every word is pure, every word proceeds from the very heart of God, every word of Scripture is indeed to us a treasure, as well as a responsibility for our edification and our obedience.

We have come to 2 Corinthians chapter 6, a paragraph that begins in verse 14 and runs through the first verse of chapter 7. And it has to do with separating from unbelievers. It's a very straightforward and helpful passage of Scripture, somewhat well known to Christians and yet perhaps not very well applied in the life of the church. This is message number three in that series, and for those of you who are here for the first time, please accept my apologies. If you want the full series, the first two tapes are certainly available for you.

But as we approach this particular text, it is set in motion by the opening words of verse 14, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers." That sets this entire context for what is to follow. And what is to follow is a series of five reasons why that principle is indeed to be followed. It is a command and there are five motives for obeying it. We'll be looking this morning, again, at these five, and we'll complete our look next Sunday.

Let me begin in an introduction just to set the tone a little bit for you, without going over the things that we've done in the past, by simply saying faith in Christ leads to a total transformation of one's entire being. The Bible calls Christians "new creations." It says, "Old things have passed away and all things have become new." When someone becomes a Christian, when they are born again, when they are transformed by faith in Jesus Christ, they enter into an entirely different sphere from the untransformed, the unregenerated, the non-Christians.

We have, as Christians, different thoughts, different values, different standards, different beliefs, different feelings, different principles, different motives, different goals, different attitudes, different hopes. We look at life with an entirely different perspective than unbelieving people do. And that difference is radical. It is so radical that fellowship, communion, harmony, participation with unbelievers is bound to be at best somewhat superficial.

We may share externally and somewhat superficially in common things. We may enjoy a common country, a common community. We may have a common family. We may work at a common job. We may have common hobbies or pastimes. We may agree on natural likes and dislikes. But when you get down deep inside, the difference is so radical. In fact, it is not just a difference. It is a stark opposition. And the believer and the unbeliever are so diametrically opposed to each other at heart that only a superficial relationship is really possible.

To the believer, Jesus Christ is God, He is Savior, He is Lord, He is Master, He is object of all love and due all reverence. To the unbeliever, Christ may be a man who is treated with difference – indifference - and disobedience. To the believer, living to the glory of God is everything, promoting the honor of Jesus Christ our supreme duty. And to the unbeliever, self is everything, and the satisfaction and comfort and success of self directs all of life. Two diametrically opposed perspectives.

And that causes severe limitations on our relationships. We could talk about that. That's an important thing to recognize. But there's something even more significant, that is the issue in this text. While this text does recognize the fact that we can only have superficial relationships with unbelievers based upon the statement of verse 15 - What has a believer in common with an unbeliever? - the thrust of this text is specifically directed at engaging ourselves with unbelievers in any common spiritual or religious enterprise. It's talking about the absolute incompatibility and incongruity that believers and unbelievers have with regard to sharing in worship, ministry, teaching - that is theological teaching - or evangelism.

It should be obvious to us that there is no compatibility but, in fact, it is not. While believers and unbelievers may play together and may work together and study together and plan certain things together and eat together and have certain levels of friendship, as soon as the issue becomes spiritual and religious and engages itself upon worship, ministry, teaching, evangelism, there is no partnership. There is no harmony, there is no common ground, and there can be no mutuality.

Sadly, it is that very principle which was in violation in Corinth. You remember we have spoken about this, and I don't want to go into it in too much detail. The Corinthians were going to idol feasts. They were going to what Paul calls in 1Corinthians 10 "the table of demons." They were even engaging in prostitutes. They were going to the acropolis of Corinth where there were a thousand prostitute priestesses and they were, as it were, in the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6, "joining Christ to a harlot" and then coming to the worship of the church. They were, they were involved in pagan worship. And to add to that, they had opened the doors of the church and let false teachers in, embraced those false teachers, believed those false teachers and followed them.

So, they had violated this principle on those fronts. First, they had gone into pagan worship. And second, they had allowed pagan worship to come to them. That is exactly what is being addressed here. When Paul says, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers," he is talking about participating

with unbelievers in pagan worship, or letting unbelievers participate with you in the true worship. And this seems so obvious and so straightforward; you would think we couldn't miss it. But the church has missed it for a long time. The church has opened its doors throughout its history to false teachers and let them come in and do their, their work which eats "like gangrene," as Paul says it, which pollutes and destroys the mind and wrecks the faith of people. The church has thrown its doors open wide to that kind of false teaching and it is still doing it even today.

In fact, the church today is trying very hard to embrace the culture and to redefine itself on a cultural level so that unbelievers feel comfortable there - an unimaginable strategy in the light of this principle. Throughout the years, evangelists have felt that they could be more successful when they go into a city if they will link up with the Roman Catholics and link up with the theological liberals of that city and together engage in a cooperative evangelistic effort to supposedly evangelize the city.

There have been Christians who have gone into theological faculties and various institutions and stood alongside unbelievers, alongside men who deny the inerrancy and authority of Scripture and sometimes the deity of Jesus Christ, and deny the doctrines of salvation by grace through faith alone and all associated teaching to that. And they have stood side by side in the same institution with those men, endeavoring to carry on a spiritual enterprise while linked with those who espouse demonic doctrine.

Those are the kinds of issues that are at stake in this text. Cooperative evangelism, cooperative educational efforts in theological and quote/unquote Christian schools and seminaries, environments, linking up with churches that are pastored and led by liberals who deny the very truths that one affirms. People ask me this all the time, "I'm in a liberal church, what should I do?" Answer: Leave immediately. People sometimes say to me, "I've come to know Christ, I'm in the Catholic Church, what should I do?" Leave immediately. The indication of this text couldn't be more clear. "Do not be bound together with unbelievers." And again, the context is a context of spiritual enterprise, spiritual activity, worship, teaching, evangelism, and ministry.

This is very prevalent today. As evangelicalism reaches wider and wider and wider and wants to embrace the culture and make it feel comfortable, wants to re-embrace the Roman system and make it comfortable, wants to embrace liberalism, wants to embrace false teachers who are all over the place. And we who try to question that are seen as enemies of the church's unity. It is the corruption of Christianity by compromise and disobedience of this principle. And so it's important that we understand this principle and that we hear what the Spirit of God has to say in it.

Let's go back to verse 14 and just remind ourselves of the command that is at the heart of this text. "Do not be bound together with unbelievers." And you remember that he draws that unequally yoking picture from back in Deuteronomy where the prescription of God to the children of Israel was, "Don't hook up an ox and an ass to the same plow or you cannot get a straight furrow." Those two beasts

have different natures. Common spiritual enterprise is the issue here, and you can't link a believer to an unbeliever and achieve a godly end. All you will do is divert from the true purposes of God and inevitably corrupt the believers who are engaged in such an unholy alliance. "Do not be bound together with unbelievers."

Now, there are five motives to this. There are five reasons for this. And I've shared them with you, at least the beginning. Let's go back and review the first two. First of all, such a partnership is irrational. It is irrational, and that is Paul's point as he asks some rhetorical questions that are really axiomatic and all imply negative answers. Verse 14, "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?"

All of those rhetorical questions are intended to show the irrationality of believers and unbelievers linking together in any spiritual enterprise. The answer to those is self-evident. That's why we call them axioms. An axiom is a self-evident truth. It is obvious that righteousness and lawlessness can't be partners. Light and darkness can't fellowship. Christ and Satan can't work together. And believers and unbelievers don't share anything in common spiritually. It is absolutely irrational to do that. In other words, common sense would tell you that is counter-productive. "How can two walk together unless they agree," said the prophet Amos.

Secondly, and we're still reviewing, it is not only irrational to be linked with unbelievers in any spiritual enterprise, it is sacrilegious. It is sacrilegious. This is far more weighty as an argument or a motive than the first one. Notice verse 16, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" Answer: none. "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.'"

Now, remember that I told you that all false religion is demon worship. An idol is nothing. But a demon is behind that nothing, impersonating that deity so that the worship of idols, the worship of any false religion is nothing more than the worship of demons; demon doctrines propagated by seducing spirits through hypocritical liars, says the apostle Paul to Timothy. And it is all part of the satanic counterfeit coming from one disguise as an angel of light, who wants to damn people through the means of religion.

All false religious systems are demonic. And Paul says to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10, "You can't eat the table of the Lord and the table of demons." You can't keep going back and forth. It is blasphemous. And the reason is, "You are the temple of the living God." And I love the phrase "the living God." Paul likes to use that whenever he's talking about idols because he sets it over against the dead idols. "You are the temple of the living God." You cannot bring idols into His temple. Remember what happened, we saw that last time in Ezekiel. Ezekiel saw the idols in the temple of God. And God left and "Ichabod" was written on the temple.

Nor can you take the temple of God and put it in a temple of idols. We saw that in 1 Samuel didn't we, chapter 4, where they took the ark of the covenant, the Philistines did, and they put it in the temple of Dagon the fish god. And God knocked Dagon over and cut off his head and cut off his hands and brought about a plague of mice that brought a black death upon the population. And those that didn't die were struck with tumors. You cannot take the temple of God and put it in an idol temple, and you cannot take an idol and put it in the temple of God. We cannot coexist.

The Greeks and the Romans, of course, had their pantheons. That means all gods. They had big temples and all the gods were thrown in there together. We don't have anyone but the true, living God. And to bring an idol into God's temple is to desecrate and blaspheme His name. And to take God's temple and put it in an idol temple is to do the same. And here were the Corinthians, who were the temple of God, going into an idol temple and eating and involved in a festival and sometimes in the iniquitous things that went on. And here were the Corinthians taking, taking false teachers who really are satanic, and bringing them into the church which is the corporate temple of God and letting them have a place and teach and influence. And such blasphemous activity is sacrilegious.

We are the temple of the living God. We can have nothing to do with idols, idolatry. So the mandate, then, is supported, first of all, by the reasonableness of it and the reverence of it. To be bound with unbelievers in any spiritual enterprise is irrational and sacrilegious. Sometimes people will say to me, "You know, I've come to Christ and I go to, to the Catholic Church, or I go to my old liberal church, or I go to my old cult and then I come here." That's exactly what the Corinthians were doing. That is exactly what is forbidden here. It is irrational and it is sacrilegious. When you came to Christ you became the temple of the living God. You cannot take the temple of the living God and put it in a temple to idols, in a demon environment, without desecrating the very name of God.

All right, let's come to a third point. To be bound together with unbelievers is also disobedient. It is not just irrational and sacrilegious; it is disobedient. And verse 17 makes that abundantly clear because it says, "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord, "and do not touch what is unclean." So here you have a direct command. So someone who links up with false religionists is in direct disobedience. "Therefore" - is a very important link - "since you are the temple of God, since God walks in you, since you are His own possession," as verse 16 says, "therefore make a clean break."

Realizing that you are personally indwelt by the living and almighty God, realizing the unspeakable grace and privilege of constant communion and power from the resident Holy Spirit, the sovereign One who lives in you leaves you no alternative but to obey your King. And your King says separate, separate. No other option can even be considered. God has expressly commanded this and the command is right here in verse 17. Paul says, "I am speaking for God Himself and telling you come out from their midst and be separate and do not touch what is unclean."

The same thought, in fact in some ways the same words, are expressed by the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah. Turn back to Isaiah chapter 52. Paul knew, certainly, this Scripture well, and it is a suitable companion. In fact, it may well be that Paul had it in mind when he wrote that 17th verse. In Isaiah 52:7, the prophet Isaiah is given revelation from God regarding the coming salvation. He talks about “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news” - the gospel – “who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces a salvation and says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” In other words, how wonderful it is when someone will come and preach the gospel.

“Listen,” verse 8, “your watchmen lift up their voices, they shout joyfully together for they will see with their own eyes when the Lord restores Zion. Break forth, shout joyfully together, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted His people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared His holy arm in the sight of all the nations that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God.” So we know what he’s talking about. He’s talking about a time when God is going to send the Savior, and the gospel will be preached and Israel will be saved.

Now verse 11, “When that happens,” he says, “depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean. Go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves.” And there is a very similar, if not a parallel, if not even what Paul has in his mind, the passage that he is building on, as it were, in 2 Corinthians chapter 6. And what is it saying? It’s saying, “Look, when salvation comes, make a clean break. Come out of your old idolatrous patterns; come out of those idolatrous habitats.” No more idolatrous feasts and festivals and meals and celebrations. You make a clean break.

Even if you are able to shun the overt sin of prostitution, or the overt sin of gluttony and vomiting, and then eating more, or the overt sin of drunkenness and debauchery and wicked talk - even if you could shun all of that, just to be in that environment, you cannot avoid the contamination of false worship and false teaching. It is going to assault the singularity of your devotion to the truth. You must make a clean break with what eats like gangrene. And the call to Israel in the time of their salvation, whenever it happens through history and, certainly, in the end when the Messiah comes and the nation is saved, becomes a call to the Corinthians and to all who believe.

From the moment of salvation on you make a clean break, particularly with false religion. It doesn’t mean that we don’t reach out to unbelievers; we are mandated to go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature, to become all things to all men that we might by some means save them. We are here on this planet in order that we might reach out to the lost and love them and bring them to Christ. It doesn’t mean that we are to divorce an unconverted spouse. It does not mean that at all. It does not mean that we cut off and sever all connections and relationships with unbelievers.

What it does mean is we disengage ourselves with any form of false religion. That's what it means. We don't participate in that and we don't allow that to come alongside us as if we were accepting of it. You say, "Do you mean unbelievers shouldn't come to church?" No, I don't mean that. I pray God that they will, and when they do that they'll be saved. What I mean is church isn't to be designed to make pagans feel comfortable. That is not its purpose. They should be starkly held to accountability for their sins when they enter into the place of worship. And they should feel uncomfortable and disconcerted.

Ephesians chapter 5 reiterates basically the same principle. Obviously those in Ephesus were coming to Christ out of the same kind of pagan backgrounds and needing to make a very clean break. And in verse 6 of Ephesians 5, Paul talks about people who deceive with empty words, people who are nothing but the sons of disobedience on whom the wrath of God is going to come. And he says to the Ephesians in verse 7, "Do not be partakers with them." Don't partner up with those who are engaged in those false religions. "You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." And verse 10, "Trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord, do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

Things were engaged upon in the mystery religions, the secretive religions that were an absolute abomination to God. He says to the Ephesians, "You have nothing to do with them, you are light, you make a clean break with the darkness. You do what is pleasing to the Lord. You never participate in any of their unfruitful deeds." And listen, better you should go to a saloon and spend the evening than that you should go to a religious institution proclaiming error and spend an evening. Because your pure mind and your comprehension of the truth is what is at stake in that environment.

People send young people away to colleges that claim to be Christian, and do nothing but assault the sound doctrines of the Word of God, and wonder why they get back a product that is confused. In Revelation chapter 18 the angel comes out of heaven and says, "Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen," and it talks about the foulness of Babylon, the final, satanic, antichrist world system. And then the angel says, "God is going to destroy this place. God is going to bring it down." And then in verse 4 of Revelation 18 it says, "Come out from her. Get out of there. Separate yourself from that wicked system."

We are a holy people. We are a sanctified people. That means set apart. We are separated. We live in a profane and defiled culture; we understand that. We are lights in a dark world. But we do not engage in mutual religious activity of any kind with those who do not hold to the sound faith of the Scriptures. This is commanded. And back, then, to our text for a moment in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, just to point out that the two verbs used there in verse 17, "come out" and "be separate," are both imperatives in the Greek, *exerchomai* and *aphoriz*. They are imperatives. That is, they are commands. If you're in that situation, get out of it.

This is nothing new, beloved; absolutely nothing new. You can go all the way back to the Pentateuch, all the way back to the writings of Moses, the Law, the first part of the Scripture. Look, for example, at Leviticus chapter 20. This is a theme in Leviticus. It's not just in chapter 20. In fact it's all throughout the book of Leviticus. It reaches sort of a very important high point in Leviticus 20. But listen to what it says, "The Lord spoke to Moses," verse 1, 'you shall also say to the sons of Israel: "Any man from the sons of Israel or from the alien sojourning in Israel who gives any of his offspring to Molech"' - that was child sacrifice offered in a fire to the god Molech - "shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people" - that means take his life - "because he has given some of his offspring to Molech so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name.'"

I can't have anybody in the context of Israel, My people, doing anything that profanes My name. And here is the worship of Molech. He says in verse 6, "As for the person who turns to mediums and spirits" - or spiritists - "to play the harlot after them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from among his people. You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy for I am the Lord your God." Verse 8, "You shall keep My statutes and practice them, I am the Lord who sanctifies you. I am the Lord who sets you apart."

Down in verse 24, end of the verse, "I am the Lord your God who has separated you from the peoples." Verse 26, "Thus you are to be holy to Me for I the Lord am holy and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine." Again, this is separation. This is true biblical separation. We separate completely from all those who are engaged in false religion, of any form - false teachers, false religious forms, be they small or large. By the way, this theme continues through chapter 21 through chapter 22 of Leviticus. Believers have always been told, whether it's in Leviticus by Moses, whether it's in Isaiah by Isaiah, whether it's in 2 Corinthians by Paul, believers of all ages have been told to separate completely from any pagan religious environment, anything that is not the truth of God.

Today we would say liberalism, neoorthodoxy, Romanism, cults, heretics, false teachers. And they abound everywhere. We must separate ourselves from them. We must not worship at the shrine of Satan or be exposed to demon idols or demon ideologies. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 10, Paul says that we have a task and the task we have, according to verse 4, is to destroy fortresses, to destroy satanic fortresses. He calls them in verse 5 "speculations or ideologies and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God." Proud intellectualism, false religion, human ideologies, all those false systems are the very fortresses we destroy, and verse 5, "We take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

We don't partner with them; we assault them. People say, "Well, you shouldn't speak against these groups." Yes we need to speak against them. They are the fortresses, they are the satanic speculations, they are the demonic ideologies, they are the proud intellectualism of man lifted up

against the truth of God, and we must attack them with the Word. That is our spiritual weapon. So not to be separated is disobedience. It is a violation of the command, "Come out from their midst and be separate." And then he adds, "Do not touch what is unclean."

God sees false religion as the most abominable thing of all. That's why I said, you would be better off to spend an evening in a bar or a saloon than an evening in a church or an institution propagating false religion. "Do not touch." The word "touch" is *haptesthe*. It means to touch in a carnal way. It's used, for example, in 1 Corinthians 7. "It's good for a man not to touch a woman, to avoid fornication." It's used in 1 John 5:18 where it talks about the evil one touching us. It is a carnal harmful touch. We don't get near that stuff.

You remember in Jude it says when you, when you find someone in there you give them the gospel and you snatch them as a brand from the burning. It's like rescuing someone out of a fire. It is that kind of false religion that disrupts faith, that shipwrecks faith. It eats like gangrene. You may think you can waltz around with it or you can open up the church's doors and let it come flooding in without any negative effect. You are dead wrong. The church cannot embrace the ungodly. It cannot allow – tolerate - false theology, false doctrine, those things that deny the truth of the Word of God. It cannot engage with people who do not believe the truth in any spiritual enterprise, whether it's worship, teaching, evangelism or any ministry. We cannot do that.

So we are commanded by the Lord to separate. Not to do so is irrational, sacrilegious and disobedient. I'll give you one more this morning. Not to do so is unprofitable. I use that word instead of "stupid." It is foolish because it severs us from God's blessings. Did you notice the end of verse 17 and verse 18? The end of verse 17 says, "'When you come out and separate yourself, 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."

Not to be separate is so foolish because what you're doing is cutting yourself off from the blessings of an intimate relationship with God. Here is God, your Father, who wants to embrace you. "Welcome" literally means "to receive with favor." This is the only time *eisdechomai* is used in the New Testament. It means to open your arms and embrace, to fold in. And that is God who wants to welcome you. By the way, that could well be drawn from the Greek translation of Ezekiel 20, in verse 34, where God promises to receive Israel to Himself when she comes out of her idolatry. And He's saying if you will make the break, My arms are wide open to pour out blessing, blessings of My love to you.

Now you will notice, and I want to give you a footnote here. And I don't know exactly where to give it but I'll give it here. You will notice that as we've gone through verses 16, 17 and now into verse 18, I have been mentioning that these are taken from the Old Testament. And I have suggested that it might have been Isaiah and/or some other passage that was in view here. When you come to this

passage in verse 18, it well could have been that in the mind of Paul was a text in 2 Samuel, chapter 7 in verse 14, which says, in effect, that you shall be sons and daughters to Me, and I'll be a father to you.

But in no case are these references to the Old Testament direct quotes. And I just want to comment on that. What I told you in our first session is that Paul takes a mosaic of Old Testament teaching and puts it all together to create this particular inspired text. And it leads me to tell you that when you study the Bible, you need to keep this in mind. Let me tell you how New Testament writers use the Old Testament.

First of all, there are times when they directly quote it. There are times when New Testament writers will directly quote the original Hebrew Old Testament. Secondly, there are times when New Testament writers will quote a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, such as the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation. And there are occasions when they quote the Greek translation of the Hebrew.

Thirdly, there are many times when New Testament writers give the sense of an Old Testament passage without directly quoting the words of it. In other words, they take inspired liberties to give the sense of the text without the exact words, which, of course, conveys the same meaning. Fourthly, New Testament writers will often blend together a combination of Old Testament passages so that you don't get the sense of one passage, but you get the sense of several blended together to make one point.

Fifthly, there are times when New Testament writers simply give the general teaching of the Old Testament without referring to any specific passage. So when you read in the New Testament and it says "The Lord said," or, "As the prophet said," it could be any of those usages of the Old Testament. There are times when such usages aren't identified by the phrase "As God said," but are just drawn out of the Old Testament. But one final note. New Testament writers never quote as authoritative anything but the Old Testament. So it is the only authoritative source.

And so, here is the apostle Paul, then, in that fashion, drawing from the Old Testament, basically drawing the general sense of it, a few combined Scriptures, maybe a few specific words and blending them together in a mosaic of absolutely inspired truth to make the point that if we will make the severing and the separation and come out and get away from the unclean, the Lord will throw open His arms to pour out blessing upon us. And so I say to you, I would be an unfaithful pastor to you if I let this church get involved in any form of violation of this. I would be accountable to God for having brought you into a situation in which you would forfeit blessing. Why would I do that?

People sometimes say to me, "Do you get a lot of criticism when you take strong stands?" Answer: I get some criticism when I take stands, but that's all right. There's a lot at stake. And what is at stake

among the many things is that I have to give an account to God for how I shepherded you. And if I'm not faithful to shepherd you into the green pastures and the still waters, and the places of blessing, then I don't want to have to stand before God to give an account for my, my tolerances which caused you to forfeit blessing.

So I will draw the lines as closely and clearly as I can understand the Bible draws them. And we will do all we can to live within those lines, not for the sake of being rigid but for the sake of spiritual benefit. There can be no real blessing in the life of a believer who is in sinful, unholy alliances with ungodly idolaters. You will forfeit something. It doesn't mean you're going to die on the spot; it doesn't mean you're going to be bankrupt and in the pauper's prison. It just means you're going to forfeit the fullness of God's blessing. There is immense reward for one who doesn't compromise with ungodly systems.

Verse 18, "And I will be a father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty." In other words, you will engage for yourself all the richness of being a child of God. As I said, that probably most notably refers back to 2 Samuel 7:14 where that very statement is made. And, in fact, in 2 Samuel 7:14, that statement is made to David, and it's in the text about God promising to David a son who would be Solomon and then a greater son who would be the Messiah. And when God made the promise that David would have a son and that son would build the temple as Solomon did, at the same time that God was making that promise to David, He was reminding David of purity and how important it was that he stay separated, that his son stay separated and know the fullness of the blessing of the fatherhood of God.

In fact, in 2 Samuel 7:14 it says about that son, "He'll build a house for My name," and it refers to Solomon and then further to the Messiah. "And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever; I'll be a Father to him and be a - he'll be a son to Me. But when he commits iniquity," Solomon, "I'll correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men." He'll be My son, and I'll have all this blessing for him, but if violates Me, I'll have to correct him.

And that's the choice we have. "Every son whom the Lord loves He scourges," according to Hebrews. So you have your choice, scourging or blessing. And it all goes back to obedience. So God said to David, the son Solomon, if he obeys Me I'll bless him, if he doesn't I'll chasten him. The idea is that God embraces with blessing those who separate themselves from sin.

Now when you became a Christian you received the authority to become a child of God. God is your Father and you are His son and His daughter. You have received in such gracious form all the richness of that parenthood from God. But any alliance that defiles, anything that interrupts this wonderful communion with God, then cuts off blessing. God is our Father and we are His children and we must repudiate all contaminating religious alliances with darkness and lawlessness and sin and Satan, or we will be chastened and we will forfeit blessing.

Well, that promise was given to David and to David's son, Solomon. And you know the sad story. Turn to 1 Kings chapter 11. Solomon did not listen. He did not obey, and he just made one unholy alliance after another. He was the supreme compromiser. Chapter 11 of 1 Kings, in verse 1, tells the sad story: "Now King Solomon loved many foreign women." You might say he never saw a woman he didn't like. I mean, he was the prototypical womanizer. King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh. He didn't even care who they were. And, of course, the daughter of Pharaoh would be as pagan as pagan can get and would have all kinds of idols and false gods.

"He loved Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittite women. All of them from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, 'You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you.'" You can't go either way. Why? Because - listen to me carefully - their society is indistinguishable from their religion. Their societies, their cultures were dominated by their deities. You can't associate with them. Because if you enter into any alliance, any religious participation, you can't participate in their religion, you can't let them participate in yours for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.

God said that, and Solomon ignored it and held fast to these women in love. He ignored it. To show you how far gone this guy was, he had seven hundred wives. Now one wife can turn a man away; seven hundred working on him. He had princesses; he had three hundred concubines. The wives were the princesses. He was the king. Three hundred concubines. Those were just extra women in case he got bored with the seven hundred. And his wives turn his heart away. Why? 'Cause they all had their own gods; they all had their own deities. They were all pagans.

"It came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord, his God, as the heart of David his father had been." Is that sad? You would think Solomon was so wise. When he was asked what he wanted, he wanted wisdom from God. He, he was all around the truth all the time. But, boy, when you expose yourself to the influence of idolatry, it is devastating.

I'll never forget a young man with whom I had a close association in seminary, one of the most tragic things. We were dear friends. We participated in all kinds of activities together. He was headed to the ministry, as I was. We graduated from Talbot Seminary the same year. He married a Buddhist. It wasn't long until there was a Buddhist altar in his house. It wasn't long until he had abandoned the faith. One wife. You know, whenever I see men who are notably in the mainstream of the church and evangelicalism, and all of a sudden they seem to fall off into some serious deviation or error, I always want to ask, "What is the wife like?" Certainly in many, many cases, if not most, that's where Satan's subtleties enter in.

“Solomon,” according to verse 5, “went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the detestable idol of the Ammonites. And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and didn’t follow the Lord fully as David his father had done. And Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech, the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

“Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel who had appeared to him twice.” You’d think if he had two personal visits from God he wouldn’t have trouble holding on to his theology, but he did. “And had commanded him concerning the thing that he should not go after other gods, but he didn’t observe what the Lord had commanded. So the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this and you have not kept My covenant, and My statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant.’”

That’s what happens when you make unholy alliances. God just rips the blessing right out of your hand. Go over to chapter 11, verse 31. And here is Jeroboam, whom you know came in to be the king following Solomon when the kingdom split. And this Ahijah, the prophet, speaks to Jeroboam in verse 31, “Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I’ll tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes.’”

So ten tribes are ripped out the hand of Solomon and ten of them go to the north. “(And he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David.)” And that was Benjamin “who was given with Judah in the south a city which I have chosen from the tribes of Israel. Because they have forsaken Me and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians” and all of that. And he goes through the whole scenario. The kingdom was split. It was ripped out of Solomon’s hand. It was tragically divided. There never was another good king in the north.

You come all the way down to verse 38, “And then it will be,” He says to Jeroboam, verse 37, “I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire and you shall be king over Israel.” But then He says, “Then it will be that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David and I will give Israel to you.”

Again, God comes right back and says, “I’m tearing his kingdom to pieces but if you’ll just obey Me, I’ll bless you.” It’s the same point. When you make unholy alliances, you are cursed. When you don’t, you are blessed. God, who is Father, desires to pour out the best of His loving gifts on His children, and He’ll do just that if we are not bound together with unbelievers. So summing up what we’ve said then, if we are bound together with unbelievers in any spiritual enterprise, it is irrational, it is sacrilegious, it is disobedient and it is unprofitable.

There's one more point; I'll save that till next Sunday. It's a very important one, and it's in verse 1 of chapter 7. It is ungrateful. It is ungrateful. He says in verse 1, "Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The point being, How could you take all these promises that God has given to you, all these monumental gifts from Him and be so ungrateful as to pursue unholy alliances? More about that next time.

In closing, there's a wonderful account, actually, as a somewhat old account of a man who was brought to trial, by the name of Ignatius. He was standing face to face with the Roman emperor Trajan. "Who art thou?" said Trajan. "Thou wretch of a devil, that are so ready to transgress our orders while you seduce others also that they may come to the same bad end." Ignatius said, "No man calls one that beareth God a wretch of a devil, for the devils stand aloof from the servants of God."

Trajan said, "And who is he that beareth God?" Ignatius answered, "He that hath Christ in his heart." Trajan said, "Do you not think then that we too have gods in our hearts, seeing that we employ them as allies against our enemies?" Ignatius said, "You are deceived when you call the devils of the nations gods, for there is one God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all things that are therein and one Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son, whose friendship I enjoy."

Trajan said, "Are you speaking of Him who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?" Ignatius said, "I speak of Him that nailed on the cross sin and its author and sentenced every malice of the devils to be trampled underfoot of those that carry Him in their hearts." Trajan said, "Do you then carry Christ within you?" Ignatius said, "Yes, for it is written, 'I will dwell in them and will walk in them.'"

Trajan then gave the sentence and this is the sentence: "It is our order that Ignatius who says he bears about the crucified in himself shall be put in chains by the soldiers and taken to mighty Rome, there to be made food for wild beasts as a spectacle and a diversion for the people."

The lines are drawn just that clearly. We have Christ in our hearts. We have no religious communion with those who do not. We are the children of God; they are the children of Satan. There can be no mutual spiritual enterprise. Such compromise desecrates the name of Christ, gives false assurance to the unbeliever, and pollutes the Christian. More on this next time. Let's pray.

Father, these words are so direct and so clear to us. Help us, Father, to see them, to see their application. We cannot stand here and give every conceivable application of these matters. Suffice it to know the principle and to walk in the Spirit who then gives wisdom and strength for the application in every situation. We call Your church to come out and be separate. And yet at the same time with tears and passion to reach the lost who are trapped in these evil systems.

We want to reach them with the gospel but we cannot participate in any way with them nor have them participate with us, lest we act sacrilegiously, disobediently, unreasonably, and unprofitably and ungratefully. Father, we ask that You would give us wisdom. Help us to find that delicate balance wherein we can still love and bring the truth and snatch those brands from the burning. We pray in the glorious name of Christ who died to save sinners. Amen.

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