

Studies from 2 Corinthians
Pt. 11
2 Corinthians 6:14-18

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.^a

¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst,
and be separate from them, says the Lord,
and touch no unclean thing;^b
then I will welcome you,

¹⁸ and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,^c
says the Lord Almighty.”

—2 Corinthians 6:14-18 (ESV)

v 14 – “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers”

“unequally yoked” — *heterozugeó*. — *heteros* (of a different kind) + *zugo* (yoke)

The meaning of “unequal” is of two things that are utterly different; it is not a value-based term

Heterozugeó is also a verb, and here is a present participle. So... “Do not be ‘unequally-yoking’ with unbelievers.”

The emphasis is not so much on an established state or condition, i.e. “yoked”

The emphasis is on ongoing activity “yoking,” which could, of course, involve an established state or condition, such as marriage or a business arrangement

This passage has often been used as pertaining to marriage between a believer and an unbeliever—to which is indeed apt—but it applies to much more.

“Yoke” (*zugo*) is a key word.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.—Matthew 11:29

^a And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.—Leviticus 26:12

^b Depart, depart, go out from there; touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her; purify yourselves...—Isaiah 52:11

^c Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, “You are not my people,” it shall be said to them, “Children of the living God.”—Hosea 1:10; et al.

It means joined together in an inseparable way, a relationship in which one party cannot act independently, and one in which both parties must be striving for the same thing in the same way

cf. - I wrote to you in my letter not to associate (*sunanamignumi*) with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. —1 Corinthians 5:9-10

So, this does not mean “have nothing to do with” unbelievers, or to “shun” unbelievers, but not to be “unequally-yoking” with them.

Throughout the Scriptures, God’s people have been warned not to be influenced by those who are unbelievers, thus betraying their covenant with God and corrupting their own lives and their relationship with Him.

And, throughout the Scriptures, God’s people, for various reasons, have ignored His warning, disobeyed His instructions, and done exactly what they were told *not* to do. (Sometimes referred to as syncretism. Sometimes referred to, by God, as adultery.)

This teaching confronts a believer with basic questions about truths of the faith. Do we believe them or not?

Is the Church truly “called out” from the world?

Do we truly recognize that the world is lost, in a state of rebellion against God, and ruled by Satan?

This is another way of asking, Do we recognize that there are two kingdoms with no middle ground?

Paul’s rhetorical questions are to make the point, repeatedly, that there is no common ground between following God and following Satan—and that we are a people who belong, exclusively, to God.

They have an element to them of “What could you be thinking?!”

What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?

Righteousness is found in Christ. It is more than the world’s idea of “ethics,” where those ideas exist at all.

The term “lawlessness” carried far more weight for NT hearers than it does for us (unfortunately). It meant utter spiritual and moral rebellion, worthlessness, and depravity.

The antichrist is referred to as the “man of lawlessness.” (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

Jesus said in his judgement narrative: “And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” (Matthew 7:23)

What fellowship (*koinonia*) has light with darkness?

There is no “twilight,” no middle ground—and certainly, no *koinonia*.

The Bible’s constant theme is light vs. darkness, and Jesus said “I am the light of the world.”

What accord (harmony) has Christ with Belial?

“Belial” (in Gk. Beliar) is a name for Satan; it is a transcribed Hebrew word meaning utterly worthless or vile

There can be no greater contrast—or a clearer teaching!

We, the church, must “get it.” There is a kingdom of this world, and Satan is the ruler of that kingdom.

We cannot and we should not desire to have anything to do with the kingdom of Satan—except to advance into it with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?

“Portion” referring to what inheritance, what lot in life and in eternity

What agreement (accord, alliance) has the temple of God with idols

In one sense:

Believers live for and worship the living Christ.

Unbelievers do not. They serve other gods.

But Paul’s greater point is...

“We *are* the temple of the living God.”

Do we have any idea how miraculous and wonderful this is?

Do we have any idea how gracious this is?

Do we have any idea how *central* this is to understanding what it means to be a Christian?

vv 16-18 — “as God said...”

These verses are an amalgam of any number of OT passages—some more direct quotes than others

They are a beautiful and rich expression of our relationship with God—which should guide any other relationships that we have