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## *God's Word to a Hesitating Church*

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God. (7:1)

*“I Have Nothing in Common  
With You”*

November 23, 2014

**Sermon Text:** 2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1

**Scripture Reading:** Deu 7

**Introduction-**

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 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. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

In some ways I think that 2 Cor 7:1 could be said to be the theme verse of this epistle. It looks back to the promises stated by God and quoted by

Paul in vss 16-18 of the preceding chapter.

- I will make my dwelling among them
- I will walk with them
- I will be their God
- They shall be my people
- I will welcome you
- I will be a father to you
- You shall be sons and daughters to me

SAYS – “The Lord Almighty”!

Last week we looked at these verses and you will recall that we argued that Paul is specifically applying these commands about –

- Going out from their midst
- Be separate from them
- Touch no unclean thing

...to the false teachers who had crept into the church at Corinth. They were power-seeking, self-glorifying individuals who abused the flock and deceived them. Such people will ALWAYS lure us away from Christ and lead us into giving them praise instead. Church history and the contemporary state of the church today are filled with examples of this very thing.

This morning I would like us to look once more at these crucial doctrines, instructions, and promises and see if we can come to even more clarity about them.

Consider the outline of Paul’s thought:

1. Believers have NO agreement with unbelievers (vss 14-16a)
2. WE are God’s Temple (vss 16b)
3. God Dwells in a Holy Temple (vss 17-18)

These verses have a large amount of Old Testament allusions in them – probably more than we realize. I will try to point at least some of them out so that we can clearly grasp what the Lord is instructing us to do, to not do, and what He is promising us.

### Believers Have NO Agreement With an Unbelievers

Christian, there is something here that you absolutely MUST get a firm hold on. It is a truth that runs COUNTER to what most of us have been taught in the churches we grew up in. *In Christ you are a radically new creation, and you are as different from an unbeliever as a Martian is different from a human being. Furthermore, we are commanded by the Lord to separate ourselves from earth-dwellers.*

Does that sound strange to you? It does to the degree that you have listened to what many preachers and popular Christian writers have been telling us. In fact, I would suggest to you that these words of the Lord Himself - "Go out from their midst, and be separate from them" have become equated to arrogance in many Christians' thinking today.

Let's consider some of the OT backdrop. Listen as I read quite a number of Scriptures here that address the separation of God's people from unbelievers -

Exodus 23:31-33 And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates, for I will give the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you. (32) You shall make no covenant with them and their gods. (33) They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you."

Exodus 34:11-16 "Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. (12) Take care,

lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. (13) You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim (14) (for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), (15) lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, (16) and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.

Leviticus 19:19 "You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.

Numbers 16:23-32 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (24) "Say to the congregation, Get away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram." (25) Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. (26) And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart, please, from the tents of these

wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be swept away with all their sins." (27) So they got away from the dwelling of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. And Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, together with their wives, their sons, and their little ones. (28) And Moses said, "Hereby you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord. (29) If these men die as all men die, or if they are visited by the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. (30) But if the LORD creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised the LORD." (31) And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. (32) And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korah and all their goods.

Numbers 25:1-3 While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. (2) These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their

gods. (3) So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

Deuteronomy 7:1-6 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves, (2) and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. (3) You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, (4) for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. (5) But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire. (6) "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people

for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 12:28-32 Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God. (29) "When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, (30) take care that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?--that I also may do the same.' (31) You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way, for every abominable thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods, for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. (32) "Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it.

Deuteronomy 13:1-10 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, (2) and the sign or wonder that he tells you comes to

pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods,' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' (3) you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (4) You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him. (5) But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. (6) "If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which neither you nor your fathers have known, (7) some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, (8) you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him,

nor shall you conceal him. (9) But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. (10) You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

And on and on and on we could go. King Solomon's foreign wives. The people intermarrying in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah when they returned to the land. Joshua warning the people before they went into Canaan. Clearly this is an abiding command of the Lord, that we come out from among unbelievers and be separate from them. Now we have the very same instruction given to us here in the New Testament- *don't be unequally yoked*. Consider again the TOTAL contrasts between the terms Paul uses. This is vital for us to get a firm grasp on. Christian, you do not have anything of substance in common with an unsaved person, no matter who they are.

<b>Believer</b>	<b>Unbeliever</b>
Righteousness	Lawlessness
Light	Darkness
Christ	Belial (Satan)
Believer	Unbeliever
Temple of God	Idol Temple

## We Are God's Temple (16b)

Now, Paul elaborates on this last contrast – God's Temple vs Idols. He reminds us that WE are the *temple of the LIVING God*, in contrast to the dead, deaf, blind, dumb idols of the world. To prove it, Paul quotes from –

Leviticus 26:11-12 I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. (12) And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

What does this have to do with proving that we are God's temple? Well, the Lord says "*I will make my dwelling among you.*" That is temple talk! Because where God *dwells* is His temple! The Temple is where God lives with His people. The Temple is the restored Eden, you see. And sure enough, all through the New Testament we are told that we who are in Christ are the Temple:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? (17) If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

Ephesians 2:19-22 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, (20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, (21) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (22) In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

1 Peter 2:4-5 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, (5) you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Now, what do we know about the Temple of the Lord? It was and is holy. Its priests are charged with keeping it holy. And one way for priests to keep holy is to “touch no unclean thing.” In this case, *by not*

*being yoked unequally with unbelievers.*

What happens consistently to the Lord’s Temple when His people violate these commands? Ezekiel, in a series of visions, is shown the glory of God *leaving* the temple. And you have the very same warnings to the 7 churches in Revelation-

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Ezekiel is also shown a vision of the eschatological temple (the church, the New Heavens and Earth), characteristically pictured with *the glory of the Lord entering the temple.*

Ezekiel 43:4-11 As the glory of the LORD entered the temple by the gate facing east, (5) the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. (6) While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, (7) and he said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. And the house of

Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies of their kings at their high places, (8) by setting their threshold by my threshold and their doorposts beside my doorposts, with only a wall between me and them. They have defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed, so I have consumed them in my anger. (9) Now let them put away their whoring and the dead bodies of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in their midst forever. (10) "As for you, son of man, describe to the house of Israel the temple, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and they shall measure the plan. (11) And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple, its arrangement, its exits and its entrances, that is, its whole design; and make known to them as well all its statutes and its whole design and all its laws, and write it down in their sight, so that they may observe all its laws and all its statutes and carry them out.

Which brings us then back to our text:

**God Dwells in a Holy Temple** (vss 17-18)

2 Corinthians 6:17-18 Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

### **Conclusion/Application**

You will recall that last time we concluded Paul was specifically applying this call to separate from unbelievers to the Corinthians' association with these false teachers who had come in among them and were alienating them from Paul, from the real gospel, and thus from Christ. In 1 Corinthians he had dealt with the literal idol temples in Corinth and the Corinthians' need to separate from idolatrous feasts and practices.

But here, Paul is expanding this principle of separation. He is applying it to ANY form of unbelief that we are threatened by. And he summarizes the call in 7:1 –

2 Corinthians 7:1 Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of **body and spirit**, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.



Look carefully. *Since we have these promises.* Here is our motivation. God's promises! Listen to them again

–

- I will make my dwelling among them
- I will walk with them
- I will be their God
- They shall be my people
- I will welcome you
- I will be a father to you
- You shall be sons and daughters to me

But close, “yoked” associations with unbelievers defiles us – it distances us from the Lord. It quenches the ministry of the Spirit in us. And remember, though most people immediately think of marriage when they read this verse about not being unequally yoked, the primary relationship Paul is addressing here at Corinth is *associations with ungodly, false counterfeits who profess to be Christians.*

So let's put the thing right out here on the table in full view –

***We must take particular care in regard to being yoked together in relationships with people who profess to be Christians. We must be discerning about who we call our 'brother and sister' in Christ. We must be wise about who we permit to***

***be among us in a local church, and about what church we enter.***

And in particular, we must be willing to “go out from their midst” even if such persons are family members – you hear that emphasized in the Deuteronomy passage we read earlier, and if you will take the time to think through things our Lord Jesus Christ said about following Him even when leaving the dead to bury the dead, or “hating” father, mother, sister, brother in comparison to love for Him, you will hear the very same thing.

The promises of God are worth it!! You won't be left alone! God Himself will walk with you and be your father.

Let me close with a personal illustration of what these things look like in our lives. That is, how not coming out from among idolaters and darkness quenches the Spirit of God in us. You have heard me tell this before, but here it is again –

Both of my parents made professions of faith in Christ. We attended church. We had Bibles in our home. But my parents did not separate from unbelievers, idolaters, darkness, and Belial. They were unequally yoked with them particularly in extended family relationships. In this case, essentially none of these relatives claimed to be Christians (on my

father's side). They habitually blasphemed Christ in their language. Several of my aunts in particular actively hated Christ and any mention of the gospel. But my parents did not come out from among them. They did not take a stand for Christ because they did not want to give up these relationships. As a result, I grew up in an environment of rank ungodliness, filthy jokes, foul language.

But worse, I also grew up in a yoked relationship with people who claimed to be Christians, on my mother's side. Yet their family and home were filled with evil and vile things in secret – though I was subjected to it firsthand for the years of my childhood. Church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday night. Church committees. Preparing the church bulletin. Teaching children's Sunday school. And all that rank evil that I cannot even mention to you, tolerated in that home that I saw firsthand.

My parents did not separate from this and come out from among them. What was the result?

God's blessing was not on our home. His Spirit was not operative. Our religion was a cold and lifeless thing, not talked about in our family. There was no vital, visible presence of the Lord in the family I grew up in. We did not pray together. We did not read

and discuss God's Word together. My parents did not instruct me in godliness. And all because my parents had allowed idols in Christ's temple – and He departed. The light of His glory was extinguished. We did not experience the blessing of His promises. It was not for many, many years that He would return to me and make His dwelling in me and I would come to know Him as my Father.

Christian, you are the temple of God. What unclean relationships might you be holding onto? I am not talking about –

- The movies you watch
- What you eat and drink
- How you dress

These things are not without importance, but let me end by pointing out something to you that is so obvious in this Scripture that it is easily missed and we end up focusing on the much more superficial things that are really much easier to come out from among. Listen carefully and look at what Paul says here and you will see it to be true:

***The unclean things that we are to separate from, that we are not to touch, that we are not to be in partnership with or fellowship with, ARE NOT THINGS! THEY ARE PEOPLE!***

“Things” like various foods cannot be called:

- Unbelievers
- Something that can have fellowship

Just as Israel could not experience the blessings of the Lord as long as they insisted on forming relationships with the ungodly nations, so it is with us.

So take care. There are people who claim to be Christians, but who, as Paul warned Timothy, have only a form of godliness but deny its power (its reality). From such people, separate yourselves and God’s promise is that He will draw near to you like never before.