

**Do Not Be Bound Together With Unbelievers
2 Corinthians 6:14**

Saving faith produces a radical transformation in respect to every aspect of a person's being. Christians, as we have already seen in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, are "**new creatures in Christ**" for whom "**the old things [have] passed away; behold, new things have come.**" This transformation is also referred to in the Scriptures as having been born again. We see this in **John 3:3, 7** and **1 Peter 1:3, 23**.

When we place our faith in Christ we immediately become radically different. We are not the same people we used to be and neither are we in the same kingdom.

Before we exercised faith in Christ we were a part of Satan's kingdom, the kingdom of darkness, but after we exercised faith in Christ we were rescued from Satan's kingdom, or in other words the kingdom of darkness, and transferred to the kingdom of light, or in other words to Christ's kingdom. And if there is any doubt about this let me read for you **Colossians 1:13-14** and see if this is not so. "**For He [God the Father] rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**"

Therefore believers and unbelievers inhabit two opposing kingdoms. Christians are in Christ's kingdom, which is characterized by righteousness, light and eternal life. Unbelievers are in Satan's kingdom characterized by lawlessness, darkness, and spiritual death. Therefore the saved and the unsaved being a part of different kingdoms with different masters will have different affections, beliefs, principles, motives, goals, attitudes, and hopes.

Because of these differences we as believers must be careful to monitor our relationships with unbelievers; whether that unbeliever is a member of our family, a co-worker, a classmate, a neighbor or even an old friend. And why would we do this? We would do this to make sure that any relationship that we might presently have with any unbeliever, whomever that unbeliever might be, is not in any way affecting our devotion to Christ or hindering our service to Christ or somehow diminishing our attachment to other true believers in the body of Christ. This is why we must monitor our relationships with unbelievers lest we, because of our relationship with

them, might become more and more like them and less and less like true followers of Christ, new covenant people, who make up the community of the redeemed.

Unbelievers are different from us. They are a part of Satan's kingdom, the kingdom of darkness and because they are a part of Satan's kingdom, the kingdom of darkness rather than Christ's kingdom or in other words the kingdom of light, they will have different affections, beliefs, principles, motives, goals, attitudes, and hopes. And if we are not careful to monitor our relationships with them they could very easily undermine our devotion to Christ, hinder our service to Christ, diminish our attachment to the body of Christ, or perhaps even worse.

Paul in **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1** addresses this potential danger. So now let us read these particular verses and see how Paul actually went about doing this?

So what do these verses say? **“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (16) 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. (17) Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,’ says the Lord. ‘And do not touch what is unclean; and 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. (7:1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”** Clearly Paul, I believe, in these verses was highlighting for the Corinthians the importance of giving due diligence to monitoring their relationships with unbelievers so that they in spite of having been called to reach out to the unsaved, as ministers of reconciliation, might remain in a safe and protected place.

So how do these verses fit into the flow of **2 Corinthians**? 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 comprise a very carefully structured, closely argued and theologically rich climax of Paul's apostolic defense he began in 2 Corinthians 2:12 and continued through 2 Corinthians 6:13.

In this apostolic defense Paul, as an apostle of Christ and a minister of the New Covenant, has detailed for the Corinthians how God had given him the ministry of reconciliation and the message of reconciliation; a ministry and message that were far superior to the ministry and message of Moses that had resulted in the Corinthians themselves being reconciled to God by God through Christ.

But bringing this ministry and message to the Corinthians so that they might be reconciled to God did not come without a price. Paul and his associates in speaking so freely to the Corinthians had “**in much endurance**” suffered greatly.

And why had Paul and his associates been willing to suffer all of what they suffered in speaking so freely to the Corinthians, and why were they continuing to do so? Let me read for you **2 Corinthians 6:11**. “**Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.**”

Basically Paul was saying to the Corinthians, “In spite of what you may have come to believe about us, based on the false accusations of our enemies in Corinth, you should know in light of all that we have suffered on your behalf and continue to suffer on your behalf, that everything that we have said to you and continue to say to you is because we love you and desire, on behalf of Christ, to serve you. Therefore, if we presently have a problem in respect to our relationship with you, be assured of this, that the solution to this problem does not rest with us but with you.”

This is a point he made very clear to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 6:13** when he said to them, “**Now in like exchange** [or in other words in an exchange that is exact] —**I speak as to children—open wide to us also.**”

But how did Paul want the Corinthians to open up their hearts to them? What did he expect from them? He wanted something from them but what was it? He wanted them to embrace him and his associates, but in order for them to do that it would necessitate that the Corinthians would have to alter their present relationship with certain unbelievers.

And this understanding provides us the link between what we have considered and what we will consider this morning. And this brings us back to our text, or in other words to the very carefully structured, closely argued

and theologically rich climax of Paul's apostolic defense that he began in **2 Corinthians 2:12**, which we will now conclude as we begin our examination of **2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**, a climax that hopefully will powerfully drive home for us the care we need to exercise in carefully monitoring our relationships with unbelievers to make sure that none of those relationships would not in any way undermine our full devotion to Christ, hinder our service to Christ or somehow diminish our attachment to other true believers in the body of Christ.

So, what is the question that we will be seeking to answer as we examine this text? The question we will be seeking to answer is what are the basic elements of his carefully structured climax of his apostolic defense in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1?

This is the question that we will be seeking to answer and what we will discover is there are three very specific elements that comprise this carefully structured climax. So, what is the first element?

The first element was Paul's command to "not be bound together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Let me now read for you the first part of **2 Corinthians 6:14** and see if this is not so. **"Do not be bound together with unbelievers."** This is the command. And this is all that we will consider this morning. We will only consider this command.

Now it is important to note that this command, "not to be bound together with unbelievers," is the specific application of a more general command **"to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit."** And where do we find this more general command? We find it in **2 Corinthians 7:1**. Now in between these two commands is the biblical support for them in **verses 14-18**. We are now ready to take a closer look at this very first command in **2 Corinthians 6:14**.

We will begin by looking at the word "bound." The word "bound" (HEROZUGEO) means to join together with one not of the same kind and is often also translated "yoked."

This command obviously should not be taken literally. It is a figurative command. He is taking something that should be obvious from the natural world and applying it to the spiritual world just like the Israelites were

commanded not to plow a field with an ox and a donkey joined together with a yoke in **Deuteronomy 22:10** neither should believers seek to live lives pleasing to the Lord while bound or yoked together with unbelievers.

And why is this? They should not be bound together or yoked together in this way for the same reason that an ox and a donkey should not be yoked together. Such an unequal yoking simply will not work, for it is totally unnatural and can only lead to bad things, something that Paul spells out very clearly for his readers in the rest of **verse 14** down through **verse 16**. But that is for next week.

Right now I would like to ask this question in light of this command. What exactly would constitute us being bound or yoked together with an unbeliever? We should consider ourselves “bound” or “yoked” to an unbeliever when our relationship with them is undermining our devotion to Christ, hindering our service to Christ, or diminishing our attachment to the body of Christ.

Can this happen to us? Absolutely! If it could not happen to us then this command, “not to be bound or yoked together with unbelievers,” would not have been necessary, but it was necessary. It was necessary because it can easily happen to us if we are not careful, if we are not careful to monitor and to continuously monitor our relationships with various unbelievers whether that unbeliever is a member of our family, a co-worker, a classmate, a neighbor, an old friend, or whomever that unbeliever might be.

So now having said this let me make the following point very clear. The command to not be bound with unbelievers should not in any way discourage us from reaching out to the lost of this world. It only means that we must be careful when doing so.

We must, as we in obedience to Christ reach out to this world, remind ourselves that there is a great divide that exists between us, a divide that must be respected.

Unbelievers are the children of darkness and we are the children of light. They as the children of darkness have nothing to offer us. The only reason why we are going to them is because we have something to offer them, which is what? The message of reconciliation!

If our relationship with any unbeliever ever becomes defined by anything else other than our desire to see them reconciled to God, by God through Christ then we are in danger of becoming bound or yoked to that unbeliever, which will invariably undermine our devotion to Christ, hinder our service to Christ and diminish our attachment to the body of Christ.

In fact, there may be some of you here today who have already fallen victim to this. You may be here and living among us but you in fact no longer living like one of us.

So now let me ask you this question. When Paul gave this command to the Corinthians, to not to be bound to unbelievers, who did he specifically have in mind? Did he have in mind unbelievers in general or a specific group of unbelievers in particular?

Even though all that I have said to you about the danger of becoming bound together with unbelievers in general is true, it wouldn't be fair to the text to let you think that Paul when giving this command was speaking of unbelievers in general. He wasn't at all.

When Paul commanded the Corinthians not to be bound together with unbelievers, he was specifically thinking in terms of his opponents within the church, who though professing to be Christians proved otherwise by what they said and did.

The reason why we must understand this command in this way is Paul, throughout his long apostolic defense that began in **2 Corinthians 2:13** and continued through **2 Corinthians 6:13**, was specifically countering the slanderous attacks of his opponents in the church at Corinth. And it is this very apostolic defense that Paul is now bringing to a climax here in **2 Corinthians 6:14**, beginning with his command to the Corinthians not to be bound together with unbelievers.

Paul in essence in giving this command to the Corinthians was commanding the Corinthians to turn their backs on his opponents who were presently in the Corinthian church, thus making it possible for the Corinthians to once again open up their hearts to Paul and his associates in the same way that Paul and his associates had opened their hearts so wide to them in having spoken so freely to them over the many years they had known them.

So now let me make this point. Though becoming bound to any unbeliever is a dangerous thing, the most dangerous thing by far is to become bound to an unbeliever within the church who professes to be a Christian but who opposes the truth.

I believe this has been repeatedly demonstrated throughout church history. Perhaps its most dramatic demonstration was in the German Protestant church in the last century, when the members of the church bonded themselves or yoked themselves to certain false teachers within the church, who though professing to be Christians proved themselves otherwise by what they said and did.

Those false teachers, rather than aligning themselves rather than aligning themselves with the gospel and the truths associated with the gospel, aligned themselves with beliefs of Nazi Germany convincing people within the German Protestant Church that the Jews were a problem that must be dealt with, and dealt with severely.

Fortunately there were a few voices in the church that were speaking against alien and foreign ideas to the gospel of Christ. One such voice was a man named Martin Niemoller, who in 1933 on the occasion of Martin Luther's 450th birthday spoke these words from the pulpit of his church, **"There is absolutely no sense in talking of Luther and celebrating his memory in the Protestant church if we do not stop at Luther's image and look at Him to whom Luther pointed, to a Jew, a rabbi of Nazareth."** His words were clear and his point was made. The false teachers, who more and more members of the German church bonded themselves to, were leading the church down a path that was opposed not only to the gospel but the Christ of the gospel who Himself was a Jew. So, what happened?

The very next evening after Martin Niemoller had preached this message I just referred to 20,000 so-called Christians under the umbrella of the German Evangelical Church, led by bishops and other church officials in full regalia, gathered in the new Berlin Sports Palace. After a fanfare of trumpets and the singing of a hymn entitled "Now Thank We All Our God," a Berlin pastor, Joachim Hossenfelder, announced that he was implementing the infamous Aryan paragraph in his diocese that dismissed all Christian Jews from church office effective immediately. During the evening it was also announced among other things that Niemoller was suspended, that the Bible

was to be reexamined for all its non-German elements (or favorable references to Jews were to be deleted or altered), and that a proud, heroic Jesus must replace the model of the suffering servant.

The speech was interrupted again and again by applause. Pathetically, not one of the bedecked bishops or church leaders stood up to disagree. Clearly, the church had imploded from within.

Christians becoming bound to unbelievers is truly a terrible thing. We as elders appeal to you to be careful in regard to this and if perchance after considering your present relationship with any unbeliever you have any reason to believe your relationship with them has in any way undermined your devotion to Christ, hindered your service to Christ or diminished your attachment to the church of Christ then you should be immediately, by the grace of God turn your back if necessary on that relationship so that you might once again move forward in the strength that God will provide.

And we as elders would ask you to pray for us that we as faithful shepherds might be able to alert you to any person in this fellowship or group of people who though professing to be Christian are opposing the gospel or the truths of the gospel in respect to any relationship with any unbeliever.

May God protect us as we go into the world with the gospel of Christ from becoming bound to unbelievers so that we might go forth in power and with undistracted devotion.