

Unequally Yoked

By Paris Reidhead*

And now, before we go to prayer, we are going to go to the Word that we may hear Him speak to us, and then shortly we will speak to Him. But we will be well instructed and well guided if we let Him speak to us first. So will you turn to II Corinthians, Chapter 6, and I shall read vs 14 of Chapter 6, through vs 1 of Chapter 7. We are still speaking about fellowship. We are speaking about this wonderful thing in the Word of God called *koinonia*. And tonight I would like to approach it from the standpoint of the negative aspect of fellowship. I think this will be helpful to see this Scripture from this point of view.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship (what *koinonia*) hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Now this portion of Scripture has been used, and properly used unquestionably, as a reason for living a separated life, not going to places of amusement that are going to degrade and defile, and soil ones' mind and heart, not engaging in business relationships that are going to involve one with moral compromise, ethical compromise, not marrying where the marriage to the unsaved party is going to involve one with a continuous pressure that will draw them away from the Lord. And this is all true, and it is all Scriptural. And the consequences of marriage of someone that has been saved, and knows the Lord, to someone that is unsaved is almost uniformly tragic, to some degree tragic, if not in a final sense, certainly in terms of the course, covered with grief, and heartache, and burden. And so, there is reason for this advice, for taking the verse, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,” and using that verse to warn Christian young people not to marry unChristian young people, warning a Christian evangelical young people not to go or become involved with Catholic young people. I think this is very important. I believe that many, many homes have been hurt, because parents did not warn their children as to the consequences of their becoming involved even on the beginning level. There ought to be compatibility in every area, and we ought to use this verse. It is a proper verse. It is good, and it's right, and it is true. But you see the consequences, the social consequences, the personal consequences, as important as they are, are not the primary argument of the portion.

God is saying indeed be not unequally yoked together. Do not get yourself harnessed up with something, some situation, some person, some relationship that is going to put you under pressure, and strain, and put you in a place of temptation. This He is saying because of the fact that it is going to cause you such harm, and such grief, and we could simply dwell on that, and say this is the application of the Scripture.

But you see, we are talking about *koinonia*, where it says, What fellowship. This is the word that is engaging us. What *koinonia*, what fellowship, what — and then the next sentence has, what communion — the same word, “hath light with darkness, hath righteousness with unrighteousness.” How can there be sharing? How can there be participation? How can there be fellowship? But this is logical and it is self-evident. However, in the 15th vs you begin to see the Lord's reason for what He is saying.

“What concord hath Christ with Belial?” And then it is strengthened, “What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” But here it reaches its great argument. “What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” Now we are beginning to see the force of His purpose. “Ye are the temple of the living God.” Here we have state that which is taught elsewhere, is implied certainly, and we would infer it as being clearly set forth elsewhere. But here it is stated specifically and directly. “You are the Temple of the living God.” He has no temple made of stones. This building here, as appreciative as we are for it, that it is dry and warm, and lighted, and available, is not God's dwelling place. He does not dwell with buildings made of stone. “You are the temple of God.” Now in the Old Covenant, He dwelt in a tabernacle, a tent, that had the - was the place of meeting. But our

Lord's death marked the conclusion of God locating Himself in a geographical spot. The veil was rent, and that veil we are told was some - I do not know — several inches thick, a very heavy woven veil, and could have only been torn by the most mighty of tractors if they were dragging on it and splitting it. But God just parted it from the top to the bottom indicating that it had not been done by vandals. It was torn from the top to the bottom, indicating that it was the power of God that had affected this. And thus God was saying that He would no longer relate Himself to a geographical place, He would no longer restrict Himself to a point in space, that the point of meeting was no longer going to be such as 692 8th Ave, and He was not going to be restricted to that point, or any point whether it is the Mosque of Omar, or Taj Mahal, or just you name it. There is from that time on a disavowal on the part of God of a geographical location for His meeting with His people.

There is thus no sacred place, no sacred building, and in spite of the fact that all of the Christian world has looked toward St. Peter's Basilica for the last several weeks since the Ecumenical Council has been meeting for the first time for several years. As far as we are concerned, this is no more significant spiritually, it is simply a building that shelters these representatives from sun and rain, and it is no spiritual significance to anyone who understands the Scripture. We are not being derogatory; we are simply stating that God has once and for all disavowed any relationship to geography that He is not going to meet anyone on the basis of geographical place. We thus find that He is identifying the place of His dwelling as being the individual, the heart. "You are the temple of the living God." And this is the reason why He argues as He does.

"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. You are the temple of the living God. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? You are the temple of the living God. What communion hath light with darkness, because you are light - the temple of the living God. What concord hath Christ with Belial, because Christ is in you, you are the Temple of the living God. And what part hath he that believeth with an infidel because he that believes has now by this become the temple of the living God." And so the whole of this argument for separation is that something has happened to the individual that is so far beyond anything that can be offered by unbelievers and unrighteousness and darkness, Belial or the infidels, or idols, that it is not worthy to be compared with it. And so the unthinkable thing is that here in Corinth as Paul wrote in his first letter were some people, the temples of the living God that had lost sight of the importance, they had lost sight of their destiny, their place, their purpose. They had forgotten who they were, and why they were what they were. And in losing sight of this, then they lost their moral bearings, they became without a rudder, they became without an anchor, they were simply tossed. They had lost the sense of their destiny. They had lost their significance of their being. And your significance, the significance of your being is not the position you occupy. How easy it is for us to deify our work. How easy it is for us to attach to our position the glory of God, and His success, is almost equated with ours. If we succeed, God gets glory. If we fail, God doesn't. How easy it is for us to confuse the work we do for God with the God for whom we work. And this is constantly happening.

It was my experience in missions, in talking with mission leaders, and executives from all over the country, to discover that there was almost a deification of the missionary task. And we would say about someone, Well for the good of the mission, for the good of the work; and families were neglected for the good of the work. Health was broken by workers, for the good of the work. Decisions were made to lop off someone's head for the good of the work. It was a deification of individuals— of the work rather than a glorification of the Lord. And this is so easy for us to do, not only with Belial, with unbelievers, with unrighteousness, with darkness, with infidels, with idols, but anything that is going to obscure the fact that the genius, and the wonder and the glory of Christianity is Christ in you, anything that is going to obscure this, anything that is going to confuse the issue, anything that is going to minimize this glorious point, has the effect of this same thing, of separating one from this which is their highest destiny. And anything that succeeds in separating you or me from this thing that he holds but as the paramount reason for our being is a price too great to pay, and it has the effect of being an idol, or being an infidelity, or darkness, or unrighteousness, unbelief, whatever it might be. It has this same effect.

Now the reason why we should not have fellowship, be yoked with unbelievers, and have fellowship with unrighteousness and communion with darkness, concord with Belial, is that this separates us from fellowship with God. Do you see? This separates us from fellowship with God. Now anything that is going to separate you from fellowship with God is like a drain in your bank account that simply means that you lose everything you put in, and get nothing for it. You stand at the window and put it in, and somebody behind the desk is absconding with it, and when you come to draw it out it isn't there. And so it is that, anything that is going to separate us from this wonderful destiny of ours, which is to be the temple of God, and have fellowship

with God, and communion with God, is an investment with no interest, no protection, no return, and no recovery, a complete waste. And this is His argument. He says, If you go to the world for your entertainment, you have grieved the Spirit of God, and you have forfeited the privilege of fellowship with God, and this is utter folly because the world gave you nothing, and you have lost the fellowship with God. And so here you've lost everything, and gained nothing. And this is the argument of the Holy Ghost. This is the argument for separation.

Some people are afraid to go to the movies, because they are afraid they'll be caught, and then they will lost face with their Christian friends. They really haven't any scruples about it. If they get in their own room and pull the curtains down, they will sit and watch from the television thing, from what we call the one-eyed idiot, you know. They sit there and watch that thing, the Cyclops, and stare at it and see the same thing they would have seen at the movie house, but they see it 20 years later of course, and that makes it innocuous. But the fact is that their consciences do not particularly bother them then. But the effect is just the same. Oh, they are not going to be discovered. They are not going to be found out. But the fact is that if it had the effect of grieving the Spirit of God, though they may never be discovered by their friends, and they may never lose face in the community, they have lost out the only thing that counts in life, which is fellowship with God, being the temple of God.

And you see, you have got to have reason for separation. You have got to have grounds for separation. And what is it? Your approval? Goodness sakes, you and I stood beside the cross, both of us deserving nothing but God's wrath and hell. Why should I care what you think of me? Or why should you care what I think of you? We must both stand before the judgment seat of Christ. If the only reason you are moral is because of the opinions of your friends you do not have morality. All you have is a kind of slavery, a slavery to the customs of your people, and to the opinions of your kind. And this isn't morality. Morality is when a person has something so transcendently real, something so gloriously, triumphantly real, that nothing else has meaning. And nothing else has value. And the reason he doesn't do something is not because he is afraid he will be caught if he does, but because someone has become so precious to him that he would not for anything in the world want to do anything that would grieve that fellowship, and injure that relationship. Then there is morality. The morality is not what is going to happen to him, but what is going to happen to the other, and his relationship to the other. And if the other is you, then my behavior is not moral. It may be ethical, but it is not moral in the spiritual sense of morality, because the fellowship I have with you is a very limited, horizontal affair, and it is nebulous. And if you move to Florida, you will find fellowship with other Christians, and so on, because this is a passing thing. But the fellowship of God, this is transcendent, this is glorious, this is indispensable, this and this only has meaning, nothing else has meaning, nothing else has value, nothing else has significance. Whereas you can brave your neighbors opinion, and we find this happening all the time. We find people that have attended church here and elsewhere, and after a little while they say, Well fellowship with those people does not mean enough to go on in the kind of life that I am asked to lead, and so the first thing you know they have frittered away, dwindled away, and they are going where it is more congenial, and compatible, humanly and horizontally. But you see, if you are what you are because of a relationship with Him, then it does not make any difference where you go, whether you go into the army...

Someone said to me about someone going into the army, they said, O my, I feel so bad for these Christian young people when they have to go into the army. Why? All it will do is show what they are. It isn't going to change what they are. It'll show what they are. Someone said to me about television down in Winston Salem, N. C., there is a missionary from China. He was 22 years in China, and now he has a television set, and he sits in front of it, and he doesn't go to church on Sunday night at all because it interferes with his favorite program. I said, Television isn't responsible. I said, All this was an excuse for him to be what he wanted to be and gave his sufficient incentive for him to do what he wanted to do. It didn't make his character. It just revealed it. The army does not make people's character. It reveals it.

And true character is based upon relationship. Whom do you wish to please? We talk about young people going away to college and their faith is being destroyed by their agnostic teachers. It is ridiculous nonsense. The faith was not destroyed by agnostic teachers; the faith was destroyed by superficial ministry back home. And the only reason they were separated and Christian was because there was more to be gained by being that way than if they weren't. But when they came to the university they did not want to live that kind of a straitlaced life, and so the only way that they could justify themselves with their parents was to write back and say, I am terribly sorry, but my professors have proved to me the Bible isn't inspired, and it isn't the Word of God, and so I have become an agnostic.

But you see, whenever that happens, you know that it isn't the truth that has changed them, because there isn't that much proof. The reason people give up their faith is not because the assault is so airtight, and the lever edge is so tremendous, and the pressure is so great that they have to do it. Because there are some very fine, warm evangelicals, probably in the same school that have endured the same pressure and haven't given it up at all. Why did they give it up? Because they wanted to rationalize their behavior. They wanted to live the kind of life they desired to live, and they wanted to make it acceptable. The convictions they had brought from their home did not allow them to do it, and so the thing to do when they get to the university is to develop for themselves a set of convictions that coincides with their conduct. And this is what happens. But if those young people had had a relationship with Him, if they had known they were the Temple of the living God, and that God was dwelling in them, and God was walking in them, and God, God had become real to them, then you could put them anywhere. It would not make any difference where they went, because they had met someone.

This is why I am so utterly opposed to the easy believism that just has ruined a generation in this country. Because it has filled people that have had a head profession of faith that have never met Him. And so as long as they live in a congenial atmosphere, where everybody has the same profession, it is all right. But you get them out of it, and the first thing you know the whole thing has disintegrated. It has been a rope of sand. But if they meet Him, then they are separated, not because they were told by mother, You should not do this or you should not do that — oh I believe parents should tell their children you shouldn't, and I believe preachers should say to Christians, Don't. But you know, I believe that if you have ever met Him then as someone has said, It is so hard to go in the fall of the year and pick all of those dead leaves off the branches. It is so difficult. And I would look at you and say, Yes, yes. It is hardly worth the effort to pick the dead leaves off the branches. Just wait a little while, and when the life begins to rise in the heart of the tree, the rise of that new life will force the leaves off. It will force the leaves off. And they will fall because of a presence of a new life.

And so what is He saying here? Essentially it is this. Oh, we could argue from it and bring you into a legalistic bondage and say, A Christian doesn't do this, and a Christian doesn't do that, and a Christian doesn't do the other, and a Christian shouldn't do that. But you see, if a Christian doesn't do that and you do it, then there is only one argument. Are you Christian? If you are in fellowship with God you do not do this. If you are doing it, you are not in fellowship with God. Let's put the shoe on the feet, rather than wearing them on the hands and trying to walk on our hands. Let's put them where they belong. If you are in relationship with Him, and if you are in fellowship with Him, and if you are the temple of God, and if you want to know Him, and if your desire is to glorify Him, then - why these things fall away, because you have tasted, because you have eaten, because you have seen, because you have heard, because you have felt... And in order that that might be fulfilled and enlarged and increased.

And so then we come to the matter of fellowship. Separation, yes. But Oh I like the way Paul put it in the letter to the Thessalonians. "You have turned to God from idols" (I The. 1:9). You see, they saw God, and they lost all interest in idols. When they saw Him, the idols were just blocks of wood and stone. They had no meaning because they had seen God.

When I find people clinging to their little blocks of wood, and their blocks of stone, their little pile of sticks, and their little dolls, the only thing you can say is, Have they ever seen God? Have they seen God? Because when you have seen God position means nothing, place means nothing, office means nothing, honors mean nothing. What can it mean if you have seen God? Have you seen Him, you are just not fit for anything else. Anything that stands in the way of your relationship with God is far too great a price to pay. I've seen Him.

William Fetler came to People's Church in Toronto, and he told about Eastern Europe. Oswald Smith, a young man with a burning heart, listened to that man preach, a man who could just simply be the vehicle of God, inflaming the hearts of all who heard him, the Moody of Russia, and when he had gone, sailed from Montreal two days later, Oswald Smith cabled him on the ship saying, Wait for me in England. I am coming. He turned his church over to someone else and spent 9 months. But as he was getting ready to leave, alone in his study up there in Toronto, Oswald Smith¹ penned the hymn, used to the tune of Juanita, "I have seen the vision, and for self I cannot live. Life is less than worthless till my all I give." And then the chorus,

¹ Dr. Oswald J. Smith (1889-1986) Evangelist who established People's Church in the City of Toronto.

“Russia, dark Russia, I am coming now to thee. Russia, dark Russia, bringing Christ with me.” And Oswald Smith spent 9 months of evangelism in Estonia, in Lithuania, in Latvia, in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, with Wilhelm Fettler translating, and hundreds coming to know the Lord. Well you see it wasn’t hard to leave Toronto. It wasn’t hard to leave the church. He had seen the vision.

Have you seen Him? Have you seen that God wants to dwell in you and tabernacle in you and walk in you, and you can know God and be filled with the fullness of God? If you have done that, nothing else has meaning. “Take the world, but give me Jesus. All its joys are but a name.”² Is He? Seen Him? That is what this means. Because in fellowship with Him, all these other beguiling, enticing, alluring fellowships, have no hold nor grasp. Have you seen Him? This is the question. Are you having fellowship with God?

Now if these other things are important to you, the question is that He isn’t. It is quite obvious He isn’t. Because when He has filled the horizon of your heart, nothing else has meaning. Has this happened? This is what fellowship with God means, and this is the basis for all separation. It is to turn to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, because you are the temple of God. He says, I will dwell in them. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Cor. 7:1). “Having these promises” — What are these promises? That we will be the temple of God, and God will dwell in us. Let us just assiduously, diligently, meticulously “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit.” Show it, and we have dealt with it. We have already committed the matter. Don’t see everything. You may see something in me that is abhorrent to you and obnoxious to you. I want to be what I ought to be. If you will come to me, I assure you that God has brought me to the cross, and I want to be right. I assume the same thing of you, that you have seen this, that you can be the temple of God, and that you are willing to make any adjustments, “cleansing yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness.” This is what has happened when you have seen Him. Nothing else has meaning, and nothing else has value. This is fellowship, first with God before it can be with anybody else.

Well that’s wonderful to me. I do not have to get up here and say, Don’t go here and don’t go there, and don’t do this, and don’t do that. Look at Him. See Him. He wants to fill you. And when you understand that, then all these other things are just like little slimy snakes that would wrap around your feet and you club them away so that you can press on to Him. Isn’t it wonderful that God wants to be known by us, and understood by us, and loved by us. And He loved us when He knew the worst about us, and He has not lost patience with us yet, and He is drawing us on, and tonight some attitude, some disposition, some motive, some purpose, some relationship, and you are going to say, Oh, how little that is. Let it go. Let it go. Let it go. Nothing else has meaning but to know God.

Shall we. Let us bow our hearts together in prayer, and thank God that He loved us, that He too, the initiative, that He has wooed us to Himself. He knew we were yoked with unbelievers, He knew we were unbelievers, He knew we were in unrighteousness, He knew we were in darkness, He knew we were slaves of Belial, He knew we were worshipping idols, but He has called us to Himself, and we have turned to Him and He knew the worst about us and loved us nonetheless, and He died so that all the adjustments can be made that we can have perfect fellowship with Him. I think you ought to just thank Him for that tonight. You ought to worship Him and praise Him. You ought to express the desire of your heart, the longing of your heart to know Him better, and you ought to just be willing to leave anything that grieves Him, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. We will “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit,” that we may please Him and know Him as He longs to be known.

Let us go to prayer, go to praise, thanksgiving, and let our hearts rejoice and cry out that we who are here may know Him thus and that there may come a people that know Him thus, wholly consumed with Him.

* Reference such as: Delivered at the Gospel Tabernacle, New York City, NY on Wednesday Evening, November 7, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

©PRBTMI 1962

² “Give me Jesus” Words By Fanny J. Crosby; Music By John R. Sweney, 1879.