

II Corinthians 6:14-7:1 "A Separated Life" May 26, 2019

All right. Let's open our Bibles this morning to II Corinthians Chapter 6 verse 14, and we want to look down through Chapter 7 verse 1. It's a practical lesson, and one that is very important, I think, for us to learn.

One of the immediate results of your coming to Jesus in saving faith is the radical transformation that takes place in your life. The Bible is filled with verses that say here are the things that happen the moment you believe, that you become a new creature, that all the old things are put away. All of your sins are washed away, God throws them behind His back, down into the sea, He remembers them no more. Everything in your life is new; II Corinthians there, 5:17. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus there in John Chapter 3, He talked about this born-again experience, where you get a new heart and His Spirit moves within your life, and He takes you out of a kingdom of darkness and He places you in the light of His kingdom; as Paul said to the Colossians, in the kingdom of His dear Son; or as he said to Agrippa, to turn you from darkness even to light.

As a result of your new birth, you now find yourself living in an entirely different world than the unbeliever. In fact, the definition is so clear that there really is no crossing of the line. You are as a Christian in God's kingdom, His Son's. It is characterized by light and by righteousness. It heads for eternal life. The unbeliever still lives in Satan's world. He's the God of this world. There's lawlessness, and darkness, and spiritual death. And so, the distinction that is made, when you come to the Lord, you transfer kingdoms.

It stands to reason, although it doesn't always seem to be grasped by everyone, that believers and unbelievers have entirely different affections. We are interested in different things. Our principles are different, our motives for life are different, our belief system is certainly different. It affects our goals and it affects

our attitudes. We have a hope that the world doesn't have. In fact, everything that links you and an unbeliever together are only temporary in nature. They're external at best. So you can enjoy family ties like the world does, you can labor in the same line of work as the world does, you can live in the same community, participate in the same past times, even maybe agree on some political or social kind of issues, but on a spiritual level, on an eternal level, you literally hold nothing in common with the world from which you came. Because of that, throughout the Bible, once you come to the Lord, God goes out of His way to say to you, stay out of there. Don't go back to Egypt. Don't look from where you've come.

John was in his 90s when he wrote in 1 John Chapter 2, "Don't love the world, and don't love the things that are in the world. Because everything that is in the world -- the flesh, the eyes of lust, the pride of life -- none of those are of your Father. The world's passing away," he said, "and its lust thereof; but if you do the will of God, you'll abide forever." Because there's two paths, and you've come to the Lord and now are on that path that leads to Him.

James, who, if you've read the book of James, you know he likes to throw things right at your face. He says in Chapter 4, verse 4, "You adulterers and you adulteresses! Do you not know that a friendship with the world will make you an enemy of God?" If you want to be a friend of the world, you are going to have an enemy of God, because of the division, because of the salvation that God has brought to you.

Paul said to the Romans in Chapter 12, "Don't be conformed to this world, be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you might prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Now, the Corinthians had struggled with this for a long time. They came out of a very idolatrous and very sensual city. Temple prostitutes and called it religion. And so, when the church was formed there, though like the Thessalonians, when Paul wrote to them in Chapter 1 verse 9 of Thessalonians, "I'm glad to hear you've left your idols to turn to the living God," so had the Corinthians. They had certainly turned to the Lord in their faith, but because of the idolatry that permeated and gripped their past, they were often tempted to go back to it. And they

struggled with it a lot. In fact, if you read I Corinthians, you'll find that this young church struggled a lot with their past and with their present in seeking to put the Lord on in their day-to-day life.

To make matters worse, the false teachers had come in and had presented to the church this quasi-Christian mystical kind of legalism that had drawn people even further away from Jesus. And so, Paul in writing to them wants to help them, and I think the counsel that you find in these verses would do a lot for us as well, because the counsel here is don't live in the world. Don't live like the world. Separate yourself from the world. God has called you into His kingdom. Live there. And I think its really good advice. We're called out of the world, even though we're still living in it.

Now, you should know that God's call for us to come out of the world does not mean that you should refuse associations with those that are lost, as a lot of Christian legalists would demand of you, because the Lord has sent you to go into the world as a sheep amongst the wolves. It isn't calling you to separate from your unbelieving spouse. Go into all the world, we're told. When Paul wrote that I Corinthian letter in Chapter 9, he said, "I am free from all men, but I become all things to all men that by somehow I might reach some; so to the Jew I become a Jew; to the Gentiles, like those who live under the law, I'll try to meet everyone right where they're at so I can share the gospel with them so I by some means save some." He said in I Corinthians Chapter 5, "I wrote you in a previous letter not to hang out with sexually immoral people." And then he wrote this: "But I didn't mean those in the world who live that way, because then you'd have to leave the world. But I said separate yourself from those who claim to know the Lord who live that way." So, God has us in the world, but we're not a part of it. We're to be a light to them, a hand of outreach. Jesus was by His enemies called a friend of tax collectors and sinners. That's what they said of Him. That He was a wine bibber, that He was a glutton. They didn't have the nicest word for Jesus, because He was available to those that were lost in the world.

In I Corinthians Chapter 8, Paul writes to this church to be careful about how the mature Christian in the church would use his liberty, and he went out of his way to talk

about idolatry, because that's where the people had come from. In Corinth in the first century, there were more idol temples than anything else, and all of the idol worship involved meat sacrifice. So, these temples would sell their meat after their ceremonies to restaurants, and they would be cheap, and so if you went to a restaurant, chances are you're eating a meat that yesterday was being offered to an idol. Well, for a mature Christian that means nothing. In fact, Paul said in I Corinthians, Chapter 8 verse 4, "We know there's only one God, and an idol's nothing." But he says, "For the sake of your brother, if he goes to dinner with you, he goes, 'I wonder if this meat came from idols,' then you probably shouldn't eat it, because you don't want to hurt his weak conscience." But there was all those verses about be careful living in this culture and the way that you associate, if you will, with it. Be a witness to, don't stumble your brother.

One of Satan's greatest ploys against the church is not to stand against you, but to join you. If he stands against the church in persecution, the church always grows stronger. When he joins the church, the church always becomes weaker. So, if he can get you and your allegiances and your alliances to be in the world, he can defeat you and minimize your influence for his glory.

So, here's the verses this morning, Chapter 6 verses 14 through Chapter 7 verse 1, but they're directed at a church that is in the midst of a world that is corrupt and horrible. Kind of like us. And here's his advice so that we can be safeguarded in our walks and effective in our walks with Him.

Verse 14, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." I hope you understand those verses, or those words. One of the problems for the Corinthians was that their walks were being watered down because of their relationship with the world around them. They had a relationship with Jesus, but they also had a relationship in the world.

The words "unequally yoked" means exactly what it says; right? A yoke is that thing you put around the neck of two animals so that they can plow together, but it's applied here to say, don't you be so closely involved with someone else who's not a believer, who can then pull you off the path; who can change your goal or change your

target or have you miss the mark; someone that can yank you to one side or another through pressure or agitation or suggestion, or just by example. In other words, you're stuck with a friend or in a relationship that isn't doing you any good; it can only damage your walk with God. And that was the problem for the Corinthians.

If you go back to the law, Deuteronomy 22, the Lord even said in the law, "You shall not yoke together an ox and a donkey." Now, you might say, well, I wouldn't do that anyway. An ox was a clean animal, the donkey was unclean. The example is much the same. We as believers are warned against the tight relationship with unbelievers, with those in the world who have no relationship with Jesus, who absolutely hold nothing in common with you. Because you've been brought out of the world into God's kingdom.

To demonstrate the reality of how silly that is, what follows in these next few verses are five rhetorical statements in the form of questions that expect to have a negative answer, beginning with the first verse, "What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?" Now, this word "fellowship" here is not the word "metanoia," which is throughout the New Testament. It is the word "metoche," which is just used here, but it has a similar kind of meaning. It means to share, or what do you hold in common. And the question is, what do you, who live in righteous lives, share with those who live lawless lives.

The word "righteousness," by the way, just for definition, is a kind of life that is brought into your life by God's grace, His mercy, and it pleases Him. In other words, you're doing the thing that please the Lord, righteousness, right things with God. God says "that's right," and now you're living that way. What relationship does that have with somebody that lives in lawlessness? The word in Greek is "anomia," and it literally means just that, to live in rebellion or to break the rules. What rules? Well, in this case God's law or God's demands; right? It is used to describe the nature of someone who hasn't been saved, a sinner who needs to be saved.

When John wrote his letter, 1 John, when he was, like I said, in his 90s, he said, "If you commit sin, you're lawless. And sin is lawlessness. And we know that Jesus came. He was manifested to take away our sin, because in

Him there's no sin. So, if you abide in Him, you will not sin," present tense. Your life will not be driven by that lawlessness, but rather by the work of God's Spirit. So he goes on and he says, "If you sin, it's because you don't know Him. You haven't seen Him. If that's the life you're living, but let no one deceive you. If you practice righteousness, then you have life." Then you're righteous. God accepts you.

Paul says when it comes to your Christian relationship with the world, what do you hold in common when you're living a life that seeks to please God and he's living a life that seeks to break God's rules? And the answer is obvious: Nothing. The righteous life will one day be received by the Lord into glory; the lawless life will one day find itself in hell. Jesus said in Chapter 7 of Matthew, I think verse 23 maybe, "I never knew you. You depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." In other words, your life hasn't changed. You haven't come to the Lord. There's no salvation. There is no repentance of sin. There's no redemption. There's no new birth. What relationship on a spiritual level do you have with someone in the world? And the answer is, you have absolutely none. There's no partnership. The distinction is absolute. We don't always see it that way, but we should.

The second question was, what communion has light with darkness? The word "communion" here is the word for fellowship, "koinonia," to hold things in common, to be intimate. Light and darkness are mutually exclusive. You certainly can't have both at the same place at the same time. When the word light and darkness is used intellectually in the Bible, it just speaks of truth versus error. When it's used morally, it speaks about holiness versus evil. But the righteous are always seen to walk in the light. Jesus said, "I'm the light of the world. If you walk with Me, you won't live in the darkness. You have the light of life." That's what you've been given as you came to Christ. One day you're going to go to Heaven. Paul said to the Colossians in Chapter 1, "He has qualified you, the Father has, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints who stand in the light." It's good to be in that group, isn't it? That group does really well throughout the Bible; The ones that belong to Jesus, standing in the light, worshipping Him. The unrighteous will be cast into outer darkness, wailing and gnashing of teeth.

So, what fellowship do they have together? Verse 15 says, "What accord," it is the word for harmony, "is there between Christ and Belial?" This third question turns from the nature of the new believer and how he differs from the nature of the unbeliever, to now the leader of their respective kingdoms. What relationship, what accord does Christ have with Belial? "Belial" is a very ancient word for the devil. The kingdom of darkness and lawlessness, the god of this world, the little term "sons of Belial" are found a dozen or more times in the Old Testament. They are usually translating the words "corrupt" or "worthless." It's a fit title for the devil. He is worthless. To think that he and Jesus would have anything in common is absurd, and that's Paul's point. There's no accord. By the way, the word "accord" here is the Greek word for our English word symphony. We strike a note that sounds good together. And the answer is, they're not going to be able to do that. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are made manifest. Whoever doesn't practice righteousness is not of God, nor he who doesn't love his brother. So, this separation is an important aspect to learn from our spiritual lives, because we're living in this world, we're not of it, and somehow, we've got to not only survive and do well, but we've got to be fruitful and multiply spiritually. But if we don't see ourselves as distinct from the world, we might very well get pulled into what the Corinthians were so often pulled into, and that is this kind of partnership where your feet are in both places.

What part, he says, has a believer with an unbeliever? The word "part" means to agree upon. Well, what can you both lay your hands to? I think it was the prophet Amos who wrote in Chapter 3, "How can two walk together unless they be agreed?" There's no agreement between you and an unbeliever in terms of the eternal things of life. You can agree about a lot of things on the earth, but we're talking about the relationship that we have with God.

And finally, he says in verse 16, "And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? You're the temple of the living God." All false religions and idolatry are ultimately a worship of the devil. We read that in Deuteronomy Chapter 32, that the people committed abominations against the Lord. They sacrificed to demons. They forsook the God who had bought them and

brought them in, who had fathered them for gods they didn't know, new gods that their fathers had worshipped. I mean, idols are just made by man. Behind it, though, sits your enemy, who's the devil. So what relationship, what agreement, what can we agree on, between the temple of God, the place of God's dwelling place, and an idol that stands so lifelessly by?

When you go to the Old Testament, which is a type of really your relationship with God in many ways, the temple became a place of God's dwelling, a place where you would meet with God. In the New Testament that becomes you and I and the church; right? His Spirit comes to live in us. We are vessels for His honor. The Lord dwells in us. So, as you go through the Old Testament, you find these disastrous consequences following those who wanted to mix idolatry from the world with their relationship with God. In II Kings, I think 21, Manasseh, who in my estimation is maybe the most wicked man in the Old Testament, brought into the temple idols, set them up, and the destruction that it brought to the nation it was at the time unparalleled.

In I Samuel, where we've been going through on Wednesday night, a couple of weeks ago the children of Israel were fighting their perennial enemies, the Philistines. They lost 300 men or 400 men in a battle. They got together and said, "Why did we lose? We're supposed to be God's people." And these guys said this: "Well, the Philistines, they carry their god into battle. We should go get our ark, and if we carry our God with us, we'll be safe." Distinguishing between God, the one that they worship, and the place of meeting. They started to deify the meeting place. Idolatry. Well, they carried this acacia box into battle, but it didn't go well for them. They lost 30,000 men and the box was stolen. And they went home going, "Well, that was a bad idea." Well, now the Philistines have it, and they think, hey, we beat their God because we have their God right here in this box. They put the box in front of Dagon, their god, who happened to be a fish with man's head and hands. Put the ark in front of it, left. The next morning, came back, and Dagon was on his face in the dirt, because now God was speaking to the Philistines on terms they could relate to: Idolatry. The next night, not only had Dagon fallen down, his head had been cut off and so had his hands. And they said, "This isn't going so well." And they began to move this ark around, and every place it

went, especially the five capital cities of the Philistines, people began to be stricken with tremendous pain and suffering, to when they finally decided, we got to ship this guy back. We don't have a rival for the God of the Jews.

If you go to Ezekiel Chapter 8 and 9, Ezekiel is with the children of Israel in captivity. They've been taken out of Jerusalem and many of them dragged to Babylon. And the Lord said to Ezekiel one day, "I'm going to take you back to Jerusalem in a vision." And he took him in to where Ezekiel had never been, inside the temple area. And he said, let me know what they're doing in here. And on the walls were etched these idolatrous graffiti marks. The priests were engaged at the temple doors with temple prostitutes. In the open areas stood these idols. And the Lord said, "For this reason I'm leaving. I'm not coming back here. I'm leaving this temple." Within 10 years, in 586, the Babylonians came and destroyed the place, and Israel would spend 50 more of its 70 years in captivity. So, what fellowship does God have with an idol, and the answer is, we don't have any. It doesn't have any. We can't have any.

So, notice the authoritative word here in verse 16: "As God has said: 'I'll dwell with them, I'll walk with them. I'll be their God, they'll be my people.' Therefore, 'Come out from among them and be separate, sayeth the Lord. Don't touch what's unclean, I'll receive you. I'll be your Father, you'll be My sons and daughters, sayeth the Lord Almighty.'" The promise of God made to the church that will stand separate from the world is that He will indwell His temple, your life, be with you, guide you, protect you, like we read in the Psalm this morning.

As believers, like I said, we are in the world, but we're not of the world. You know, Jesus stood down in the valley on the way to the garden of Gethsemane to pray for the church, the church that would eventuate because of the sacrifice. And there in verse 17 He said, "Father, I have given them Your word. The world's hated them because they hate Me, but I'm not praying that You should take them out of the world. I'm just praying that You would keep them from the evil ones. They're not of the world like I'm not of the world, so set them aside in Your truth, in Your word that's truth." Jesus's intention was to leave you and I in the world to be a

light, to work the fields, to reach out to the lost.

As believers, it is to our detriment, however, if we try to live on both sides of the fence. In the church we're very spiritual; we say amen a lot, we raise our hands at the right time, we sing at the top of our lungs, and then we walk out the door and no one can see that we're believers at all. At work they don't identify us with Jesus. There's no evidence that we walk with God. We just live on both sides of the fence. We fit in everywhere we go.

There are a lot of believers, and unfortunately, we run into a lot of them in counseling, who really believe that that doesn't apply to them; that somehow, they're special cases. We'll have folks coming in that are dating, and one of them is a believer and one of them is not, and we have to say, "You can't marry this person." To which they usually reply, "We'll just go to another church." But it doesn't negate the fact that the Lord said separate. We will hear this: "But we love each other. We get along. I can win them over later." It's the old missionary dating idea. It's just not in the Bible. Come out from among them. I'll be your God.

It applies to business relationships. If as a business owner, you have a bunch of people with you that are partners that aren't believers, it's not going to go well with your business. You're going to be compromised in every place that you turn. Your goals are going to be different. Your values are going to be different. It's going to affect your business practices.

It also affects your friendship level. If your best friends are unbelievers, that is the people you spend all of your time with, I guarantee you you're not going to do well spiritually. In fact, I would say this to you: Check your friends. There's your spiritual level. If you can only hang out with unbelievers because they're the only ones that'll put up with you and you feel comfortable with them, there's a problem. You should do this: Find Christians stronger than you, and if they'll put up with you, hang out with them. Because here's the principle, and it's a biblical principle: View the world as a place for evangelism. Look at the lost as outreach. You'll walk out these doors, the world is a place that you go to fish. You go looking for souls. You go looking for opportunities. If you want fellowship, and

comfort, and a wife, or a husband, or a business partner, you look in the church. Look amongst the saints, because that's the place you find comfort and you find hope. But be careful when that gets out of balance. The world is lost. It needs to be reached by the gospel and it will never be reached by compromised saints.

Look at the obvious comparisons seen here. What fellowship, communion, accord, part, agreement, have the righteous with the lawless, light with darkness, Christ with the devil, a believer with an unbeliever, the temple of God with idols, and the answer is, they don't have any. And so, you read in verse 17 and again in Chapter 7 verse 1 the word "therefore." If that's true, then get out of there. Don't touch, separate, so that I can be your Father and you can be my children, and "Therefore, since you have these promises," Chapter 7 verse 1, "beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of our flesh and spirit, and let us go on to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord." The word "perfect" is the Hebrew -- Greek word "teleios." It's the word that Jesus used when He said on the cross "It is finished." Literally, let's go on to grow up and be complete in the Lord, and be moved by the fear of the Lord, not the fear of the world.

Let's do this. Stay away from the world. Avail yourself of God's cleansing. Be His children. I remember as a kid, and maybe you grew up in that time as well, my mother would say to us sometimes, if I was not doing the right thing, "Wait till your dad gets home." And that was horrifying. I didn't want to hear -- now, I don't -- my dad was always pretty accommodating, but just the thought he would lose his cool, I didn't want any part of that. And I thought, what if I heard that from the Lord, "Wait till your Father gets home." Oh, man. It'll strike the fear of God in you. It's a necessary ingredient in my life.

Isaiah did well with the Lord, but in Chapter 6 of Isaiah he said that the year that King Uzziah died, then he for the first time in his life saw the Lord in a way that brought him to his knees. He'd always idolized the king, looked up to this man, but now when he was out of the way, now he saw God, and he feared the Lord. Daniel in Chapter 10 said the same thing. The Lord came to visit him and Daniel said, "I was left without strength, lying on my face, hearing His voice. It's like I fell asleep.

I couldn't get up." There's something to be said for realizing that you joined God's kingdom, and there's only one person you have to please, and it's Him.

So, look, you walk out of here, that's the world out there. That's who you're supposed to be reaching, living a kind of life that people want to emulate; that seeing in you the love of God, they'll know that you belong to Him. Your marks of your kingdomship should be showing. You want to have good fellowship? Come to church. Hang out with Christians. You want to separate from those who live ungodly lives, even in the church; the adulterers, the backbiters, the drunks. Hey, let them do their own thing. But you don't want to be that kind of witness. You want to witness for the Lord. And here's where you get your strength and out there is where you get your fruit.

So, Paul says to these believers, come out, be separate. God will dwell on you, he'll walk with you, he'll be your God. What more do you want than that? But it's going to require a choice on your part to put yourself where God belongs and where God would have you to be.

So, check out your friends. Check out your barbecue tomorrow. See who you're hanging out with. It could say a lot about where you're at.