

Pentecost, which was originally an Israelite festival, has significant symbolic meaning as do the other OT festivals. The two loaves of bread made with yeast, which were offered to the Lord, aptly portray the church. Out of two peoples, Jew and Gentile, God made one new man, the church which is being purified by Christ till He comes.

Since Pentecost Jesus Christ joins believers by the Holy Spirit into one new Body, the Church (1 Cor 12:12-13). Scripture also says that they are being placed as “living stones” into a “spiritual house”, the Temple of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:21-22). As 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 shows, this should have an effect on how we live.

If the Corinthians were to open their hearts to Paul, as he had done to them, then they would need to make a choice and reject the false teachers and all for which they stood. The text answers two primary questions.

## I. What is Paul calling believers to do?

1. *Two direct commands*: (1) Do not be bound or yoked with unbelievers (6:14), a figure which might have been drawn from the OT, and (2) Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit (7:1; cf. 6:17). (See 1 Corinthians 5 for cleansing in reference to sin. Purification is needed in both outward practices and inner attitudes of the heart. It is the continuing process of becoming holy in practice.)

To be “yoked” with an unbeliever is something that might lead us to sin. There is the temptation to compromise on the clear commands of God and Biblical teaching.

2. *Principles derived from the passage (i.e., from the commands and rhetorical questions)*

- The degree of restriction or freedom to end an association of joint effort (v 14, “yoke”)
- The degree to which profits or losses are shared (v 14, “in common”)
- The degree to which things such as resources are held in common (v 14, “fellowship”)
- The degree to which you must complement one another (v 15, “harmony”)
- The degree to which you have a stake in a venture (v 15, “in common”)
- The degree to which you must make decisions together (v 16, “agreement”)
- The degree to which it influences you to do wrong (7:1)

3. *Examples of application in Paul’s letters*: 2 Corinthians (submitting to false teachers); 1 Cor 6:1-8 (binding oneself to the decision of an unbelieving judge in a civil court, but cf. Rom 13); 1 Cor 7:39 (marrying only in the Lord, i.e., a believer); 1 Cor 5:9-11 (certain association with sinful pagans is allowable, but not with professing believers who sin like pagans); 1 Cor 9:22 & Ephesians 4:17 (becoming all things to all men, but still no longer living like the Gentiles do).

## II. Why does Paul command believers to do this?

1. *Believers and unbelievers are radically different.*

- Righteousness versus wickedness, or literally, lawlessness: God loves righteousness but hates lawlessness. We will be slaves of the one or the other. The believer has been made righteous in Christ but the unbeliever has no righteousness before God.
- Light versus darkness: They cannot co-exist. The believer is moved out of darkness into the kingdom of light. The non-believer hates the light and loves darkness. God is light and in Him is no darkness.
- Christ versus Belial: Only two captains exist of two realms. Christ is the Light and our righteousness. Belial (a name for Satan) is the prince of darkness and of lawlessness. A person either has God as his father or Satan.
- Believer versus non-believer: They share no inheritance in common. The believer’s hope, blessings, and values are heavenly, eternal and God-centered. The non-believer is self-centered and worldly oriented.
- The temple of God versus idols: To bring idols into the temple of God was an ultimate act of rebellion and desecration.

There are two distinct camps which are clearly divided and have no middle ground. To attempt to yoke together a believer and an unbeliever makes no sense. Furthermore, it is important to understand the gospel clearly, since that is what places a person in one camp or the other.

2. *Our privileges obligate us.*

Our privileges are introduced and summarized by this fantastic statement: “For we are the temple of the living God.” The temple was where God revealed Himself. It was where worship was allowed. It represented for the Jews their identity as the people of God. Paul quotes from OT places in connection to the new covenant, of which we benefit by being in Christ, who is the promised Offspring of Abraham. God, by His Spirit, lives in us now. We are His people and He is our God. The temple is currently a spiritual house made of living stones.

These promises (i.e., those of 6:16b-18) bring the obligation to cleanse ourselves and to participate in the sanctifying work of God. It does not make sense, to be promised the very presence of God and to choose the fellowship of Satan. It does not make sense, to be promised eternal blessings and work instead for things that perish. It makes even less sense, to despise God by making such wrong choices.

There are various applications of this command, some more or less obvious. Don’t be joined to an unbeliever in marriage. Don’t be joined to an unbeliever in a business partnership. Be on guard against being yoked to wrong teaching, either in churches or in one’s education.