A close-up of a hand

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**2nd Corinthians 5 – “Unevenly Yoked”**

**VISION:**

**North Shore Fellowship exists to Lift up Jesus, and to “reconcile” people into A relationship with God through him. *(2nd Corinthians 5:18)***

**2nd Corinthians 5:18** “Now all things *are* of God, who has *reconciled* us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the *ministry of reconciliation*.”(NKJV)

This verse speaks very clearly about the heart of God, for us, and for the lost.

**2nd Corinthians 6:1-2 “**As God’s co-workers we urge you not to receive God’s grace in vain. **2**For he says, *“In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you*.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”

Paul is quoting Isaiah 49:8 here, emphasizing that now is the time to receive the grace of God. Do not put it off to some future date. Now is the time of salvation.

There is a popular quote that says; *“yesterday is gone, and tomorrow is not promised”.* In other words, today is the only day you can live in. The best you can do for tomorrow, is plan for it today. Don’t take God’s grace for granted, today is the day to receive God’s grace and to pray for salvation if you haven’t already!

**Personal Appeal:**

Paul now makes a very personal appeal to the church in this letter. He knows that his relationship with the Corinthian church is suffering some strain. Even though he “fathered” this church plant, since his departure to plant and cultivate other churches there have been those who are speaking against him, trying to discredit him, and actively leading others within the church to disregard his authority.

We learned in 2nd Corinthians 2 that the church had not only rejected Paul's instructions but had chosen to follow other men who opposed Paul, and treated him with disrespect and ridiculed his apostleship.

He previously reminded them of how he poured himself out for them because of his love and dedication to them. In this chapter he lists it again, somewhat *poetically.*

**2nd Corinthians 6:3-10“**We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. **4**Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; **5**in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; **6**in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; **7**in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; **8**through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; **9**known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; **10**sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.”

**DIFFICULTIES:**

in great endurance;

in troubles,

hardships

distresses;

in beatings,

imprisonments

riots;

in hard work,

sleepless nights

hunger;

**BLESSINGS:**

in purity,

understanding,

patience

kindness;

in the Holy Spirit and

in sincere love;

in truthful speech

in the power of God;

**CONTRASTS:**

with weapons of righteousness in the right hand AND in the left;

through glory AND dishonor,

bad report AND good report;

genuine, YET regarded as impostors;

known, YET regarded as unknown;

dying, AND yet we live on;

beaten, AND yet not killed;

sorrowful, YET always rejoicing;

poor, YET making many rich;

having nothing, and YET possessing everything.

He is not complaining here, he’s just recounting the sacrifices that he made for the ministry, because of his love for the church.

*[I was interviewed recently by some pastoral seminary students who are writing a paper about some of the hardships and hazards that Pastors experience regularly. They asked me what the hardest part of church planting is. I told them it’s very much like parenting. You begin with nothing or very little, and sacrifice so much of your life to raise them from helpless babies into adult individuals. The hardest part is when there is trouble or dissonance in that relationship because it affects you deeply. Pastors experience that type of heartbreak very frequently as they see people walk away, or discontinue their relationships with the church, the Pastor, and sometimes the Lord.]*

Paul describes it this way;

**2nd Corinthians 6:11-13“**We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. **12**We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. **13**As a fair exchange—I speak as to my children—open wide your hearts also.”

It is so important to keep an “open heart”. Sometimes, we can become bitter through hurt or disappointment and begin to close our hearts to others and to God. We go from soft-hearted, where we give and receive love freely, to hard-hearted where we are callous and defensive. God wants us to maintain a heart of love and forgiveness to all people, and to remain open-hearted to Him as well.

**Eph. 4:30-32**“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. **32**And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

When you find it hard to forgive others, think about how much ‘Jesus forgave you’.

*[friend who told me that this is how he deals with those who deliberately hurt him]*

**2nd Corinthians 6:14“**Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”

This advice and warning should not be taken lightly. Your faith, and relationship with God is not a small part of your life. It is the central and most important part of your being. In fact last chapter told us that *“if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation, old things pass away and all things become new”.*

If you are dating, going into business, or entering into some partnership with someone who is not a believer and is not committed to submitting to God’s will and His word. You are destined for trouble, hardship, and likely failure.

A yoke is a crossbeam added to a harness to bind two animals together to double their pulling power for a plow, or a carriage. They were very effective when two animals of like kind and size (normally oxen) would be trained to work together as a team to pull simultaneously.

-Long shot of a pair of oxen

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“Unequally yoked” is the phrase the Bible used to described two people who are joined together in marriage or some type of partnership where one is a believer and one is not. This results in many problems as one submits to God’s word and his will, while the other ignores or disregards it.

Much like yoking a donkey and a bull together.

-Two animals with horns tied to each other

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It may seem like they can help, and even complement each other, but they soon find that they pull different directions, or at different speeds, OR one is sensitive and stubborn and refuses to budge (like a donkey) and the other is prideful and insensitive (like an ox) and forces their way.

**Deut. 22:10** “Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.”

I’ve counseled several young couples to NOT get married until, or unless both partners are surrendered to Jesus and committed to doing God’s will. [Ex.: Muslim/Christian]

Here’s why. It’s more than just ideological differences, or diversity in points of view, or even worldviews. It is spiritual darkness versus spiritual light.

If you are a believer, your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. If you connect with someone who is not a believer, their soul is still under the influence of the devil. You may have certain things in common; like the same music, laugh at the same jokes, share the same opinions on things, and be physically attracted to each other. All those things are Body and Soul, but none of those things are of “the Spirit”, they are all of “the flesh” (sin nature). Notice how Paul describes the difference between “The Flesh” and “The Spirit” in Romans 8.

**Romans 8:5-9 “**Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. **6**The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. **7**The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. **8**Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.**9**You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does ***not*** have the Spirit of Christ, they do ***not*** belong to Christ.”

In the “flesh”, (a.k.a. “soul” - mind and emotions), two people can seemingly have a lot in common. But in The Spirit, they are worlds apart.

**2nd Corinthians 6:15“**What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?”

(“Beliel” is a name for Satan, much like “Beelzebub” in the Old Testament). { : )}

The question remains, “what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?”

The answer is; “nothing of eternal spiritual importance!”

**2nd Corinthians 6:16-17“**What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” **17**Therefore, “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

There is a popular mentality among some Christians that we should try to convince worldly people that we are not strange, unrelatable people, but that we are just like they are; we like the same music, sports teams, food, movies, etc.

This is not entirely wrong. The best intentions are that we can create common ground and relational bridges by which we can at some point share the gospel. Much like Paul, when he said;

**1st Corinthians 9:22** “I have become all things to all *men,* that I might by all means save some.”

Paul’s primary motivation here was to “save some”, in other words ‘have them turn completely away from their former lives and submit fully to Jesus’. When he was honest with them about that, some believed, but others persecuted him.

The problem happens when the world has more influence on the church, than the church has on the world. Paul also says in the very next chapter;

**1st Corinthians 10:21“**You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.”

We are called to be separate, different, set apart, and what 1st Peter calls (in the KJV) *“a peculiar people”.*

Final verse of this chapter; after the words *“Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord’:*

**2nd Corinthians 6:22** **18**And, “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”<>

God is called the Heavenly, and Everlasting Father in the Bible. *All people* are made in the image of God, and are God’s creation, but *not all people* are God’s children according to scripture, only “those who believe”.

**John 1:11-12 “**He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. **12**Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

This is why it is so important “to Believe” in Jesus. Meaning putting your faith and trust in Him, accepting the free gift of salvation through His death on the cross, and confessing Him as Lord. When we do this we are given, the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’

**Romans 8:15-17** “you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ!”

We are immediately “*reconciled”* right relationship with Father God, and as we studied in the previous chapter, and given the “*ministry of reconciliation”* to lead **others** into sonship as well.

This is why we place so much importance upon the cross. Jesus’ death made all this possible. It is through the cross that he is able to invite us to be children of God, and joint heirs with Christ in God’s glory. For this we remain, very very grateful!