

FRACTURED OR FRUITFUL FELLOWSHIP?



TEXT: **2 Corinthians 6:11-18** *O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged. Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship 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.*

INTRO.: A. The opposite of fellowship is separation. Both subjects are dealt with in this passage. Usually we think of fellowship as positive and separation as negative. But both are positive as far as the believer's walk with the Lord are concerned and his relationship with other people – the saved and the lost. We are to fellowship with God's people and avoid fellowship or separate from the ungodly, or unsaved.

ILLUS.: Recently an otherwise spiritual Christian told me that their "best friend" was an unsaved person. That cannot be. Believers have an obligation to *bond* with other believers and *separate* from unbelievers. This does not mean we have a right to be unkind to the lost or ignore them, or we could have no ministry among them. It does mean that the influence of the unsaved on a believer is harmful and destructive.

B. Paul had a genuine and deep rooted love for the Corinthians, even though they were carnal. (A good lesson for pastors and every believer to learn!) He loved them even when they not only did not love him in return, but even when they criticized him and questioned his authority and apostleship. Paul uses this one-way relationship to admonish them, and teach them about spiritual obligations regarding relationships...

I. UNREQUITED LOVE: v.11-13

A. An Open Mouth: v.11a

1. One of the things that real love does is to articulate its feelings, true love is irrepressible.
2. Paul is not ashamed to tell them how he feels about them.

B. An Enlarged Heart: v.11b

1. The second thing real love does is to enlarge the heart or broaden the affection towards its object.
2. Scripturally the heart deals with not only the mind, but also the emotions, and this concept has been carried down to our culture; the heart & love are often associated.
3. Paul, on his side, was desirous of a fruitful fellowship with the Corinthian saints.

C. An Unreciprocated Love: v.12,13

1. Here Paul declares the longing of his heart for them to reciprocate his love to them.
2. He says they are "straightened in (their) bowels" i.e., instead of the broad love he had for them, they had a very restricted love for him.

ILLUS.: The word "*bowels*" is used over and over in the KJB in both the O.T. & N.T. It refers to 1) organs of generation, especially the womb; thus figuratively where love would originate and 2) it speaks of tenderness which originates from deep within the person's

being. For example we speak of the "bowels of a ship" when we refer to the inside compartments there. All the new versions run from this word as if it is somehow vulgar, but it is an *accurate, precise translation* of both the Hebrew and Greek words!!!??? So much for "a more accurate translation should be."!

3. Paul here is entreating the believers to return his love to them and uses the term "my children" to reinforce his request.
4. He asks them to open up their restricted love for him: **"...be ye also enlarged."**

II. UNEQUAL YOKES: v.14-16

ILLUS.: Paul not only speaks of a "fractured fellowship" between himself and the believers at Corinth, but now launches a reproof against the problem which has helped to create the rift between him and them, i.e., unequal yokes between them as believers and the unbelievers in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians, he addressed several problems which resulted from these relationships or "yokes." They fellowshipped with both carnal Christians as well as the unsaved. They went to law before the unsaved against their brethren. They allowed the lost to dictate their lack of responsibility regarding church discipline against wayward church members. They were even openly associated with known ungodly & unsavory people. Their (and our) **associations with the lost result in fractured fellowship with God's people**, and the Lord Himself.

1 Corinthians 5:11 *But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.*

A. Separation Not Isolation:

1. This passage & Paul's counsel here does not mean that believers are to have no contact with the world, but rather that they are to have no "yokes" or official connections.
2. We are to have "homogeneous" relationships (with the same kind), not heterogeneous relationships (with a different kind).

ILLUS.: Let's use the most common illustration of a marital yoke. If the person you marry is lost, you are considered **righteous** before the Lord & your spouse is considered **unrighteous**. You live in the **light**, your lost spouse lives in **darkness**. You belong to **Christ**, he or she belongs to **Belial or Satan**. You are a **believer**, your husband or wife is an **infidel**. You are **the temple of God**, your spouse is **the temple of idols**. You are headed to **heaven**, he or she is headed for **hell!** This does not mean you are to divorce or necessarily leave your spouse as the passage will reveal, but simply that your fellowship and participation with them in some areas are restricted.

B. Separation Not Association:

ILLUS.: But what we just said above applying to marital yokes, applies to any yoke or partnership in business, socially, emotionally, financially, or even politically! *Beware the unequal yoke!* The basic rule is to not yoke ourselves voluntarily with unsaved people in any association where the unsaved require us to violate God's will or will unduly influence against His will or His Word. We cannot have a right relationship with God and/or His people while we have an improper relation with any who are opposed to Him.

1. The construction of the passage is such that the "unequal yoke" is the subject and the succeeding phrases are the qualifiers: **"fellowship...communion...concord...part... agreement..."**
2. In other words, these concepts describe the **"unequal yoke."**

TRANS.: Paul has thus far spoken of the "fractured fellowship" between himself and the Corinthians which he hoped would be mended. Then he spoke of the "fractured fellowship" which occurs when believers and unbelievers associate. Now he will deal with the "fruitful fellowship" possible to those who obey his admonition...

III. UNBROKEN FELLOWSHIP: v.17,18

A. The Command for Dutiful Children:

1. The command is clear: **"Come out!"** NOT **"Stay in!"**

QUOTE.: Jack Hyles: "Daniel didn't clean up Babylon. Abraham didn't clean up Egypt. Lot didn't clean up Sodom. Balaam didn't clean up Moab. Jacob didn't clean up Haran. Jehoshaphat didn't clean up the northern kingdom. Naomi didn't clean up Moab. W.B. Riley didn't clean up the Northern Baptist Convention. R.G. Lee didn't clean up the Southern Baptist Convention. Charles Spurgeon didn't clean up the London Baptist Association. Jack Hyles didn't clean up the Southern Baptist Convention. Maybe you can't either!"

2. Obedient children respond immediately and positively, not sluggishly and partially to their parents.
3. The Lord is our heavenly Father and He expects absolute obedience from His children.

B. The Comfort of Divine Communion:

1. Paul is saying that if we expect to be treated well as children, then we must do as we are told.
2. If we want "fruitful fellowship" with the Lord, we need to do what is expected of us.

- a. We are already His children when we are born into the family.
- b. But as an earthly father wants a tender and affectionate relationship with his children, our heavenly Father wants the same with His children.
- c. This is a conditional promise, i.e., the Father will provide, guide and protect His children based on their obedience.

ILLUS.: It isn't that God withholds His blessings from His children as some punishment, but rather that the disobedient child places himself in jeopardy by his lack of separation from the ungodly. This concept is well illustrated in God's warnings to those associated with Babylon during the Tribulation period...

Revelation 18:4 *And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*

CONCL.: Which will it be for YOU? **"FRACTURED FELLOWSHIP OR FRUITFUL FELLOWSHIP?"** It is up to you to decide.