

2 Corinthians 6:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Analysis

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers (Μὴ γίνεσθε ἔτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις, Μή ginesthe heterozygountes apistois)—Heterozygountes (present participle of heterozygeō) appears only here in the New Testament. It literally means 'being yoked with a different kind' or 'mismatched yoking,' alluding to Deuteronomy 22:10: 'Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.' Apistos (unbeliever) doesn't necessarily mean atheist but anyone who hasn't trusted Christ for salvation. The present imperative with mē means 'stop becoming' or 'do not continue to be' unequally yoked.

For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? (τίς γὰρ μετοχὴ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀνομία; tis gar metochē dikaiosynē kai anomia?)—Paul begins five rapid-fire rhetorical questions proving the incompatibility of believers with unbelievers. Metochē means partnership, sharing, or participation. Dikaiosynē (righteousness) versus anomia (lawlessness, unrighteousness) represents fundamental moral incompatibility. The expected answer: 'None!'

And what communion hath light with darkness? (τίς δὲ κοινωνία φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος; tis de koinōnia phōti pros skotos?)—Koinōnia (fellowship, communion, partnership) asks about shared life and intimate association. Phōs (light) versus skotos (darkness) expresses absolute spiritual antithesis (cf. John 1:5; 8:12; Eph 5:8; 1 John 1:5-7). Light and darkness cannot coexist or cooperate.

This abrupt section (vv.14-7:1) addresses the Corinthians' compromising entanglements with paganism. While Paul isn't commanding social isolation (1 Cor 5:9-10), he prohibits binding partnerships that compromise Christian distinctiveness. The 'unequal yoke' applies to marriage, business partnerships, religious syncretism, and any covenant relationship requiring shared convictions.

Historical Context

Corinth was a notoriously immoral pagan city with temples to multiple deities, including Aphrodite's temple with its cult prostitution. The Corinthian church struggled with maintaining separation from pagan practices (1 Cor 8-10 addresses meat offered to idols; 1 Cor 5-6 addresses sexual immorality). Paul calls them to maintain spiritual distinctiveness without becoming isolationist.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. In what relationships or partnerships might you be 'unequally yoked' in ways that compromise your Christian convictions or testimony?
2. How do you balance Paul's call to be separate with Jesus's command to be 'in the world' as salt and light?
3. What specific entanglements with 'unrighteousness' or 'darkness' is the Holy Spirit convicting you to sever?

Interlinear Text

Μὴ γίνεσθε ἑτεροζυγοῦντες ἀπίστοις· τίς γὰρ
not Be ye unequally yoked together with unbelievers what for
G3361 G1096 G2086 G571 G5101 G1063

μετοχὴ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀνομία τίς δὲ κοινωνία
fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness what and communion
G3352 G1343 G2532 G458 G5101 G1161 G2842

φωτὶ πρὸς σκότος
hath light with darkness
G5457 G4314 G4655

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 15:33 (Parallel theme): Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

1 Corinthians 10:21 (Parallel theme): Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

James 4:4 (Parallel theme): Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Leviticus 19:19 (Parallel theme): Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee.

Psalms 106:35 (Parallel theme): But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

1 Corinthians 5:9 (Parallel theme): I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators:

1 Kings 18:21 (Parallel theme): And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

Proverbs 22:24 (Parallel theme): Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go:

Proverbs 29:27 (Righteousness): An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.

Malachi 2:11 (Parallel theme): Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

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