

Introduction: It is sad how blind people are. We are all born with a blindness that eyeglasses cannot fix. The real issue is true vision and proper perception. *** How is it that we have come to accept a culture obsessed with death and are not speaking against it? As many abortions (killing unborn babies) as we have in the United States, there are far more mandated abortions by the government of China. Families are not allowed to have more than one child. Worse, so many couples want sons, that if genetic testing reveals the child is female, they abort (kill) her. And we are starting to allow the killing of frail elderly people. States are debating, and one state has passed, a law permitting assisted suicides. We are doing very little to stop the heroin epidemic and all the overdose deaths it causes. And, it is no longer ‘their’ problem. We all know someone addicted to this awful drug. And, how many times do we read an obituary with these words: died at home unexpectedly. It may be due to an overdose or a heart attack. But, usually this is a euphemism for suicide. Of all the causes of death, this is the most heartbreaking for so many people. The increase in suicides in this century (just twenty years) has been staggering. *** With all this, and the increase in sexual immorality, we would expect people would be moved to action to do something to give others hope, help, support and comfort. But, instead, people are getting addicted to ‘social media’. There are many pictures posted of trivial things that are harmless in themselves. However, these diversions are a way of avoiding the need to address the messiness of our lives. Worse, there is too much divisive rhetoric. People are misrepresenting and blaming other people who do not agree with them. As a result, very little positive is happening. People would rather escape or fight each other when they should be doing the hard work of putting sacrificial love into action to solve the problems of our culture of death. *** This is a willful choice to be blind to the needs for hope in life that are all around us. As Bono sang on U2’s second album: No one is blinder than he who will not see! *** So, we can thank God for the apostle Paul who wrote this letter to a church of people becoming holy as Jesus is holy. Ironically, they were living in one of the most decadent cities in the Roman Empire. He laid out two ways of life: light and darkness, righteousness and lawlessness. The former ways are those of The Messiah, the latter are the ways of worthless wickedness, personified and provoked by the devil. *** Paul also reminds believers of the promises of The Lord to live with His people on the condition they come out of darkness, lawlessness and idolatry. This will result in adoption by The Lord Almighty. Then He will empower them to cleanse themselves from all defilement as they perfect holiness in the fear of God. All this is only for people continually living by faith in the fear of God, and who are together becoming God’s Temple.

Those with obedient faith are purified from idolatry

We are now ready to examine the details of this passage, full of allusions to Scripture – especially as given through Moses and the prophets.

I. The community of believers being made like Christ must not be joined to un-believers, but be made separate to The Lord. (6:14-17)

A. The Temple of God (believers in a church) must NOT be ‘differently yoked’ to un-believers and idols. (*Verses 14-16a*)

1. The church of believers must NOT become ‘differently yoked’ to unbelievers. (*Verse 14a*)

‘Different yoke’: The word is *hētērō-zugōs*, literally ‘different yoke’. It was used of farm animals, but here God is extending to concept to people. Believers must never be teamed up with un-believers.

2. Paul expands on the command with a series of five rhetorical questions. (*Verses 14b-16a*)

Righteousness: Because, what with having (in common) righteousness and lawlessness? (*Verse 14b*)

Light: Or what fellowship (in common) light with darkness? (*Verse 14c*)

Christ: But what harmony (symphony – same sound) Christ with Belial? The latter is a Hebrew word for worthless wickedness that became a proper name for the devil. (*Verse 15a*)

Believers: Or what part (portion, share) to believer with un-believer? (*Verse 15b*)

Temple-Church: But what agreement (stand together) has The Temple of God with idols? (*Verse 16a*)

Idolatry: We have come across idolatry earlier in our Lenten series, starting with the Israelites worshiping the false god of thunder and rain, Baal, just east of the Jordan River. (*Numbers 25*) Physical idols are just physical representations of the most dangerous idol: self-centeredness and pride, of which we are all guilty.

Nothing: The obvious answer to all these questions is that all of these pairs have nothing in common. Lawlessness, darkness, unbelief and idolatry are all clearly offensive to God and should be to people with eyes to see and ears to hear. Whereas, righteousness, light, faith and fellowship in Christ please God and benefit people. In the middle is the most important question. Have we surrendered to Christ to be fully in Him?

Or, are we living for ourselves, mere lackeys of the devil?

B. All believers are The Temple of The Living God, fulfilling what He spoke through Moses and the prophets, so they must come out from idolatry. (*Verses 16b-18*)

1. Because we are The Temple of The Living God. (*Verse 16b*)

Temple-Church: In his first letter to this church, Paul told them together they were The Temple of God. (*1 Corinthians 6:14-20*)

2. Just as The God has said [and Paul quotes four Covenant promises of God]. (*Verses 16c-f*)

I will dwell: I will dwell in them. (*Verse 16c*)

I will walk: And I will walk among (them). (*Verse 16d*)

Their God: And I will be their God. (*Verse 16e*)

My people: And they will be My people. (*Verse 16f*)

Leviticus and Ezekiel: Yahweh told the Israelites: I will put My dwelling place (*mīsh-kān*) among you all and also walk among you all, and be your God and you all will be My people. (*Leviticus 26:11-12; Ezekiel 37:27*)

Concluded on the back

3. Therefore, come out from the midst of them (the unbelieving idolaters) and be separated. (*Verse 17a*)
Ezekiel: Even after seventy years of exile in Babylon, many Israelites still wanted to worship idols and not The True God. Adonai Yahweh spoke through Ezekiel to say He would gather them from the nations, purge them and accept them, not dealing with them as they deserved. (*Ezekiel 20:30-44*) Grace
4. And you must not touch uncleanness, and I will welcome you. (*Verse 17b*)
Isaiah: After telling of His Suffering Servant, Yahweh commanded His people to depart from Assyria and touch no unclean thing, because He will comfort them and fill them with joy. (*Isaiah 52:1-12*)
NO compromise: God's Word is eternally true. It is perfect and firmly established. We should seek Him in His Word, delight in His Word to have full life. (*Psalms 119:89-96*) So what was true for the Israelites before Jesus came to earth to fulfill Scripture, and what was true for the churches in Corinth is true for us. We must NEVER compromise our faithful obedience to God with any hint of idolatry. This is especially true of self-centeredness and pride. If we do this, we have God's wonderful Covenant promise:

Those NOT joined to defiling idols are welcomed by The Lord

II. The Lord Almighty promises to be Father to those who obey SO together they be cleansed to go on to full holiness. (*6:18-7:1*)

- A. The Lord Almighty promises them a Father-child relationship. (*Verse 18*)
 1. I will be Father to you all. (*Verse 18a*)
Promise to David: Yahweh spoke to David through Nathan to say He would be Father to the descendant of David who would be the eternal King (Messiah) of His Kingdom. (*2 Samuel 7:14* in the context of the entire chapter)
 2. And you all shall be my sons and daughters, says The Lord Almighty. (*Verse 18b*)
Jeremiah: Even though Ephraim (Samaria) had been severely disciplined for idolatry before Jeremiah's day, Yahweh said He still had everlasting love for him to draw him with loving-kindness to restore his inheritance **because** He is his Father and Ephraim is His firstborn son. (*Jeremiah 31:1-9*)
Isaiah: Some 150 years before Jeremiah, Yahweh said through Isaiah He would bring back his sons and daughters from the ends of the earth, even those who had 'blind eyes'. (*Isaiah 43:1-13*)
The Lord Almighty: The name 'Almighty' occurs nine more times in the New Testament, all in *Revelation*. It always applies to Jesus. (See especially *4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 19:6; 21:22*)
- B. So, Beloved, having these promises, let us be fully cleansed. (*Verse 1*)
 1. So, Beloved, having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit. (*Verses 1ab*)
Defile: To be defiled is to be polluted in the heart. This is what idols do to people created in God's image. And this defilement is of the whole person: both the physical body and the inner thoughts, feelings and desires.
Cleansed: The church planting apostle Paul joins himself with the members of the churches in Corinth in this exhortation that they all be purified from the defilement of idols.

Those with obedient faith are purified from idolatry

3. Continually becoming fully complete in holiness in fear of God. (*Verse 1c*)
Fear of God: There are many blessings to those who fear Yahweh including deliverance from trouble and redemption (*Psalms 34:8-14*). Solomon summed up life as fearing God and keeping his commandments (*Ecclesiastes 13:13-14*).
Obedient faith: Abraham, the father of all the faithful (*Romans 4*), showed the fear of God when he offered his only son to God in obedient faith (*Genesis 21:6-12; Hebrews 11:17-19*). The fear of God is the basis of obedient faith:
Why do we obey? Because we know we have been adopted by The Awesome, ALL Powerful and HOLY God!
NO compromise: The bottom line is if we know the fear of God AND we know His Word that we are to love Him exclusively with all we are, we must NOT put anything or anyone (especially ourselves) above Him. When we add to this the words of Jesus that IF we love Him we will obey (keep) His commands and words (*John 14:15-24*), we must **never compromise** our relationship with God by idolatry. So let us show our obedient faith in God by purifying ourselves from ALL idols.

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Conclusion: Four commands are given to the church of believers in Christ, who are being made holy as He is HOLY. Three commands come from the prophets. All commands are supported by promises God gave through Moses and the prophets. All of this is the basis of an exhortation to God's people. Together, they must come out of the darkness of disobedience and idolatry. This is because, as God's adopted children, they are called to cleanse themselves of all defilement, while being perfected in holiness out of fear of God: the basis of faith that leads to obedience.

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