

A Warning against Idolatry

You are The Temple of the Living God

2 Corinthians 6: versus 14 through 18 • English Standard Version (ESV)

The apostle Paul writing to the church at Corinth.

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.

17

Therefore go out from their midst,
and be separate from them, says the Lord,
and touch no unclean thing;
then I will welcome you,

18

and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,
says the Lord Almighty.”

Notes:

2 Cor. 6:14

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. This command, which is Paul’s main point in 6:14–7:1, will be restated in different words at the end of the section (7:1). To be “unequally yoked” is to be “hitched up” or even crossbred with another animal who is not the same (Gk. heterozygeō; the related adjective is found in Lev. 19:19; see also Deut. 22:10, though the word does not occur there). It is thus an image for being allied or identified wrongly with unbelievers. In context, it refers especially to those who are still rebelling against Paul within the church, whom Paul now shockingly labels unbelievers (he clearly thinks it possible that some are [2 Cor. 13:5], though he hopes not), but the principle has wider application to other situations where (as with animals yoked together) one person’s conduct and direction of life strongly influences or controls the other’s.

2 Cor. 6:15

Belial (Gk. Beliar, also spelled Belial, from a Hebrew term meaning “worthlessness” or possibly “destruction”). This name for Satan is not found elsewhere in the OT or NT but was used in the Judaism of Paul’s day. Derived from one of Satan’s characteristics (i.e., that he is “worthless” or “treacherous”; see the same word in Deut. 13:13; 15:9; Judg. 19:22; 1 Kings 21:13; etc.), it was often used in contexts that stress Satan’s activity as an opponent of God, which fits Paul’s concern with his opponents.

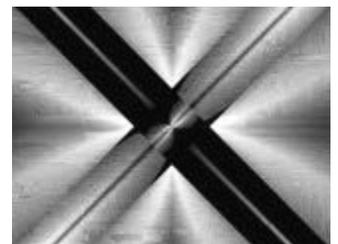
2 Cor. 6:16

idols. (See Romans 1:21-25). ²¹“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.”

we are the temple of the living God. The word for temple (Greek naos) refers to the Most Holy Place, where God’s presence was manifested over the ark of the covenant, not to the more general temple complex or building (the hieron). Since Israel is never identified with the temple, this equation of believers with the Most Holy Place (see also 1 Cor. 3:16) reflects the amazing reality of the new covenant, in which God dwells directly and immediately in the midst of his people, a reality inaugurated by his Spirit (see 2 Cor. 3:3). as God said. This one phrase introduces the entire chain of six OT quotations in 6:16–18, which closes with the parallel expression, “says the Lord Almighty” (v. 18). Taken together, these OT texts support the commands of v. 14 and 7:1. The first quotation is the covenant formula from Lev. 26:11–12, here adapted to the Corinthians by combining it with the new covenant promise of Ezek. 37:27 (thereby changing the original “among you” to among them). This adaptation affirms that the Corinthian church is experiencing the fulfillment of the covenant promises first given to Israel.

2 Cor. 6:17–18

Therefore. Paul draws out the implications of being the new covenant people of God with three commands from Isa. 52:11 (**go out ... be separate ... touch no unclean thing**) and three promises from Ezek. 20:34; 2nd Sam. 7:14; and Isa. 43:6 (**I will welcome you ... I will be a father to you ... you shall be sons and daughters to me**). Paul’s application to the Corinthians of promises originally given to Israel reflects his conviction that the church is the fulfillment of God’s covenant people, being restored under the new covenant. The combination of 2nd Sam. 7:14 (“I will be a father to you”) with Isa. 43:6 (“sons and daughters”) indicates that God’s promise to become the “father” of David’s “son,” the Messiah, is expanded to include all of God’s people who are adopted into his new covenant “family” (see Mark 3:33–34; 2nd Sam. 7:24; Jer. 31:1, 9).



Unless the Lord builds the house...

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