

THE BASIS FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 (ESV) – 14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers [There is the principle in plain language. It is just four words in the Greek text: *Mé gínesthe hétérozougountes apítois*. In literal terms, a yoke is used to join two animals for labor. Figuratively, a yoke presents the controlling authority over a person. We see this in Genesis 27:40, when Isaac tells Esau that for a time he will serve Jacob, but eventually “you shall break his yoke from your neck.” We see it also in Leviticus 26:13 regarding Egyptian slavery, in Isaiah 9:4 to describe the “yoke” of the power of sin, in Nahum 1:13 to describe Yahweh freeing His people from the dominance of Nineveh, and in Galatians 5:1, where “the yoke of slavery” refers to living under the bondage of the Law as taught by the Judaizers. To be unequally yoked with unbelievers refers to the authority over each person. The Christian is under the authority and Lordship of Christ; the unbeliever rejects the authority and Lordship of Christ; there is no possibility for a Christian and a non-Christian to partner in almost anything]. **For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?** [Two examples are given that plainly describe the principle. The righteous man and the lawless man are under utterly different authorities, and are literally aimed in the opposite direction. Light and darkness are opposed to one another. Darkness is literally the absent of light; light has no respect for darkness; light relentlessly drives away darkness.] **15 What accord has Christ with Belial?** [This is where the dividing line is drawn. A Christian is under the authority of Jesus Christ. Belial (which means worthless or useless) and here is used as a description of Satan. This is so important: the Christian who joins himself or herself to an unbeliever is trying to join Christ and Satan.] **Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?** [That is, what can be shared between someone whose faith is in Jesus Christ, and someone who denies and rejects Jesus Christ? Simply from a human point of view, I am not going to be friendly with someone who despises my wife.] **16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols?** [There were times in the Old Testament when people brought idols into the Temple of God. When Hezekiah became king, just about the first thing he did was order the cleansing of the Temple. In Second Chronicles 29:5-6 he says, “Hear me, Levites! Now consecrate

yourselves, and consecrate the house of the the LORD, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the Holy Place. For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the LORD our God. They have forsaken Him and have turned their faces from the habitation of the LORD and turned their backs.” The word “filth” is an euphemism; the original word is far more descriptive.] **For we are the temple of the living God** [“We” refers to the church, those who are in Christ. The command “do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers” is given because we who are in Christ are the Temple of God, and the presence of unbelievers within that Temple contaminates it with filth.]; **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; [This language could not be clearer. “Go out” is a command; we cannot expect unbelievers to leave us; we must leave them. “Be separate” is another command; it requires that we isolate ourselves from relationships with unbelievers. “Touch no unclean thing” is a command, figuratively meaning to have nothing to do with the things of the world.] 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.” 1** Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves [by obeying the instructions of Scripture] **from every defilement of body and spirit** [Body and spirit cover the entire scope of existence. It isn’t enough to say “I don’t DO the things my unbelieving friends do,” if you share in their attitudes or values or concerns, the things of the spirit.], **bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.** [In the end, we are to be perfect as God Himself is perfect (Matthew 5:48), and do so because we fear God more than man. Much can be said about the fear of God. It is true that Christians are not to live in terror of Him. But many Christians utterly eliminate the fear of God from their thinking. Any understanding of the fear of God utterly eliminates every sense of the fear of God is wrong. James 4:1-4 make it clear that those who are friends with the world are enemies of God, and spiritual adulterers. God will never abandon His children, but many who claim to be His children have no faith in Him or love for Him, and instead take His name in vain while they remain fully committed to the world.]

So, let's get a brief on this.

THE BASIS FOR SEPARATION IN THE WORLD. SECOND CORINTHIANS 6:14-7:1.

Believers must not join themselves to unbelievers. There can be no true unity between believers and unbelievers, just as righteousness and lawlessness are polar opposites, and light and darkness are polar opposites. We are the Temple of God, and His Temple must be pure for Him alone. The word "yoke" carries the sense of being under authority. Christ's authority and Satan's authority are two different yokes. A believer and an unbeliever are two individuals, but there can be only one authority. We are commanded as God's people to go out of the world, and to be separate from the world, and to leave the things of the world alone. We must cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit (which includes every aspect of life, both actions and attitudes), in order to be holy in the fear of God.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BELIEVER IN RELATIONSHIPS. ROMANS 12:18, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." The basis for separation from the world does not mean giving in to hatred, or doing everything that we can to be unpleasant. To the contrary, we are to do all that we can to live peaceably with all. In fact, Hebrews 12:14 says that we are to "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Now, does "strive for peace with everyone" mean that 'peace,' however we define it, is our primary concern? No. There are at least dividing lines that will not permit peace to exist.

FIRST, THERE CAN BE NO PEACE WITH THOSE WHO DENY AND REJECT CHRIST. He demands our highest loyalty; above our country, and even above our families.

Matthew 10:34-37 (ESV) – 34 "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. **35** For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. **36** And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. **37** Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not

worthy of me.

That is, following Christ may very well cost you dearly in terms of human relationships. What if your parents deny Him? You are to love Him more than them. What if your son or daughter denies Him? You are to love Him more. No one could ever say that Jesus failed to give full disclosure: following Him faithfully may turn your loved ones into enemies. Remember two things. First of all, no one on earth has the ability to reconcile you to God, and that is the most important issue of your life. And second, it is through your faithfulness to Christ that your unsaved loved ones have the greatest hope of hearing the Gospel and coming to Christ. But in all honesty, there can be no peace with those who deny and reject Jesus Christ.

SECOND, THERE CAN BE NO PEACE WITH THOSE WHO WILL NOT REPENT OF THEIR SIN. This is certainly true when it comes to the church and the world. It's really tragic that for so many "Christianity" is nothing more than the world's values with some biblical proof texts. If someone demands that you, as a Christian, accept homosexuality, abortion, evolution, feminism, transgenderism, Marxism, and so on, you must not, even at the cost of peace with that person. Believe me, I understand that it's one thing when that other person is a celebrity or politician, and a very different matter when they are someone who is dear to your heart. But beloved, you cannot be faithful to Jesus Christ and accept your child's homosexuality, or vote for a pro-abortion candidate. These are not personal opinions, but sins which the Bible condemns. Your faithfulness must be to Jesus first and foremost, and there are times that faithfulness will come with a terrible, awful cost. I've read of pastors who had a biblically sound view of homosexuality until a son or daughter announced that they were homosexual, and then that pastor quickly changed his mind. That isn't love, it's apostasy. As Matthew 10:35, following Jesus can and often will result in broken relationships. And as I said a few minutes ago, those who abandon Christ in order to make peace with the world face the judgment of God themselves, and do absolutely nothing to bring that loved one out of their sin and into a holy relationship with Jesus.

AND THIRD, THERE CAN BE NO PEACE WITH FALSE DOCTRINE. Jesus warned us in Matthew 24:24, "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform

great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand." Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus, "I know after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them." (Acts 20:29-30). Paul warned the Romans about "those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine you have been taught; avoid them." (Romans 17:17). He warned the Corinthians about "false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ." (Second Corinthians 11:13). Most of Galatians is a grave warning against the false teachers that were perverting the Gospel. He wrote the Ephesians about the primary importance of pastor-teachers, who enable the entire church to speak the truth in love. There are warnings about false teachers in Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians, First and Second Timothy, Titus, James, First Peter, Second Peter, First John, Second John, Third John, Jude, and Revelation. There can be no peace with those who teach false doctrine.

So, when we talk about being peacemakers, we must begin with the knowledge that there are at least three areas where there can be no peace at all: with those who deny Christ, with those who demand that we accept their sin, and with those who hold and teach false doctrine.