

2 Corinthians 6

We have to stay close to Christ and His people to avoid being ruined by the world.

- I. Don't ignore the opportunities God gives you to draw near to Him. 6:1-2
- II. Keep your whole life centered on Christ to help you through all of life's hardships. 6:3-10
- III. Open your heart to close relationships with other believers. 6:11-13
- IV. Avoid close ties with the world that have the potential to drag you down. 6:14-18

- I. Don't ignore the opportunities God gives you to draw near to Him. 6:1-2
 - A. 6:1 Paul viewed himself as Christ's coworker.

Matt 11:28-30 NKJV ²⁸*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

- B. Some of the Corinthians were ignoring their opportunities to draw close to God:
 - 1. Opportunities to put their faith in Christ and be saved.
 - 2. Opportunities to advance their spiritual growth.
- C. 6:2 Paul is quoting Isaiah 49:8 and he says that the time of its fulfillment is now. Here is the general idea:

"This is the main idea ... Under the Messiah, it is said by Isaiah, God would be willing to show mercy. That would be an acceptable time. That time ... has arrived. The Messiah has come, and now God is willing to pardon and save. ... Under the Messiah, or in the time of Christ, God is willing to show mercy to people. In him alone is the throne of grace accessible, and now that he has come, God is willing to pardon, and people should avail themselves of the offers of mercy." (Barnes)

We have to stay close to Christ and His people to avoid being ruined by the world.

- II. Keep your whole life centered on Christ to help you through all of life's hardships. 6:3-10
 - A. Paul offers the trials he endured in ministry as evidence for his integrity. He has said this kind of thing before to the Corinthians and he will say it again.

He says even more in 2 Cor. 4 and 2 Cor. 11 if you want to read those.

We have to stay close to Christ and His people to avoid being ruined by the world.

III. Open your heart to close relationships with other believers.

6:11-13

A. This passage is especially clear in the NLT:

2 Cor 6:11-13 NLT ¹¹*Oh, dear Corinthian friends! We have spoken honestly with you, and our hearts are open to you. ¹²There is no lack of love on our part, but you have withheld your love from us. ¹³I am asking you to respond as if you were my own children. Open your hearts to us!*

B. In the OT David's son Absalom rebelled against him. He drew people away from loyalty to his father. He raised up an army to attack Jerusalem, forcing King David and his government to flee the city and causing a civil war. In the end, Absalom was killed and David was devastated. He loved his son and never wanted to see any harm come to him, but Absalom couldn't understand that and didn't appreciate what was in David's heart. He simply rebelled.

This is the kind of thing Paul was dealing with in Corinth. Some of the Corinthians refused to listen to him, but he never wanted anything for them but the best.

- Sometimes we can do something similar with other Christians. We put our guards up. We are not open to counsel from them or not open to close relationships with them. This turns out for the worse for us. It's especially bad when we close ourselves off to relationships with more mature believers – as these Corinthians were doing with Paul. Diligently seek out relationships with people who have known the Lord longer than you have. Find people who you see the Lord is using and attach yourself to them. You'll benefit from it enormously – you have no idea how much!

Pr 13:20 NKJV *He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.*

We have to stay close to Christ and His people to avoid being ruined by the world.

IV. Avoid close ties with the world that have the potential to drag you down.

6:14-18

A. We need to make sure we don't misunderstand this. Paul is not advocating that we create a Christian "bubble" and cut ourselves off from people outside the bubble. He knows it is essential that we try to maintain good relationships with family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc., regardless of where they stand with Christ. God may have us in those relationships precisely so that we can love and serve them and be used by God in their lives.

1 Cor 5:9-10 NKJV ⁹*I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.*

B. The word literally means, "joined with a different kind," and is found only here in the NT. Paul's instruction draws on the OT prohibition against plowing with mismatched animals (Deut 22:10), or attempting to mate unlike domesticated animals (Lev. 19:19).

C. Paul is referring to marriage, business dealings or any other social ties that can pull us away from true devotion to Christ. We might paraphrase Paul as follows: “Don’t get yourself into any relationship with unbelievers that might involve compromise with Christian standards or witness.” (Victor Bible Background Commentary)

D. Paul’s explains in this section that the difference between Christians and non-Christians is so great at the spiritual level that genuine fellowship between the two is literally impossible.

2 Cor. 5:17 NKJV *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

We are a completely new species, a new breed of animal, if you will.

E. Consider also that we should already be yoked together with Christ:

Matt 11:28-30 NKJV *²⁸Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Divided Loyalties

F. Problems arise when we get into situations that might divide our loyalties. How or why do our loyalties become divided? This can be a complex topic, but we should look at it in at least two ways:

1. **Internal Pressure Due to Our Identity** To a great extent we form our identity based on the people or the groups we identify with. When we come to faith in Christ, we need to begin to self-identify by our relationship with Christ and His people. For some of us, this transition can be very hard. If we are coming from a completely non-Christian background, our identity can be somewhere else entirely.

a) When I first came to Christ my group identities were in music and Roman Catholicism.

b) Others may self-identify based on some other religion, ethnicity, work or school, sports or politics or any of many social networks they are involved in.

c) When Jesus enters the picture, He needs to be allowed to take over so completely that our primary identity is formed by Christ, our relationship with Him and the others who form His body here on earth. We no longer have the right to look at the unbeliever and think, “Hey, I just want to get married” or “Hey, these people are really cool.” By identifying with Christ and His body, His people, I don’t mean churchy-ness or nominal, cultural Christianity, I mean Jesus Christ in the way Paul meant it here:

Galatians 2:20 NKJV I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

2. **External or Peer Pressure** Unequal yoking causes negative peer pressure. This is closely related to the identity issue above. Our associates can exert pressure on us, intentionally or not, to compromise our loyalty with Jesus.

a) We are unequally yoked when the temptation is very real to give in.

b) As Christians we can exert a sort of healthy, positive peer pressure on one another. The thing is we have to be intentional about making sure we are closely connected enough to God's people to allow that to happen.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV ²⁴And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Problems in Species Classification:

G. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. Here's why:

1. **Cultural Christianity** Not everyone who says they are a Christian is one, at least not in the way Paul means it here. Paul had no cultural or nominal Christians to deal with when he arrived in Corinth. There were Jews and there were pagans; the church more clearly represented something new.

2. **Blatant Hypocrisy** This is sometimes a sub-category of Cultural Christianity. These are people who like to go to church and be thought of as Christians on Sunday, but live by a different standard the rest of the week. This is really slimy and God hates it just like Jesus hated it when He saw it in some of the Priests and Pharisees of His day.

3. **Carnal Christianity** There was plenty of this in the Corinthian church. What we mean here are people who are Christians, want to continue to live like the world or maybe in even a worse way than the world wants to live. It can sometimes be very hard to distinguish between a carnal Christian and an outright pagan, except that the pagan is often a much better person.

In 1 Cor 7, Paul writes that any believer married to an unbeliever should stay with the unbelieving spouse as long as the non-Christian is willing to keep the marriage together. Other types of unequal yoking can be dealt with differently. You might be able to get a new job.

Finally, taking all of that into consideration, remember this passage. Paul really means what he says.

We have to stay close to Christ and His people to avoid being ruined by the world.