

**SEPARATION OR AMONG?  
(Part 2)**

*What about being unequally yoked?*

Use of Yoke in the New Testament

Matthew 11:29-30

"Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. "For My yoke is easy, and My load is light."

Luke 14:19

"And another one said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.'

Acts 15:10

"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"

2 Cor. 6:14

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

Galatians 5:1

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Philip. 4:3

Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

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1 Tim. 6:1

Let all who are under the yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine may not be spoken against.

**YOKE** - A wooden frame placed on the backs of draft animals to make them pull in tandem. The simple yokes consisted of a bar with two loops either of rope or wood which went around the animals' necks. More elaborate yokes had shafts connected to the middle with which the animals pulled plows or other implements. The word is used most often in the Bible to speak of slavery, bondage, and hardship (1 Kings 12:4, Jeremiah 27:8). Positive usages include the yoke of Christ (Matthew 11:29-30) and the joint nature of the church's work (Phil. 4:3)

The negative uses of the word "yoke" the New Testament are in these passages:

Acts 15:10

"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"

2 Cor. 6:14

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Galatians 5:1

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Acts 15:10 and Galatians 5:1 clearly refer to the concept of returning or turning to a legalistic "yoke of slavery" imposed by Judaism. Could 2 Corinthians be talking about the same thing? (See below.) This interpretation would be out of the mainstream of current commentators' thought, but what do we see in context?

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Paul was highly concerned about the false apostles that were coming in and seeking to lead the Corinthians astray. He is constantly reminding them of his relationship with them and warning them of the danger of following the path of bondage.

2 Cor. 5:12

We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, that you may have an answer for those who take pride in appearance, and not in heart.

2 Cor. 6:1

And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain--

2 Cor. 6:4

but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,

2 Cor. 6:11-7:4

Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. [12] You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. [13] Now in a like exchange-- I speak as to children-- open wide to us also.

[14] Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? [15] Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? [16] Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

"I will DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;

And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

[17] "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord.

"And do not touch what is unclean;

And I will welcome you.

[18] "And I will be a father to you,

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And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"  
Says the Lord Almighty.

[7:1] Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

[2] Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. [3] I do not speak to condemn you; for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. [4] Great is my confidence in you, great is my boasting on your behalf; I am filled with comfort. I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

The context of 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:4 seems to indicate that Paul is playing the concept of being linked with these unbelievers (false apostles) against being yoked with him (true apostle). Is it possible that the unbelievers he is speaking of are the false apostles Paul speaks about in the rest of the Epistle? I think this interpretation must be considered.\*

2 Cor. 11:13

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

2 Cor. 11:15

It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

2 Cor. 11:20

In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or pushes himself forward or slaps you in the face.

2 Cor. 11:22-23

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. [23] Are they servants of Christ? (I am

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\* This interpretation of 2 Cor. 6:11-7:4 was first suggested in a conversation with Tom Crompton.

## A Bible Study

Al Engler

out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again.

2 Cor. 12:14

Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you, because what I want is not your possessions but you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

*Conclusion:* However with look at 2 Corinthians 6-7, it is clear that the separation from the world God is looking for has to do with a heart that is singly devoted to him and focused on living out a new way of life in Christ.

This living out the life of Christ is designed by God to be lived in the midst of people who will see the difference. The royal priesthood living good lives among the pagans (1 Peter 2:9-12); salt flavoring a situation or light set on a hill (Matthew 5:13-16) stress the difference that this life must be lived out in a manner that can be readily seen by others.