

# Divided Heart

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 15 November 2015

Preacher: Canon David Short

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, you'll find it helpful if you turn to the reading Alita just read for us, 2 Corinthians chapter 6 on page 967.

We're going to be doing a bit of flicking today. So page 967, 2 Corinthians 6, and I hope you noticed that we had a text in the Bible reading in 2 Corinthians 6 that has to be one of the most abused and misunderstood texts in all the Bible.

It's verse 14. Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Anyone heard that used? It's been used in tens of thousands of youth groups all around the world to say, don't date those who are outside the Christian faith.

It's been used in all sorts of churches as sort of a moral club to beat people, to say, if you're a Christian, stick to your own and be suspicious of those who are not like you.

It's been used to justify a sort of a Christian ghetto mentality where you send your children to Christian schools and you only listen to Christian music, whatever that is, and you only watch Christian movies.

[ 1 : 17 ] I've watched Christian movies. They're terrible. It's more seriously, people have used it to say, don't invest in companies unless they're Christian companies.

You know this idea of ethical investing? Well, you're trusting the ethics of that company, of course, and you certainly cannot become a partner, a business partner with anyone who doesn't pass your faith-o-meter test.

Well, yeah, I mean, the verse might have some application to some of those things, but that is not what it means.

It comes in this passage. It's not about being conformed to a set of rules. It's about being transformed by the living God. So what I want to do is I want to put it back in its context.

For those of you who are note-takers, he says hinting. For those of you who are note-takers, a very strong hint, I've got three big introductory points, and then I'll get to the main passage sometime later.

[ 2 : 23 ] Firstly, what is the immediate context? Well, verse 14, if you look at it, please, comes between two commands about widening our hearts. The passage is a sandwich passage.

You know, a sandwich passage, you've got bread and filler, then bread. The bread, the first bread, verse 13, right before it, says, finishes with widen your hearts.

Chapter 7, verse 2 begins, make room in your hearts. And right in the middle there is don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers. So the Apostle Paul is writing to this church in Corinth that he founded.

And something has happened that has narrowed their spiritual arteries. It's constricted their heart. And this middle section, verses 14 to 18, is how to unplug the heart.

Spiritual, how to become healthy spiritually. And the word unbelievers cannot mean all non-Christians. I'll explain in just a minute. Nor does Paul ever use it for Christians who are behaving badly.

[ 3 : 25 ] I think it's a specific reference to a group of teachers who have come into the church at Corinth who were teaching a false gospel and the Corinthians were taken in by it.

Let me see if I can show you and prove it to you. Keep your hand in chapter 6 and turn right to chapter 11 for a moment, please. Chapter 11, verse 4. You might think Paul's being a bit strong calling him unbelievers.

Well, wait. Chapter 11, verse 4. The Apostle says, If someone comes and proclaims another Jesus from the one we proclaimed, and by the way, you know, if an angel turns up later in the morning and stands up the front here and says, I've got another gospel for you, you know what we say to

him?

Leave. Doesn't matter if he's an angel or she's an angel. Don't know whether you call them he or she. Whatever. You say leave. Even if an angel preaches a different gospel, you tell them to go away.

Verse 4. A different spirit from the one you received. Or if you accept a different gospel from the one that you accepted, you put up with it readily enough. They put up with it.

[ 4 : 36 ] They accepted it. Verse 13. Speaking about the false teachers. Such men are false apostles. Deceitful workmen.

Disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder. For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it's no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

Their end will correspond to their deeds. You see. The apostle Paul. It's not a territory dispute. The apostle Paul is not jealous of these false teachers. But he sees the hand of Satan himself behind their lovely lies and their disarming distortions.

And so he's saying, open your heart to me. Open your heart to the gospel again. That's the immediate context. And I think unbelievers refers to these people.

Secondly, there's a much bigger context in the whole of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. And I'm arguing this because the apostle cannot mean that we should withdraw from contact with non-Christians.

[ 5 : 41 ] Keep your hand in 2 Corinthians 6. Turn backwards to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, please. 1 Corinthians chapter 5, page 954.

1 Corinthians chapter 5, page 954.

Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world. Or the greedy and swindlers or idolaters. Since then you'd need to go out of the world.

You'd need to take a rocket ship to Mars. Not to associate with people. I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother. If he's guilty of, that means he's not repenting of sexual immorality or greed or idolatry or reviling a drunkard or a swindler.

And what I mean by that is not repenting of it because all of us do all those things many times. Not even to eat as such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?

[ 7 : 08 ] We get this wrong, don't we? We're very judgmental about people outside the church and we're just very loosey-goosey with those inside the church. It's not our job.

And the Bible picture is that we are meant to associate with everyone, irrespective of what they believe. In fact, not just associate. The Bible picture, like Jesus, is we're meant to engage and be involved and we're meant to love as Jesus loved.

In fact, Christians are supposed to have, we're supposed to have the most adaptable and flexible lifestyle. We're supposed to be most flexible in our gatherings for the sake of outsiders to love and to share Christ with them.

So turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 9 before we leave 1 Corinthians, please. 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 19. The apostle says, For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.

So to the Jews I became like a Jew in order to win the Jews. So sometimes in the book of Acts, Paul does things that are specifically Jewish that he doesn't have to do. To those under the law, I become as one under the law, though not myself being under the law, that I might win those under the law.

[ 8 : 32 ] To those outside the law, like a Gentile, I became as one outside the law, although not outside the law of God, but under the law of Christ, that I might win those outside the law.

To the weak, that is spiritually weak, I become weak, that I might win the weak. See, I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some, and I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

See? The purpose of the Christian life, for us to live differently, the purpose of holiness and righteousness in our lives, is for the sake of mission.

Paul doesn't become like other people so as to be received and accepted by them, but so that they will receive and accept Jesus Christ.

Because who will speak with them? How will Christ get to them unless we do? So if we go back to 2 Corinthians chapter 6, this is my second introductory point. When Paul says, don't be unequally yoked with unbelievers, he cannot mean cut off contact with unbelievers.

[ 9 : 41 ] Thirdly, there is a wider context of the Greek culture. If you've been with us for the last few weeks, you'll know the false teachers were very successful in Corinth because they were perfectly mirroring the Greek culture, the aspirations and hopes of the Greek culture.

Here's the thing. The Christian view of the good life and the great person, the Christian view of human flourishing, is utterly and completely new in the world.

It had never been imagined in any religion or any culture before. The Greek view of what is good, how to be a good person and a virtuous person, was basically detachment.

So the Greek virtues, the four Greek virtues, prudence and fortitude and rightness and moderation, they're not about relationships. They're about yourself.

Now, don't get me wrong. You are all much more easy to get along with if you have those four virtues. But I just point out, they're not Christian. There's nothing specifically Christian about them.

[ 10 : 50 ] They're about detachment, self-sufficiency, being strong. But since God sent his son into the world to suffer for us and to die for us, the whole Christian life is about involvement and attachment.

It's about opening our hearts to each other and those around us. It's about being open to the sufferings of others, something that the Greeks never did. It's being conscious of our own weakness and our own grace and need of grace.

And I think that's why the Apostle Paul has talked so much about weakness in this book. The Christian virtues are faith, hope and love. They're all person-centered. Faith is you trust someone who's trustworthy.

Hope is you believe the promise of someone for the future. And love, you are caring for someone in their need. So we grow as Christians not by individually cultivating our individual virtues and growing strong in here.

We grow as Christians as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ works on us. It's there that we increasingly learn how to love.

[ 12 : 04 ] It's there we learn what it is to share in the suffering of another person. That's where compassion comes from. And if you have false teachers in the church who are challenging the gospel at this very point, you know, we're embarrassed about this suffering and passion of Jesus stuff, and they try and replace it with a gospel of success, you know, we don't have any time for weakness and suffering.

We want health and wealth and prosperity. You know what happens? Your heart narrows. And your worship gradually shifts from the true God to other gods, yourself.

So this section of 2 Corinthians 6 is about the true worship of the true God. And I'm nearly finished my introduction.

There's an Artizo intern listening, and he should know that you should never give long introductions like this, but I'm doing it. One more thing, and that is that the passage folds in half, and it's like an arrow.

And right at the center of the arrow is verse 16, where the apostle says, we are the temple of the living God, which is utterly astonishing.

[ 13 : 27 ] That the God of creation would live with us. And that means that the Christian life is more about having the presence of God than it is about following certain rules.

It's about having more of him. So when we pray, we are praying to have more of him rather than getting all these things off our chest, although that happens, or getting a list of things for him to do. And the Corinthians had started very well in the Christian faith, but they had become stalled and stuck. And instead of having more of God in their lives, they had become, they were beginning to have idols, more of idols in their hearts.

Because it is very possible as a Christian, that even after you've begun to walk in the presence of God, to try and bring things into the presence of God that actually compete with God.

And the thing is that you can remain perfectly correct and perfectly orthodox in your Christian beliefs and completely lose the transforming power of Christ in your life.

[ 14 : 34 ] And that's what this passage is about. So I've got two points. And the first one I've called invasion in the temple of God. Invasion.

And I mean, I don't mean invasion like complete takeover. You can't do that with God. I mean like an infestation. We have more cockroaches in Australia than you have in Canada.

And I say that based on intimate knowledge. When Bron and I were in seminary, we went to dinner with a couple. They invited us down to their place and they lived in this awful place under the railway station down the road from us.

And Steve said, come, we have an infestation of cockroaches, but come anyway. And I thought, okay. And we went and I'd never seen anything like it.

Australian cockroaches are big. And I don't suppose there was a moment during sitting in the lounge or sitting in the dining room when I couldn't see a hundred separate cockroaches.

[15:38] Yeah, yeah. I know up walls. They'd run onto the dinner table and Steve would knock them off. It's just amazing. And it's amazing what you can live with.

I think they lived there. They lived there for two years like this. Well, in infestation in the temple of God, this is the purpose of the famous phrase in verse 14, do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

A yoke, you know, it's like a wooden beam that you put across your neck. You put them across the neck of a couple of oxen. So they pull together, they plow straight line.

In the Old Testament, God says you don't put two different kinds of animals in the same yoke. It ruins the whole purpose. They're going to go all over the place. A silly illustration. You don't put a beaver into a harness with a moose.

You understand what I'm saying? But what Paul's saying here is, it's not just like Sesame Street. You know, one of these things is not like the other. But there's a hostility between these things.

[16:47] It's more like if you're trying to put a yoke over a wolf and a sheep. They don't just go in different directions. The wolf eats the sheep.

And that's the point of the word unequal. Unequal's not just about size. There's a power imbalance. And that is the problem with false teaching. Because we are so easily deceived.

We are so easily conned, particularly when it comes to our favorite idols. You don't think you are, but you are. So am I.

Because spiritual lies are much more powerful in our hearts than we think. And they're at work in us all. They're at work in you now. And they're at work in me. We think we're pretty wise spiritually.

That we're not easily fooled. We think of ourselves likely as spiritually sensitive, sharp and discerning. Not easily taken in. We'd never erect a golden calf and bow down to worship it like Israel did.

[17:51] And if you think like that, you would be mistaken. Because it is of the very nature of idols to take us into their yoke.

And we are the sheep. And if you are yoked to an idol, it will devour you. And so the apostle asks five quick questions, all of which expect no for an answer, all of which lead up to the climax, which is the last one.

All of them are about a relationship, an incompatible relationship. Just look down again. What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Answer, none.

He's not talking about how we behave morally. The apostle is not saying Christians are always sinless. You remember, we are the righteousness of God, chapter 5, verse 21.

And lawlessness is not doing bad things. Lawlessness is fooling myself that I can have God and these other things. I can have God and really lust after many possessions.

[18:56] I can have God and my neighbor's wife. And by doing that, I'm trying to replace God as the lawmaker. Question two, what fellowship has light with dark?

None. They just don't get on. Light drives dark out. Light drives light out. And the light that God has brought into our hearts, as we bring in other things that are other gods, it drives the light out.

What accord has Christ with Belial? Thirdly, absolutely none. Belial is a Jewish word for Satan, I think. Satan who hates God, hates his people, who traffics in lies and deceit, who specifically disguises himself as an angel of light.

What portion has a believer with an unbeliever? The answer is none. On the outside, of course, we're the same. But one person believes that all God's blessings come to us through Jesus Christ and the other just doesn't.

But it's the fifth question where we've been heading all along. Just look down at it, please, in verse 16. What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

[ 20 : 05 ] For we are now the temple of the living God. Now, you know, don't you, that when the Bible speaks about idols, it's not just speaking about bowing down to little statues that are made and offering incense to them.

In the Bible, idols are primarily a thing of the heart. One of the best ways to understand this is through the first commandment. God says to Israel, I am the Lord your God.

You shall have no other gods before me. And what is it to have a God? Well, a God is what we look to for all that's good.

It's something we trust in and believe in and cling to. And it can be something very good in itself. It could be marriage or it could be a career or it could be having success or it could be the approval of others.

It could be something as silly as buying something. It could be getting fit. But if we begin to love that thing more than we love God, it becomes an idol.

[ 21 : 12 ] If it's more fundamental to my happiness, if it's more important to my view of myself, it's an idol. And the two biggest idols we know from Corinth were sex and money.

And the New Testament says, greed is idolatry. It's the nature of the human heart. Greed financially, wanting more, wanting more, wanting more, wanting to possess.

Sexual greed, wanting someone else. Both are idolatry. And if we yoke ourselves to those idols, we will be controlled by something other than God.

And I think this is very difficult for us. We live in a culture where there are online hookups, internet porn, family flux, 50 shades of grey.

That's just, that's the West Coast culture. And we are increasingly shaped, I think, and immersed in consumerism.

[ 22 : 17 ] We're not just consumed by consumerism. You know, that kind of works on my dissatisfaction and my false gratification. Consumerism, where my, how I understand myself, my identity comes from, as I consume things, I am who I am because of the brands I wear, what I buy or what I don't buy.

And I begin to value things by, it's a terrible yoke. Consumerism ends by consuming us. It's terrible for relationships, you know. Gradually, the other, the other person or the other people in our lives, they don't have value in themselves.

They have value to me only as they're useful to me. The same happens in our relationship with God. I'm no longer praying so that I might have God, so that I might know him and serve him.

My question for God is, what can you do to make my life better now? And if Paul was writing to us, he might say, what partnership has love with consumerism?

Or what accord has hope with branding? Or what fellowship has faith with pornography? This is a genuine infestation in the temple of God.

[ 23 : 38 ] And if you are feeling condemned about this, and I'm going to move to the second point, I need to say, this is something every single one of us struggles with. We all struggle with putting things before God.

And I have found in my own life that as I get older, it's easy to trade disresponsible idols for more respectable ones. So the second point Paul makes here is how to cleanse out the temple of the living God.

And the only thing that has the power to clean our lives from idols are the promises of God. See, verse 16, we are the temple of the living God.

The word he uses is the inner sacred space, the inner sanctum, the most holy place, the place in the Old Testament where God's physical presence dwelled. In other words, we, you and I as believers, are the place God dwells on earth.

It's just impossible to express the high privilege of this. We were made for this in the Garden of Eden, but we live outside the Garden of Eden and Israel was never called the temple of God.

[ 24 : 56 ] And imagine how ludicrous this sounded when Paul wrote it in the first century to a marginalized minority, didn't even have status in Corinth. What that means is that we as a Christian church and every Christian church is not just another organization.

We're not just another gathering playing an important role in society. We're not a kind of a spiritual alternative social service agency meeting the needs of our neighbors.

We're the dwelling place of God on earth. And that's not something we're going to become. That's something we are now based on God's promises. And from verses 16 to 18, Paul grabs up a bunch

of Old Testament quotes and shows us some of the promises that God is fulfilling now through Christians.

Verse 16, look down, please. I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

If you look through these promises, it's interesting to see that they come from two separate times in the Old Testament. Firstly, they come from the mountain of Sinai.

[ 26 : 07 ] You remember when God had rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. He brings them to the mountain, gives them everything, promises to dwell with them. And before Moses can come back down the mountain, they're dancing around the golden cow.

The second time is much later, near the end of the Old Testament, during exile. God had abandoned the temple. Remember, we looked at that in Ezekiel. Israel had been taken off into slavery of Babylon and now the promises are even better and stronger and more wonderful. He promises to bring his people back. He says, touch no unclean thing. Don't bring those Babylonian idols with you. And I will put my spirit within you, not just in a temple that you can go and visit, but I'll put my temple within each of you believers.

Verse 17. And I will welcome you and I will be a father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty. As it is with God, the restoration is always greater than what we lost. God adopts them as his children and family, gives them direct access to him as the father. And that's why Paul calls them in chapter 7, verse 1, which is a repeat of verse 14, really.

[ 27 : 28 ] He says, since we have these promises, 7-1 beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

You see, it's only God's promises that have the power to cleanse us and to remove our idols. Because the way idols work is they make promises to us, but they're always false promises. They're never able to fulfill it. I looked up some brand name promises this week. And I know this is just advertising, but Starbucks, their purpose is to inspire and nurture the human spirit, one person, one cup, one neighborhood at a time.

Walmart, Walmart's motto is that we save money and live better. Live better. Really? Really? FedEx?

Peace of mind. Really? And I'm not going to tell you Volkswagens. It's not fair. You know, if your God, if your idol is the approval of others, which is one of mine, you quickly become a slave.

[ 29 : 00 ] If it's being physically attractive or being famous, it's going to devour you. It's very dangerous to yoke yourself in any way like this. With God's promises, he stands behind his promises.

He's utterly trustworthy because he says them and he will do them. And our hearts continually to be restless and we lose his promises.

We forget them and attach them to other things. And what we need to do is to take the promises of God and bring them to bear on our idols. And this is the most important thing to know, that the promises of God come first.

Before we cleanse ourselves, that the power to cleanse comes from God in his promises to us. That we don't cleanse ourselves so that we might be his sons and daughters, but because we already are his sons and daughters.

We don't try and remove our idols so that he may be a father or so that he might forgive us. He already is our father. He already is, has forgiven us.

[ 30 : 05 ] And in the Lord's Supper, in just a moment, we read this lovely text from Jesus in Matthew. This is the yoke we need. He says, come to me, all who labor, it's a working hard word, and are burdened, and I will give you rest.

He says, take my yoke on you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. He says, my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

We have to go to Christ. And when we take his yoke, when we go to Christ, he takes us into his yoke, and it's easy, and it's light. Not just because it fits us perfectly.

Not just because it delivers us from the other yokes. But because under that yoke, Christ has borne and will bear all our burdens, all our anxieties, because he's borne the great one.

Death, destruction. So that God would be our father. And we would be brothers and sisters. So, since we have these promises, brothers and sisters, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of the Lord.

[ 31 : 26 ] Amen.