

# Divided Heart

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now this morning we continue in our series that's represented on the front of your bulletin as the upside down gospel from Paul's letter in our scriptures of 2 Corinthians.

And we finish chapter 6 today and we pick up in chapter 7. We've just come through one of the greatest synthesis of the gospel in all of the Bible.

We do know that all of scripture is God-breathed and inspired by our Lord. We must admit that some passages have just a phenomenal synthesis of who God is and we are in light of that and the great salvation through his story that he's brought to bear on our lives and in the world in which we live.

And so now when we turn to the end of chapter 6, the beginning of chapter 7, we get a picture again of who God longs for us to be, the reason for which he's saved us.

And we are given a very vivid picture. Back in 2011 when we moved to this building, we had a sermon series on the church and a number of pictures were given to us that are represented in scripture by name.

[ 1 : 24 ] And one of them, or more than one of them, was not included because we couldn't do all of them. But we're introduced to another one here today and I wonder if you noticed that before I share that with you in verse 16.

You are going to need to turn to your Bibles, page 966. But as you're doing that, let me just remind you of some of the pictures of the church that are represented in the Bible.

How God understands us and our relationship to him. And one of them is the people of God. That one actually is introduced in Genesis and we're reminded of that again in Revelation. So from beginning to end, so know that the church is represented as a royal priesthood, the body of Christ, holy nation, and the bride of Christ, and this morning the one that we're introduced to, which is in some respects redefined or re-represented in verse 16.

Paul says, for we are the temple of the living God. So I don't know how you think of a church when you come here to worship on Sunday mornings. You live your life day in and day out as a follower of Jesus Christ.

I'm presuming that maybe you're actually here for the first time or haven't been in church for a while and don't identify yourself in those terms. But the church in other terms, but in this term today, understands itself because it's been revealed to us through Scripture as the temple of the living God.

[ 2 : 46 ] That's a remarkable statement. Now the world in which we live in wants us to think of ourself in other terms. And some of those are good terms. Most of you will think of yourself as a Canadian. Some as a Canuck.

If you're a follower of the BC football team, you might think of yourself as a Lion. Or maybe as Christians sometimes we think of ourselves as little Lions. But anyway, if you're a follower of the other football team in Vancouver, you might think of yourself as a White Cap.

In our market-driven economy, they may want you to think of yourself in some kind of terms of a brand. Unfortunately, Christians are now thinking about branding themselves, which I think this is a correction to that when we think of ourselves as the temple of the living God.

If you graduated from UBC, you might think of yourself as a Thunderbird. I graduated from a university back in the Midwestern United States, and so that makes me a Buckeye.

My wife reminds me that a Buckeye is just a worthless nut. Unless, of course, you cook it, and then it becomes a chestnut that you can eat at Christmas time. Okay, I digress. I'm sorry.

[ 3 : 52 ] But the church is the temple of the living God, and that's what's really important and brought to bear in our lives here this morning. And so I just want to look at two things. What does

that mean to be the temple of God? And in light of that, what do we do?

That's what Paul's on about. He's telling us what it means to be the temple of the living God, and actually what we're not to do, which comes before verse 16, and what we are to do in light of that. But first of all, let me just look at this term, the temple of the living God, which is in verse 16. You almost miss it, don't you? Because there's this beautiful quote that follows that, or quotes that follow that in poetic form, which is telling us something significant about what it means to be the temple of God.

But in the Old Testament, we know that the temple was that place that represented the presence of God, right? The propitiation for sin actually happened there through sacrifice and ritual.

But it was also a place of petition and prayer in the Old Testament. I know that's very brief. I don't have time to go into more than that. But we all know that the relationship between God and his people didn't start in a temple.

[ 4 : 55 ] It was in a garden before a temple, even a tent before the temple. And we know that there were these three important figures in the Old Testament who thought and were occupied to certain degrees about the temple.

There was Saul, who had no heart for God, and God was in something of or represented in a portable tabernacle. There was David, who really wanted to build a temple, but was restricted from doing so.

He, David, who had a whole heart for God, and God's presence was represented in something of a tent. And then there was Solomon, who was something of a man who had a half heart for God. And he was the one who was given permission to build that temple.

And that temple then was filled with the Spirit and the glory of God. I'm brushing over the Old Testament now and coming to the New Testament. But the people of God would then go to this temple, we know, because God's presence, propitiation for sin, prayers were there in that place. Then we have Jesus, who is God, who comes into the world, and he goes to the people while the people are still going to the temple to find God in that place.

[ 6 : 04 ] And when Jesus comes to the world, it's as if God's residence changes. And especially then when Jesus dies on the cross. And even though before Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, we see that the residence of God changes, and it's no longer exclusively located in this temple.

And so Paul's saying something quite significant now, isn't he, to this church that's in Corinth, where there are many temples. That this God that they worship now is now no longer located in a temple like those people of Corinth who are going to their temples to worship God.

For the church, God is living, and he is life-giving, and he locates himself within his people. And so there's this great contrast between the world and the culture and now the church, and the life that they actually have in God who makes his life full in his people.

Because they are now the temple of the living God. God's temple is in his people. He temples himself. He lives in his people. He is the living God. And so the church now is the living God's temple.

It's a big change that's actually happening, a big contrast, and some discontinuity with what happens in the Old Testament, and certainly a big contrast with the world. And so now the church doesn't have temples because we are the Lord's temple.

[ 7 : 35 ] We no longer go to a place where he resides. He comes. God comes to his people and resides with them. And so the church, the temple of the living God, is in contrast to this culture.

The Corinthians are going to temples, but the church is the temple of the living God. And it's quite remarkable. It draws attention to the importance of the loyalty to our God and where we actually give of ourselves to him and where God finds himself in his people and people see that God is actually with them as he dwells with them.

And we actually then dwell in him in the place where God resides. So this is about actually the temple of the living God. This is what Paul is saying about this. He follows on from there, drawing attention to the covenant relationship that God has with his people when he says, Then I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

That's something of a motto from Old Testament to New Testament. I will be their God and they will be my temple. And God says that he'll do these three things. I will dwell among them. I will walk among them and I will be their God.

It's a great promise of God that's represented in the temple, which now is the church where God dwells. So in light of that, what do we do? And Paul says this.

[ 8 : 59 ] He says there are things that we don't do, which all go in front of the temple of the living God and things that we are supposed to do that actually follow from that, from top to bottom with the temple of the living God in the middle.

And this is what Paul says about what we're not to do. Because we're in contrast to the world in which we live. And so he says these two things about what we're not to do. First one has to do with the relationship with one another in the church.

Paul says that we're not to restrict or withhold ourselves from one another, from believers. Paul writes this. He says, You are restricted in your own affections. The apostle is making an observation, not an affirmation here.

And he contrasts himself with the believers in Corinth. He's essentially saying, Look, we speak openly to one another. We are to give our hearts to one another. And so he goes on and writes that we have spoken freely to you, Corinthians.

Our heart is wide open. In other words, express your affections verbally to one another. Give your heart over to fellow believers. Engage with one another with the love of Christ.

[ 10 : 00 ] Unite yourself with fellow believers. And so Paul contrasts himself, unfortunately, with the church in Corinth. And apparently they're not actually investing their life with him.

That's somewhat understandable because he's written some difficult letters to them. So maybe they've restricted or withheld themselves. But he's saying, Look, don't do that. Don't restrict yourself. Give yourself over.

Give your affections over to one another. That's the way the world would do it. Actually, if you're corrected, you might actually pull back from them. But he's saying, Don't do that. Push in. Give yourself to one another.

The second thing that he says then, and this is about relationship with others outside. There is a time for restricting oneself. And Paul says this by contrast. And even command to the church.

And this is in respect to their relationship with the world. He says, Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. There's a restriction in that. It's pretty general, not specific.

[ 10 : 53 ] But he follows this command up with five rhetorical questions. And he doesn't get a lot more specific. But he just says it in different ways. And the answer to all of those questions is none.

Right? Starts in verse, well, starts in verse 14 when Paul says, For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?

And the answer is none. As well as the four that follow that. Well, the operative word in all of these questions are in some ways saying the same thing. And the words include things like partnership or accord or fellowship or portion or agreement.

And it all comes down to loyalty and allegiance and identity and union with one another through Christ. You may raise questions, though. Do believers associate, therefore, then with non-believers?

And the answer is yes, of course. We do business and politics and athletics and academics and medicine and other disciplines with those who are non-believers. Do we have different views with non-believers?

[ 11 : 56 ] Well, of course, yes. And our associations with them are a context for us to be salt and light with them. But we do have great differences. And we have great contrasts with those in the world.

And so we don't have a biblical definition of partnership or accord or fellowship or portion or agreement with them. And no, no, we don't have that because of the unique work of salvation that Christ has wrought in our lives and in our hearts and in our souls and in the church.

But it may raise the question, well, why aren't we equally yoked with unbelievers? And Paul's point is because we are the temple of the living God. The living God dwells in the church and there is not compromise on matters of union with Christ, who we've given all of our affection, all of our heart, mind, soul and life over to.

Maybe this raises another question, too. The same one, similarly. Why aren't we equally yoked with unbelievers? I think the clue is something in the word, this word yoke.

The word yoke conveys purpose. The yoke was actually, you probably know, it was an apparatus where two ox would be put in together to pull some kind of mechanism to till the fields.

[13:13] But it conveys purpose, doesn't it? A purpose of life for the believer is different for that of the unbeliever, which is why we're not to be yoked with unbelievers. Our purpose is to glorify the Lord and to serve him only.

Joshua, I think, challenged and invited the Hebrews with a question and answer that helps us understand this. When they were coming into the promised land, he said to them, and what about you?

What will you do? Who will you choose today? Will you choose to serve the Lord or serve other gods? And he said, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Why are we not to be yoked with unbelievers?

Why is that not a possibility? Because our purpose is different than that of the world, that is, of glorifying and serving the Lord and him only. So that's what we're not supposed to do.

But what are we supposed to do? Well, if we don't do certain things as a contrast to the culture around us, then we do do other things that I think should make us a compelling influence in the culture and the world in which we live.

[14:14] In saying that, we are, again, the temple of Christ. It is where he dwells. And it's similar to what Paul has actually said earlier in this letter, and that is that we are the aroma of Christ.

Our aroma is received one way to those who are being saved, but to others who are being judged. And Paul wants to make it clear that he isn't condemning the believers in Corinth.

He says that explicitly in this. And his desire is the salvation of the believers in the church. So as Paul issued restrictions of being unequally yoked, now he's making something of prescriptions or commendations.

One was kind of a prohibition. Now this is something of a prescription. He does three things briefly here. And the first one is in verse 1. He says to them, cleanse yourself. This first one follows the identity of the temple of the living God.

Paul encourages the church to cleanse, purify itself. It isn't salvation by works. Since they are the temple of the living God. Now the church, though, can cleanse itself or be cleansed.

[15:21] Before purity and holiness were impossible. But with God, all things are possible. So the church, identified with the life of Christ, can bathe in the grace of God.

A long, hot shower. A long, hot soak, as it were, in the spirit. Is the way that the church stays clean. Paul is saying, keep on turning to the Lord for your purity.

You turn to him once for that. Save you. Keep turning to him to be cleansed. To be purified. That's the first thing. The second thing that he says in verse 2 is make room in your heart.

The second follows the identity of the temple of the living God too. From the image of being in the washroom now to something of the family room, I think. We're welcome into the Lord's presence.

And now that we're clean and that, we can have a good conversation with the Lord. Open up the heart to the Lord and let him see into your life and speak into your life. And as the Lord speaks into our hearts from his word, let it sink in, I think Paul is saying.

[16:24] Call it for purity. As we said earlier, it says, cleanse the thoughts of your hearts. Now that the heart is clean, clean from those erroneous thoughts, we open up the heart to the good and the gracious and the glorious thoughts and words of the Lord.

Our heart becomes the home for the word of God. And then thirdly, Paul says in verse 3, live and die together. The third follows the identity of the temple of the living God, I think, too.

And from the image of the washroom to the family room, now we're into the living room. Now we do life together and we also do death together. We are completely known to one another, alongside of one another.

And we've lived and served and worshipped God in one accord. And now as we live together, though, we also die together. We're willing to die together. And as Christ died for sinners in that sacrificial death, that we can't actually die for one another.

We go to great lengths as we love one another, live and die together. And as we do that, I think, the world which we live in begins to see how great this love of God is, wrought in our lives and through our lives for one another.

[17:42] And that we know that we are the disciples, the followers of Jesus Christ, because of the love that we have for one another. As we are willing to live and die for one another. And as that's the case, I think that the church is not only a contrast to the world in which we live in, but it also becomes compelling to the world in which we live in.

And that's a great and marvelous privilege that we have. And it's the power of the gospel through the weakness of our own lives.

But as our lives become a contrast to this world, as we don't hold things back from one another, as we live differently and are not yoked to the world, but do these three things that Paul then calls us to.

Making us a great picture of what it means to be a temple of the living God. Not a temple of gods that aren't alive and that are dead and that aren't life-giving, but one that actually gives life.

Because God is the one who is life. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer.