

An Unholy Alliance

With the gulf oil crisis now settling into the pages of history as one of the worst-ever oil disasters world-wide, we're reminded once again how, for the most part, oil & water do not mix. There are other things that don't mix, one in particular that Paul identifies in today's Templates of Truth.

One of the Apostle Paul's most-quoted statements in the New Testament was made to the Corinthian church – *Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness... or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?* (II Corinthians 6:14-15). Many have branded Christians as arrogant, intolerant prudes because of the values expressed in this passage. The distinction it requires in lifestyle choices and behaviors is one of the reasons people like Ann Rice “denounce” their Christianity. It is often very unpopular being a Christian! Living separated, consecrated and holy lives is often lonely, alienating and harshly critical because of the hard choices it requires. Yet, God's instruction to His people remains – *Come out from their midst and be separate* (6:17). The word, *separate* means different, distinct and unique.

The term *bound together*, refers to being coupled or partnered with something or someone of a different kind. The old King James English rendered this phrase as “unequally yoked.” The more contemporary term is an “unholy alliance.” Paul is not saying that Christians should have nothing to do with non-Christians. We could never influence or lead them to faith in Christ if we totally divorced ourselves from their audience and interaction. Paul is talking about value & behavioral choices. He is talking about the differences that characterize, demonstrate and manifest the Christian lifestyle from that of a non-Christian. That contrast is becoming more and more blurred in our contemporary world. Too many Christians see nothing wrong identifying with non-Christian values and behaviors, and incorporating those into their own lives.

Unholy alliances are relationships that just don't mix and usually don't last. A friend told me about an exciting job opportunity she recently seized upon, only to resign after a few months. It was an unholy alliance that revealed itself in a daily clash of values, convictions and principles. In the same way, businesses have failed, partnerships have dissolved, companies have closed and people have been terminated or passed-over for promotion because the values & ethics that control day-to-day operations and decisions are vastly different in the Christian and non-Christian worlds. When a Christian understands that difference, he understands Paul's directive. Don't go into a business partnership with an unbeliever. Working with unbelievers is obviously a reality in any job, but close alliances in the organizational structure of business will often reveal the differences through conflict, compromise and controversy.

It is often said that “love is blind.” A beautiful, young Christian girl falls in love with a charming non-Christian boy. She thinks her love will change him; usually his values pull her down. He promises, “I'll start going to church with you after we are married.” The testimony of

thousands proves that promise rarely materializes. He always wants to go to places, be with people and do things she is uncomfortable with. Frustration, bitterness and resentment begin to grow in their relationship until the conditions are too challenging to remain unchanged. Paul's advice would have avoided this kind of suffering and pain. Do not marry a non-believer. If you are not going to marry a non-believer, what sense does it make to even date one? Nowhere in the Bible does it suggest that you have to date or marry someone in order to win them to Jesus! It is an unholy alliance. It is much easier to avoid an unholy alliance than it is to disengage from one.

When your life is observed, can the distinction be clearly seen? Too many Christians allow their language to be laced with the profanities of the street. A few beers after work with the buddies on the job is no big deal. Lying to get the promotion or the raise; making an unethical choice to ink the deal; taking advantage of one customer in order to get more money out of another – these are among many practices that blur the distinctions between God's way and the world's way. As believers, we are directed by God to designate ourselves as different, while still reflecting His love, grace and redeeming qualities. Do you have any unholy alliances in your life? Paul says, *let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God* (7:1). Seek God's help today in making the changes necessary to separate yourself as holy and distinctly His.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.