

# **“Keeping Morally Pure in a Morally Corrupt World!”**

**2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1**

**Intro.** – February 1, 2004 during the halftime extravaganza of Super Bowl XXXVIII, pop stars Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake were strutting their stuff when at the end of their performance a “costume malfunction” took place. We’re aware of what that entailed. Interestingly, there was a seeming outcry. Michael Powel, son of Colin Powel, was then head of FCC (Federal Communications Commission). He said, “A new and stronger stance for decency was going into effect.” Since then, I’m sure you have seen and heard the difference on the TV/radio waves – haven’t you? Have you seen a decrease of moral corruptness in the world? Are you sensing a turning back to moral purity or is there reason to think otherwise? Is your struggle with keeping morally pure in a morally corrupt world being helped in any ways with these events?

John Underwood, former senior editor for *Sports Illustrated* and featured writer for *The Miami Herald* wrote, “Civilizations do not give out, they give in. They come apart, not in a flash, but by the inch. In a society where anything goes, everything eventually will.”

Our society is giving in. We live in a time where freedom of expression is being pushed beyond the limits of reason. The entertainment industry, under the guise of “constitutional rights,” has flooded the airways with trash talk and painted the screen with increasing filth. Cal Thomas writes in response, “They have not only abandoned my values, they now have sunk to the sewer level, dispensing the foulest of smells that resemble the garbage I take to the curb twice a week.”

Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12 record, “*Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, and they did not know how to blush.*” Have we stooped so low in our values we too, as a nation do not know how to blush? How are we, the Bride of Christ, to live out our lives in such circumstances? How can God expect us to be morally pure in a morally corrupt world?

*Purpose: to see how through God’s Spirit we can live morally pure lives in a morally corrupt world*

Our text addresses this very issue and gives us tangible, applicable principles. Choices we can make to enable the power of God’s Spirit to direct us in living holy lives:

## **I INTENTIONALLY Not be Unequally Yoked (vv 14-16)**

- A. Defining the Principles (What does it mean to “*not be yoked together with unbelievers*”?)
1. This principle goes all the way back to Deuteronomy 22:10, where God instructed Hebrew farmers “*Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.*”
    - a. ox and donkey were not to be hitched together why? Because – 2 entirely different animals!
    - b. ox was clean animal while donkey was considered unclean.
    - c. contrary natures – ox hard working/cooperative while donkey stubborn/feisty = drag both...
  2. There are certain things that are fundamentally incompatible – i.e. they never meant to be together:  
- Illus. – like water and oil... Cubs and Reds... OSU and MU...
  3. This principle applies especially to Christians and non-Christians:
    - a. when one becomes a Christian, God gives a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17 “*If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*” – participant in divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)
    - b. i.e. Christians are to be *different* or *separate* from the world.
  4. When you become a Christian, God *adds you to the church* and calls you to have a new/divine nature, to be separate from the world. The very word *church* literally means “called out ones”...
- B. Applying the Principle
1. Some overzealous Christians have abused this principle and turned being *separate* to be *isolated*. – i.e. their circle of friendship becomes so narrow they can’t even get alone with each other...
  2. Big difference between casual association and being unequally yoked:
    - a. “yoked” = tied together close relationships... partners in same urgent cause over period time...
    - b. Christians are commanded not to be equally bound together with or be in fellowship with those who are not. Why? 1 Corinthians 15:33 “*Bad company corrupts good character.*”

3. Distinction between *redemptive friendships* and *brotherly fellowship*... Do you know difference?
  - a. “redemptive friendships” – making friendships with the intent of influencing with Gospel...
  - b. “brotherly fellowship” – bound together “in Christ” – brothers/sisters based on Bible!
4. In marriage this principle must be applied:
  - a. if you’re a young person and a genuine Christian, don’t marry somebody who isn’t Christian.
  - b. if you’re a committed Christian don’t marry somebody who is a nominal Christian...
    - 1) Illus. – “If you’re a child of God and you marry a child of the devil, you’re going to have trouble with your father-in-law.”
    - 2) Satan will tempt you to be unequally yoked with someone who is not a Christian... If you truly desire a Christian home, begin by dating Christians alone...
  - c. Wayne Smith tells former UK football player engaged to a gorgeous girl. She became a Christian, but a month prior to wedding, she said, “I have to be honest. I don’t want to go to church all the time after we’re married. I really don’t enjoy going... I don’t want to be involved like you are.” Young man, in tears told Smith, “I’ve broken off engagement. My dad taught me to love the Lord and now that he’s died and gone to be with the Lord, there’s no girl living going to keep me from seeing my Lord and Dad some day.”
  - d. when you marry non-Christian, that which is most important is at odds between you – it won’t be long before you’re at odds not just over church, but entertainment, how to raise kids etc.
5. In close friendships this principle must be applied:
  - a. need to associate with people world in order to influence them = *redemptive friendships*...
  - b. closest friends should be people who share your convictions – Illus. – read of college girl moved into an apartment with non-Christian girl. Thought they had everything worked out, but wasn’t long until non-Christian was bringing boys home for the night etc.
  - c. what Lord means “*What fellowship can light have with darkness... What does believer have in common with unbeliever... What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?*”

Charles Swindoll said, “When you put on the white gloves and work in the mud, the mud never gets glovey.” We’re to be distinctive, and not to be too closely tied to unbelievers!...

## II FAITHFULLY Review the Consequences of Sin (vv 17-18)

### A. Think Beyond the Pleasure/Thrill of Sin

1. Illus. – several yrs ago, 19 yr old W German student astounded world by flying a small airplane across Russian border and landing it in Red Square, Moscow. He was immediately arrested and imprisoned by the embarrassed Communist authorities. While awaiting trial, reporter from *Newsweek* magazine asked if he ever thought about what would happen once he landed. He said, “You know, I didn’t think about that...; I was so caught up in the challenge of it.”
2. That’s what happens when people get caught up in the pleasure and thrill of sin and refuse to consider the inevitable consequences – when it all blows up in their face...
3. 1987 a movie (movie I have not seen...) with Glenn Close and Michael Douglas was about middle-aged man who got caught up in an affair. When he realized how foolish he’d been, attempted to break it off, but the woman refused to let him go. She pursued, blackmailed, and threatened he and his family. The movie was appropriately titled *Fatal Attraction*.
  - a. sin is enticing... but it is also lethal – Proverbs 21:16-17 “*A man who strays from the path of understanding, comes to rest in the company of the dead. He who loves pleasure will become poor.*”
  - b. i.e. price paid for sin always exceeds value of pleasure enjoyed = Satan always cheats!

### B. Come Out and be Separate (v 17)

1. OT Jews not to touch dead body, leper, or festering wounds. When they did, they were considered *unclean* and were *separated* (couldn’t worship in public assemblies because unclean)...
2. Point: you may think you can handle unclean things e.g. (porn, flirtation, alcohol etc.) but eventually these and others will defile you and will slowly alienate you from God and others...

- a. Randy Alcorn article *Leadership* magazine: “A battering ram may hit a fortress gate a thousand times, and no one time seems to have an effect, yet finally the gate caves in. Likewise, immorality is the cumulative product of small mental indulgences and miniscule compromises, the immediate consequences of which were, at the time, indiscernible. Our thought is the fabric of which we weave our character and our destiny.”
3. Bible makes clear “*Be sure your sin will find you out.*” (Numbers 32:23) – Sin carries high and exorbitant price tag. Is it worth it?... Price you pay always exceeds value of it passing pleasure!

### III PURPOSELY Perfect Holiness in Life (7:1)

#### A. Our Goal as a Christian

1. Ought to be to live a *grace responsive life*...
2. Realizing the great promises we are given “in Christ” we lack nothing living a separate life.
3. No Christian gives up anything to live within the will of God (1 John 5:3 “*This is the love for God; to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome...*”
  - i.e. it is the disobedient, the non-responsive Christian who loses!
4. Note: it is not to simply get rid of sinful practices, we must replace them with an aggressive determination to be holy – something that is a life-long process and something we cannot do alone! Such is where the presence of God’s Spirit in our lives is an absolute necessity!

#### B. Practical Applications to Attaining Our Goal

1. Develop a Biblical relationship with your mate:
  - a. need to make our marriages so loving; so free from inhibitions and so fulfilling (i.e. Biblical) that we’ll not be tempted to look elsewhere!
  - b. work at marriage and be alert to red flags of poor communication and discontent... spend time together under no time or pressure constraints... fulfill your Biblical role to your mate!
2. Regular Bible study
  - a. Psalm 119:11 “*I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.*”
  - b. everyday we are badgered by world’s propaganda – e.g. world tells us sex outside marriage is OK, or that marriage is “boring<” that adultery is “exciting” and fornication is harmless... “everybody normal is ‘doing it’”...
  - c. we must be fortified with the Word of God...
3. Illus. – husband picks up *Sports Illustrated Swimsuit* issue thinks, “My wife doesn’t look like that, I must be deprived.” Or wife watches a romantic movie where “the man is so tender and thoughtful” and she thinks, “My husband doesn’t have a romantic bone in his body...
  - listen: if we can’t counteract that propaganda, we’re going to be weakened like that gate that keeps getting hit by the battering ram!

**Conclusion:** Many have mistakenly thought salvation by grace relieves us of *obligation* to obey God’s commands. Nothing could be further from truth. Our obligation to obey God is grounded in the fact of creation (Psalm 24:1-2), and nothing can ever change that. Being saved by grace has no effect whatsoever on this obligation. Under grace we are free from law as a *way* of salvation but NOT as a *standard rule* of obedience.

Salvation by grace does involve a significant change in our *motivation* for obedience. This is what this entire passage covers. Our motivation for fighting sin and being more holy is backed by the strongest motive of all – *grateful love*. If we really love God we will want to please Him by doing His will. How then can we keep morally pure in a morally corrupt world? By responding to God’s grace! Have you accepted His grace on His terms? Are you growing in this grace!