

The Principle Of Separation

These days it is common for Christian groups to join forces with non-Christian organizations in order to accomplish some social goal – be it protesting abortion, or feeding the hungry, or whatever the hot topic of the day might be. Christians will join with Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, and whoever else they can find in order to accomplish their goals. The supposed justification for this is that while we may have differences we can all agree on this one area, so why not work together?

The answer is simple: it's because the Bible forbids it. Our generation has forgotten (or rejected) the principle of separation, and the consequences have been devastating. The Church desperately needs to relearn that ecumenicism – the idea that we should all get along and work together no matter what we believe – does not come from God. In fact, God is so opposed to it that He promises to curse those who are involved in such things.

I realize that's a strong statement, so let's look at the evidence. In 2 Chronicles 18 we find the story of Jehoshaphat and Ahab. Jehoshaphat was a wise and godly king who the Lord gave great riches and honor. Ahab was an incredibly evil king who was married to the even-more-evil Jezebel. Despite their differences, Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea to join with Ahab and attack their common enemy:

2 Chronicles 18:1: “Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

2 And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramothgilead.

3 And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war.”

This is exactly the sort of thing that the modern Church does. Jehoshaphat was good and Ahab was evil; Jehoshaphat worshiped the true God while Ahab worshiped pagan gods. Since they had a common enemy, Jehoshaphat thought it made sense for them to team up and work together. After all, the Syrians were evil and posed a threat to both kings. As the modern Church would say, this is the Lord's battle, and if we can get unbelievers to join us in our fight then so much the better!

Except the battle did not go well. If you read chapter 18 you will see that the prophet Micaiah warned against going to war at all and prophesied that Ahab will be killed. Sure enough, Ahab actually was killed. When Jehoshaphat returned home, the prophet Jehu rebuked the king for joining forces with Ahab:

2 Chronicles 19:1: “And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.”

The Lord was *not at all* pleased that Jehoshaphat had joined forces with Ahab. Even though they had a common enemy and a common threat, Jehoshaphat was forbidden from joining forces with him. The Lord did not see it as attacking a common problem; He saw it as helping the ungodly and aiding those who hate the Lord. What the Lord focused on was the fact that *Jehoshaphat helped Ahab,*

a king who hated God. What Jehoshaphat helped him do was beside the point. The Lord was upset that he had helped Ahab *at all*. Because of this, as the prophet Jehu said, “therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.”

Some may wonder, didn't the Lord command us to pray for our enemies and do good to them that hate us? Yes, He did. But the Lord did *not* command us to *join forces with them and help them accomplish their goals*. That is an entirely different matter. That is what Jehoshaphat did, and the Lord was very upset about it. The fact that the Syrians were evil and were also Jehoshaphat's enemy did not matter to God at all.

Let's look at another case. After Ahab died another king arose named Ahaziah, who was also very evil. Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea for the two of them to join forces and send some ships to Ophir to get gold (1 Kings 22:48). Once again we see a godly king teaming up with an evil king in order to accomplish something. Now, there was nothing wrong with going to Ophir for gold; King Solomon sent ships out and acquired great wealth. Jehoshaphat thought that by teaming up together both kings would be enriched.

However, the Lord was not pleased:

2 Chronicles 20:35: “And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:

36 And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber.

37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.”

As you can see, what upset the Lord was not the purpose of the voyage. No, what really upset God was that Jehoshaphat had teamed up with the evil Ahaziah. Because Jehoshaphat joined himself with a pagan, God-hating king, the Lord destroyed the ships they had made. The Lord *hates* it when His people team up with His enemies in order to accomplish something. It doesn't matter if their stated goal is something that is actually good. *He hates it*. In fact, He hates it so much that He promises *wrath* on those who dare to do such things. In the example above, God was so upset at the partnership that He actually destroyed the ships.

This same principle is repeated in the New Testament:

II Corinthians 6:14: “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”

People commonly apply this to marriage, but *Paul was not talking about marriage*. Marriage isn't even mentioned anywhere in the chapter! What Paul is saying is that Christians should *not join forces with pagans*. As Paul points out, light has no communion with darkness and righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness. They are *different teams entirely* and they are not to be “yoked

together”.

How many times did the apostles join forces with pagans in order to accomplish societal goals? *Zero times*. How many times did the Church in the New Testament join with idol-worshipers to stamp out poverty, feed the hungry, or pursue some other goal? *Zero times*. Instead Paul stands up and condemns this practice – just as it was condemned in the Old Testament. God wants His people to be *separate* from the world. He doesn't want them building alliances with them; He wants His followers to “come out from among them, and be ye separate”.

This principle of separation is no longer believed by the modern Church. We have rejected the clear teaching of II Corinthians 6:14-17. In fact, we think it's *great* when we can team up with God-hating organizations in order to get things done! We see that as winning. What God has to say about it is entirely forgotten – but God does not mince words about this:

II John 1:10: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:
11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

How does God say we should treat those who preach a false gospel? Does it say we should join forces with them and try to find areas of commonality so we can build agreements? Nope. What it actually says is that we shouldn't receive them into our home. In fact, we *shouldn't even bid them 'godspeed'*.

Now, when John says “receive him not into your house” he is not forbidding us from inviting them over so we can share the gospel with them. What he is forbidding is doing anything to help them, either in deed (by giving them a place to stay so they can keep preaching a false gospel) or in word (by bidding them godspeed). John is clear that those who help them, even verbally, become a “partaker of his evil deeds”.

Sadly, this is a sin that the modern church *loves* to commit. I saw a case where one church learned that a mosque was undergoing renovations, so they invited the Muslims to *borrow their sanctuary* so they could keep worshiping their false god. That is exactly the sort of thing that John was condemning – but instead of being dismayed, we hold up such terrible sins as examples of “outreach” and “building bridges” and “true love”. God, however, calls it *being a partaker of their evil deeds* and hates it with a passion.

Another common thing is to see famous Christians get up and praise Catholics and Mormons for their good works and their love of God. As I have said many times before, Catholics and Mormons preach a false gospel. Praising and encouraging them goes far beyond “bidding them godspeed” and is absolutely condemned by the apostle John, but somehow the Bible's disapproval doesn't stop us from finding people who “bring not this doctrine” of saving grace and then doing all we can to encourage them and make them feel good about themselves.

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate”, the Lord says. That is the commandment. God repeats it in Revelation and adds a threat:

Revelation 18:4: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

In this case the “her” is the evil Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations. God is commanding His people to come out of that enemy of God and “be not partakers of her sins” – for those who *are* partakers of her sins will also partake of the plagues that God will send. How do we become partakers of her sins? By joining forces with them and helping them in word or deed. We become partakers when we refuse to separate ourselves from them.

The modern Church has decided that it is not interested in separation, and instead it eagerly tries to form alliances with as many god-hating organizations as it can possibly find. The Church has no idea of the great trouble that it is in. God did not hesitate to discipline king Jehoshaphat, and He will not hesitate to discipline us either.