

The Principle Of Separation

In our day it's common for Christian groups to join forces with non-Christian organizations to accomplish some goal, such as protesting abortion or feeding the hungry. Christians will join with Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, and whoever else they can find to accomplish their goals. The justification for this is that while we may have some differences we can all agree on this one area, so why not work together?

This all sounds very nice but it turns out the Bible forbids it. Christians aren't allowed to join with non-Christians, even if the goal is a good one. People seem to have forgotten (or rejected) the principle of separation – and the consequences have been devastating. The church desperately needs to understand that the idea that we should all work together no matter what we believe doesn't come from God. In fact, God is so opposed to it that He promised to curse those who are involved in such things.

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 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 18:1-3: “Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab. 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. 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 many modern churches do. 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 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; if we can get unbelievers to join us in our fight then so much the better!

Except the battle didn't go well. If you read chapter 18 you'll see that the prophet Micaiah warned against going to war and prophesied that Ahab would be killed. Sure enough, Ahab was killed. When Jehoshaphat returned home the prophet Jehu rebuked the king for joining forces with Ahab:

2 Chronicles 19:1-2: “And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. 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* pleased that Jehoshaphat had joined forces with Ahab. Even though they had a common enemy and a common threat, Jehoshaphat was forbidden from joining with that wicked king. God didn't see it as attacking a common enemy; instead He saw it as helping the ungodly and aiding those who hated Him. What the Lord focused on was the fact that *Jehoshaphat helped Ahab*. 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.”

Now, it's true that the Lord commanded us to pray for our

enemies and do good to them that hate us. However, the Lord did *not* command us to *join forces with them and help them accomplish their goals*. That's an entirely different matter. It's a wonderful thing to pray that our enemies would repent of their sins and be saved. It's great to give food to our enemies when they're hungry so that we might save their lives. However, Jehoshaphat went far beyond that. He intervened to help Ahab wage war against his enemies. The Lord was very upset about that. The fact that the Syrians were evil and were also Jehoshaphat's enemy didn't 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 ships to Ophir to get gold (1 Kings 22:48). Once again we see a godly king teaming up with an evil king to accomplish something. Now, there was nothing wrong with going to Ophir for gold. King Solomon also sent ships to Ophir and he acquired great wealth by doing so (1 Kings 9:28). Jehoshaphat thought that by teaming up together both kings would be enriched.

However, the Lord wasn't pleased:

2 Chronicles 20:35-37: “And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly: And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber. 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.”

The Lord wasn't upset with the purpose of the voyage. No, what upset Him 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 to accomplish something. It doesn't matter if their goal is something that's actually good. *He hates it*. In fact, He hates it so much that He promises *wrath* upon those who dare to do such things. In the example above God was so upset at their partnership that He destroyed their ships.

This same principle is repeated in the New Testament:

II Corinthians 6:14-17: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 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. 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 marriage isn't even mentioned anywhere in the chapter! Paul is saying that Christians shouldn't 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 must never be "yoked together" (in marriage or otherwise).

How many times did the apostles join forces with pagans to accomplish their goals? *Zero times*. How many times did the New Testament church join with idol-worshipers to fight poverty, feed the hungry, or pursue some other goal? *Zero times*. Instead Paul condemned that practice, just as it was condemned in the Old Testament.

God wants His people to be *separate* from the world. He doesn't want us to build alliances with the wicked! Instead He commands His followers to “come out from among them, and be ye separate”.

This principle of separation is no longer believed by many people in the modern church. Instead one church after another has rejected the clear teaching of II Corinthians 6:14-17. Some pastors teach that it's *great* when we can team up with God-hating organizations to get things done! They see that as winning. What God has to say about it is entirely forgotten – but God is very clear about this:

II John 1:10-11: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 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. Instead it says 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's not forbidding us from inviting them over so we can share the gospel with them. What he's 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”.

There are some modern churches which love to commit this sin. I saw one case where a 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's exactly the sort of thing John was condemning – but instead of being dismayed, some pastors hold this up 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.

It's also common for various famous Christians to praise Catholics and Mormons for their good works and their love of God. As I've said many times before, Catholics and Mormons preach a false gospel. Praising and encouraging them goes far beyond “bidding them godspeed”! That's a serious sin and is condemned by the apostle John, but somehow the Bible's disapproval doesn't stop churches from finding people who “bring not this doctrine” of saving grace and doing all they can to encourage them and make them feel good.

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate”, the Lord says. That's 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."

This passage is talking about Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations. God is commanding His people to leave that enemy of God and “be not partakers of her sins”, because 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.

Some churches have decided that they're not interested in the principle of separation and eagerly try to form alliances with as many god-hating organizations as possible. Those churches have no idea of the great trouble they're in. God didn't hesitate to discipline king Jehoshaphat, and He won't hesitate to discipline us either.