

Evil Companionship

Tom Fannin—December 23, 2023

Today, this message is going to be directed toward the youth. Certainly, it's going to be a message that we can, hopefully, all learn from. So, today we're going to be talking about who we keep company with. That is an important thing to consider.

We think about the youth in the Church, and it's really good to have young people in God's Church. It's good to be able to work with them, encourage them and instruct them.

That's what we should be doing as members of God's Church, and also as parents and grandparents. So today, again, we're going to be talking about:

- What company do we keep?
- Does it have an influence on us?
- Does it have an influence on our behavior?

Let's go back to what Paul wrote; 1-Corinthians 15:33: "**Do not be deceived...**"

So, he's making a point right away. This is something for us to think about.

Verse 33: "Do not be deceived; evil companionship corrupts good behavior."

So, Paul makes it down here that the company we keep, the companionship we keep. If it's evil, it can corrupt us; It can corrupt our behavior.

There's a lot of things we can keep company with that we should be keeping company with, but again, in this message, we're going to be talking about people we choose to keep company with and the effect and influence it can have on us.

Certainly we don't want our good behavior, the things we've been taught, the things we've been instructed in from our parents and from God and His Word, to be corrupted in any way.

In 2-Corinthians 6:14—*Paul writes here:* "Do not be unequally yoked..."

When I think about yoke, I think about animals. When you take a couple of horses that are of equal ability, equal strength, and they work together, they can get a lot accomplished.

But then you think about maybe putting two animals together that don't work well, that aren't of the same mind, aren't of the same ability, and aren't working together; it's a problem.

Paul says here, v 14: "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common?..."

Trying to live life righteously and correctly before God vs lawlessness. What do those two things have in common? *Well, they don't!*

"...And what fellowship *does* light *have* with darkness?" (v 14).

Well, they don't have any fellowship! They have, both of them, different purposes!

Verse 15: "And what union *does* Christ *have* with Belial?..." *He has none!*

With Satan and the demons and that way of life, ***Christ has no union with them at all!***

"...Or what part *does* a believer *have* with an unbeliever? And what agreement *is there between* a temple of God and idols?..." (vs 15-16).

For those who come before God to worship and honor God and praise God, and for those who go before idols, things that are created by man, **what agreement is there between those two thoughts or those two ideas?**

"...For you are a temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said: 'I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. **Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,**' says **the Lord,** 'and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you'" (vs 16-17).

So, yes, we want to be received by God. As God says here, come out of that. Don't touch the unclean. Don't have part in that.

Verse 18: "'And I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,' says *the* Lord Almighty."

That's the purpose of the calling and being in God's Church. ***We look forward to being spiritual beings, sons and daughters of God!***

We see what was talked about here by Paul. There are two different minds here. There are two different ways here. We don't want to have union or fellowship or companionship with those that are of a different mind or a different way. One thing that is important for us to remember, and especially the youth: ***people have an ability to influence other people and to influence certainly their behavior!*** We know some people are ***very persuasive*** in how they do things.

We're going to look at maybe, in my opinion, the most strong example of a persuader that there is, *and that's Satan the devil!* Let's see what happened and what he did.

Revelation 12:3: "And another sign was seen in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns on his heads; and his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to deliver, so that he might devour her child when she gave birth" (vs 3-4).

What I want to bring out here is Satan the devil. We know at one time he was Lucifer, and he was a covering cherub, and he was beautiful in how he was made. He was perfect, a creation of God, and he had a purpose.

But at some point, he changed. He looked to himself as something special. He wanted to set his throne up where God's Throne was, and he was corrupted. Somehow he was able to draw away one-third of the angels, this covering cherub. How did that happen? *Here are all these angels that:*

- knew God
- knew God was the Creator
- knew God was a God of love
- knew God was a God of power
- knew God was a God of Truth

But somehow, *Satan was able to persuade* those angels to follow him. They rebelled against God, and they were held accountable for that. We know that Satan:

- is a deceiver
- is the father of lies
- has a way of persuading

That's the power behind this on earth today!

This same power exists through and works through people. This power of Satan, this demonic spirit, we all struggle with and fight against this, and so do our youth.

But the point is, we can't underestimate that power and how persuasive it is, as it works against the young people, even in the Church.

Ephesians 5:11—*Paul writes:* "And have no fellowship with **the unfruitful works of darkness**, but rather expose *them*."

When we see things go on that we know are "...**unfruitful works of darkness**..." we want to expose those things. We want to, in our mind, understand:

- what they are
- where they come from

- what they're motivated by

We don't have anything to do with it; we want to get away from it.

So yes, we want to be aware of it and expose it, but the most important thing is we have *no fellowship* with it. We get away from it when we see it.

1-Peter 4:1: "Consequently, since Christ has suffered for us in *the* flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind because the one who has suffered in *the* flesh has finished *living* in sin"

Yes, we're going to suffer in the flesh as we follow God and Jesus Christ and try to live their way as those members of God's Church, and also as the youth in God's Church. *If you try to live God's way, you're going to suffer in the flesh!*

Christ suffered in the flesh. Let's read about that. Remember that Christ knows what it's like to be flesh.

Hebrews 2:16: "For surely, He is not taking upon Himself to help *the* angels; but He is taking upon Himself to help *the* seed of Abraham." *If we're Christ's, we're Abraham's seed!*

He's taken it upon himself to help us, but He's also taken it upon Himself to help the youth in the Church, because He wants the youth to also be successful and to follow Him and God.

Verse 17: "For this reason, it was obligatory for *Him* to be made like *His* brethren in everything that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest *in* things pertaining to God, in order to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered, having been tempted *in like manner*, He is able to help those who are being tempted. So remember this, all of us, especially the youth we're talking to here, Christ knows what it's like to be a child" (vs 17-18).

He was instructed by God. He was awakened by His Father every day and He was instructed.

- He knows what it's like to live in the flesh as a child
- He knows what it's like to live in the flesh as a teenager
- He knows what it's like to live in the flesh as a young adult and on to adulthood

Christ knows what it's like and He sits at the right hand of God and He intercedes for us!

So, for all of us, *especially the youth*, remember that **Christ knows!** When you pray to God and ask for help, Christ is there to help you.

1-Peter 4:2: "*To this end: that* he no longer

live *his* remaining time in *the* flesh to *the* lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the past time of our lives *is* sufficient to have worked out the will of the Gentiles, when we ourselves walked in licentiousness *and* lusts, *and were* debauched with wine, carousing, drinking and wanton idolatries” (vs 2-3).

This was for a lot of people who were called into God’s Church and repented, knew, or baptized; that was part of their past lives. It no longer is.

Verse 4: “In *seeing* this *difference* in your *behavior*, they are astonished *that* you do not rush with *them* into the same overflowing debauchery, *and* they revile *you*.”

So yes, for the young people in God’s Church, it’s difficult at times because you’re not running and you’re not keeping company with those people who act and behave in that way. You’re being separate from them.

Sometimes you’re going to find yourself—just like those of us in the Church—reviled for that. They may look at you like you’re no fun because you don’t do the things that they do. Sometimes as adults, it’s the same thing. People look at us like you’re not somebody they want to be with because you don’t participate in what they do.

But that’s what we are as Christians and as youth in the Church. We have to be separate from those things. And yes, as I said, sometimes we’ll be reviled for that. It’s tough for young people growing up in the Church. I know that because I grew up in the Church myself. Just remember, turn to God for help. Turn to God for help because Jesus Christ is there at His right hand.

I want to turn back to Proverbs now because I want to go over something that gets brought out in the Proverbs.

I’m going to make a statement here as we start to read in Prov. 7: ***There can be consequences for keeping companionship with people you shouldn’t***, having evil companionship. As Paul mentioned, there can be dire consequences for that for the youth in God’s Church.

Proverbs 7:1: “My son, keep my words and store up my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live; and keep my law as the apple of your eye” (vs 1-2). *This is an instruction from a father to a son, admonishing them to:*

- keep the commandments
- store them within you
- remember them
- let them be the apple of your eye
- let them be something that’s important to you

By doing this, we’re able to have good behavior by having these things. We’re also able to expose and understand what the evil is.

Verse 3: “Bind them upon your fingers; write them **upon the tablet of your heart.**” *They need to be internalized:*

- God’s Word
- God’s commandments
- God’s way

Verse 4: “Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister’... [somebody you want to keep companionship with, a family member] ...and call understanding *your* kinsman.”

This is who we want to keep company with: ***wisdom and understanding that comes from God and His Word!*** Why? Why do we need to do this?

Verse 5: “So that they may keep you from the wanton woman, from the stranger *who* flatters with her words.”

So we’re kept from that. We’re kept from those who would like to draw us away or deceive us, and introduce us to things we don’t need to be a part of.

Verse 6: “For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice.”

This pictures someone standing there looking out, observing something that’s getting ready to happen. I’ll just point out right now for all of us, ***God knows!*** God looks down from heaven and ***He knows*** all the time:

- what’s going on in our lives
- what we’re doing
- what we’re participating in

We can’t hide anything from God! Even those thoughts. There’s nothing that can be hidden from God.

Verse 7: “And I saw among the simple ones, among the youths, a young man with no understanding.”

So, here was somebody that wasn’t using wisdom, wasn’t using understanding, and they were being watched. What are they going to do?

Verse 8: “Passing through the street near her corner.... [this person that’s going to be trying to draw this other person in] ...And he went the way to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night” (vs 8-9). ***Someplace he shouldn’t be at a wrong time to be there!***

When you get in a frame of mind where you start participating in, and keeping company with

things you shouldn't be doing, and people you shouldn't be with .

What happens is, is you forget. You forget that God knows, and that God's watching, and you get in a mind of nobody will know. Nobody will see. There won't be a consequence for this. ***Well, that's not true! There are consequences for wrong actions!***

Verse 21: "With much *alluring*, seductive speech she caused him to yield; with the flattering of her lips she induced him. He goes after her immediately, like an ox goes to the slaughter, or like a fool to the correction of the stocks until a dart strikes through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare and **does not know that it will cost him his life**" (vs 21-23).

How sad is this what's being depicted here? This young man decides to go and join company with someone he shouldn't, and then immediately, it's a snare that he's fallen into. There's a wound that comes from this.

I can tell you, growing up in the Church and seeing a lot of young people grow up in the Church, many have taken wounds. Many have fallen into snares because they chose to keep company with someone they shouldn't have. They got corrupted by it and suffered and went through a lot.

So again, the point here is **there are consequences** by keeping company with someone you shouldn't be.

Verse 24: "Hearken unto me now therefore, O you children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways; do not go astray in her paths, for she has cast down many wounded down to the chambers of death" (vs 24-26).

Remember this example of what evil companionship can do to you. It can have an effect, you know, and sometimes just one experiment one can be life changing and life altering and maybe can lead to the loss of life.

Remember that Satan is behind a lot of these things. When we start entertaining things, we shouldn't or we start keeping company again with people we shouldn't. Satan has snares out there. We have to be mindful of who's behind a lot of this and be very careful.

I want to bring out a couple of things here to take note of, and one is people can change. I experienced this in my life.

Growing up in the Church and in being in school, I had friends that I associated with and had good relationships with. Well, as I started to get older, probably around the age of 16, a lot of the

friends I had in school began to change. They began to participate in things that they shouldn't have been participating in. ***So, I had to make a choice:***

- Was I going to go along with that?
- Was I going to participate in those things/
or
- Was it a time for me to separate from my friends?

So, thankfully, with God's help, and because I had received instruction growing up, I made the decision to separate myself from that, and God blessed me for it.

I made new friends in school that didn't participate in those type of things. So, yes, they noticed, as we read back there and Peter; my behavior was different. I can't say they reviled me, but they noticed my behavior was different. So there was a separation there that needed to happen.

So the point is, be mindful. All the youth in the Church and for all of us, *people can change!* When they do, we may need to do something.

Something else I want to bring out, too, for the youth within the Church—not everybody within the Church—but I'm talking about particularly youth, maybe like you. I'll give you an example of myself.

I went to one of the youth summer camps called SEP in the early 80s, and there was a lot of kids in the Church. When I got up there to the camp and started meeting a lot of the kids, I started to find out a lot of the kids in the Church were doing things they shouldn't be doing. It was kind of eye-opening. Some of the things the youth were involved in.

But my point here is not all the youth in the Church may be doing the things God wants us to be doing. The things you've been instructed in.

- pay attention to that
- be mindful of that
- don't get discouraged over that

if you come across that!

If you find young people within the Church that aren't walking as you walk, ***you need to separate from them***, because you may come across that.

Let's see what Paul writes about this, and this applies to all of us in the Church. That's why Paul wrote this.

Romans 16:17: "Now I exhort you, brethren, to **take note of those who are causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned...**"—*the doctrine we learned comes from Christ!*

It says: "...**and shun them**; because these

are the sort who are not serving our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies, and are deceiving the hearts of the innocent by smooth talking and flattery” (vs 17-18)

So, yes, we’ve to take note of those sometimes that aren’t following Jesus Christ and walking after Him. What they’re involved in has to do with things that they’re motivated to do of themselves. A lot of times, through their words and their persuasions, they’re deceiving many as it says here.

So we have to take note and we have to shun and separate at times from people like that, even in the Church.

I think this is going to be used in Millennium. People who aren’t behaving properly and living God’s way are going to be shunned and they’re going to figure out pretty quick ‘why won’t anybody have anything to do with me?’ They’re going to learn it’s because they’re not following God and living by God’s Law. *That’s why!* They need to correct that and repent.

But nonetheless, those who are walking this way and are refusing to change and repent, we don’t want to have anything to do with them. For the young, the youth in the Church, you may come across this where you may have to part ways with people

For all of us, and especially now the youth in the Church, ***you need to:***

- continue to look to God
- continue to look to God’s way
- be thinking about promises that God has for you, for the youth

Psalm 37:1: “Do not fret yourself because of evildoers, and do not be envious against the workers of iniquity.”

Sometimes we look around—I know the youth do—and you see this world and what goes on in this world and what people are participating in and doing. Sometimes we become envious of what others are doing and how they’re rewarded and all the luxuries they have and the recognition and the things again go on in this world. We can become envious of these things, and we can fret over these things. But we shouldn’t do that because it goes on the say here:

Verse 2: “For they shall soon be cut down like the grass; and wither as the green herb.” *It’s temporary!*

There’s nothing to these things in God’s eyes. But it goes on to say here, ***the important thing for all of us is:***

Verse 3: “Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and cherish faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (vs 3-4). *Remember this:*

- keep companionship with God
- keep companionship with God’s way.

*That will make sure you have good behavior and there’s blessings that come from that! **Keep this companionship!***

Verse 5: “Commit your way unto the LORD; trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass.”

You will not be corrupted in any way if you keep companionship with God and obey God and stay faithful. As it says here,

- God will give you the desires of your heart.
- He’ll bless you for being faithful and keeping companionship with Him.

Remember that!

2-Tim.—let’s see what Paul told Timothy. Now, Timothy, he grew up in the Church. You can say he had a grandmother in the Church. His mother was in the Church and Paul knew him from the time he was younger. So, Timothy was kind of like a son to Paul. He treated him like a son and instructed him like a son. Obviously from the writings of Paul to Timothy, Paul thought very highly of Timothy and what he was doing.

2-Timothy 2:22: “But **flee youthful lusts...**”

When you’re young, you have lusts. There are certain things you want to do and participate in. Some of these things probably aren’t good for us to be doing. So, Paul says here to flee that, get away from those things, youthful lusts. ***But he says here, what to do:***

“...and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace with those who are calling on the Lord out of a pure heart” (v 22).

So pursue these things, do these things. These contribute to good behavior with those who are calling on the Lord, with the same ones who are doing these things.

So, for young people—and for all of us—let’s keep company with the people who are doing what we’re doing, ***the people who are trying to build the mind of Christ and live God’s way and calling upon the Lord!*** That’s Who we want to keep companionship with. That’ll go a long way in helping us.

We started in 1-Cor. 15:33, and Psa. 119:63 is a good Scripture to go along with that:

Psalm 119:63: I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts”—*commandments!*

This is all we need in the Church. We all need to be companions of each other, but we all need to be of this mind: ***those who fear God, those who keep God’s commandments.***

For the youth, you need to be companions with the same young people who are striving to do what you’re doing. *So, let’s remember—all of us:*

- to have good companionship
- to have companionship with God
- to have companionship with Christ
- to have companionship of all those who are striving to obey God and live a way of life that pleases God

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1 Corinthians 15:33
- 2) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
- 3) Revelation 12:3-4
- 4) Ephesians 5:11
- 5) 1 Peter 4:1
- 6) Hebrews 2:16-18
- 7) 1 Peter 4:2-4
- 8) Proverbs 7:1-9, 21-26
- 9) Romans 16:17-18
- 10) Psalm 37:1-5
- 11) 2 Timothy 2:22
- 12) Psalm 119:63

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