

**October 12, 2020**

Today's words of real challenge for you.

In society an expression used frequently to call into question a person's character or integrity is "Guilty by association." It is used to imply because of a person's relationships with people of suspect character, morals, or ethics that logically they too must be of questionable character, morals, or ethics. This line of reasoning also holds true for Christians. If those people with whom we most closely associate are constantly involved in blatantly sinful behaviors then our witness or testimony for Jesus is compromised and our integrity rightly impugned. Christians must learn to be careful when it comes to selecting their friends. For as Paul writes, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Read with me from 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

*14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. 17 "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE," says the Lord. "AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAR; And I will welcome you. 18 "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.*

Let me ask, "What criteria do you have for choosing your friends?" "Is everyone who is nice to you a friend?" How Christians choose our friends is actually very important. Our relationships say a lot about who we are as Christians. Today's Christians are often engaged in unhealthy

relationships; Not only relationships with other people, but also professional relationships.

Choosing to associate in unchristian ways is a conflict of interest. Conflict of Interest occurs when any activity or association will impugn one's integrity. As Christians, when we involve ourselves in relationships with people or organizations that are not Christian often it may bring discredit to us and ultimately to God. To be in friendships or associations with those who are not Christian will frequently cause our integrity and the integrity of the church to be compromised. This will in turn cause our witness for God to appear insincere or contrived.

We must remember that Christians are in the world, but not of the world. On the night Jesus was betrayed He prayed; "Now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I Am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:13-18).

We are in the world yes, but we do not belong to it. Therefore, any relationship that does not glorify God is an unwise relationship. Remember, relationships are not just among individuals, but with groups as well. Moreover, it is important for us to notice that Jesus is sending us into the world, not to be part of it, but to bring the Good News of Jesus into it. The primary responsibility of every Christian is to proclaim God's Gospel Message.

From the "Sermon on the Mount" Jesus declares, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and

trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck measure, but on the lamp stand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).

How we select our friends and associations is important. Our relationships must edify us in the Lord. Our relationships should be such that all in the relationship will bring out the best in each other. The Sage asserts, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).

Our relationships must also encourage mutual support, not only in the good times, but more importantly in the bad or difficult times. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes challenges, “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor; for if either one of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Our relationships are reflective of our true character. Our relationships also demonstrate the depth of our convictions and commitment to Jesus. Remember, Jesus said, “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Our witness for Jesus should be unimpeachable. No adversary should be able to cast dispersion upon our character.

What is the nature of your relationships and associations? Do they glorify God and provide a healthy platform by which Jesus is proclaimed as Savior? Evaluate your friendships and associations. Seek God's guidance in choosing those you call friend. May Jesus be your best friend. Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for watching out for us and providing one who is closer than a friend in Jesus, Your Son. Let all of our relationships and associations glorify You, through Jesus, amen.*

Choose friends that will always bring out the best in you.

Until the nets are full