

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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## Who or What is on the other side of your Yoke?

*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. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)*

The most frequent application of this passage that you will read or hear relates to marriage. Advocates of this view warn singles not to marry anyone outside their faith. True enough, if two people do not share the same faith and choose to marry, they face a significant challenge. However, I have known any number of people who built a strong and godly marriage despite not fully agreeing on their faith. One of several essential ingredients was that they chose to respect each other and their differences in faith. And, admittedly, the two faiths were not worlds apart, so much so that no common ground could be found. A couple considering marriage should make their personal faith perspective a key and bedrock component in their decisions and plans—and a topic of long, honest dialogue. If they become so starstruck that they ignore their faith, the grim reality of their oversight will haunt them eventually—and often painfully.

The central, contextual teaching of the passage is ignored by this myopic focus on marriage. The context of the lesson deals with a person's whole world view and life, not exclusively with their marriage. Further, the words appear in a letter to a church, not a letter to an individual. Therefore, the contextual and obvious application of the passage should be to a believer's whole world view, and, more appropriately to a church's collective conduct. To get a proper sense of the context of this lesson read the whole of 2 Corinthians, chapters 6 and 7. Nothing in this broader context confines the passage to marriage alone or makes marriage the primary focus of the passage.

If we follow the contextual flow and apply the lesson to a New Testament church, where does it take us? How should a faithful church implement this passage in its decisions and conduct? What implications does the passage impose on a church's choices of who and what it will "Fellowship" and not "Fellowship?" In today's politically correct pseudo-Christian climate of all things ecumenical, it is quite convenient to restrict this passage to marriage alone, but the context will not allow such a narrow view. The primary focus of the passage in context applies to a church. Simply

and contextually grounded, there are some things and people that a godly, faithful New Testament church should refuse to "Fellowship."

Paul generalizes the object of his "No fellowship" instruction as "unbelievers." So what constitutes an unbeliever? If a person believes that a man existed in first century Nazareth named Jesus, but denies that this Jesus was anything other than a "Good man," is he a believer? If a person believes in the God of the Old Testament, but not in the Jesus of the New Testament, is he a believer? If a person believes in Jesus as God Incarnate, but also believes that Jesus is limited from doing anything in or for anyone apart from that person's willing decision, is he a believer? If a person claims to believe in God, but interprets the Bible in some strained or twisted (The Bible word is "wrested." 2 Peter 3:16) manner, is he a believer?

All of these are legitimate questions. In an effort to answer such questions, many Christian people have adopted an old historical cliché, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." (Augustine) While classifying our Bible beliefs as either essential or non-essential, we make an effort to find a balanced view of the question. But what constitutes an essential doctrine versus a non-essential? I recently encountered a man who holds that fatalistic predestination and Oneness Pentecostal denial of the Trinity are both mere non-essential doctrines that should not be insisted on as essentials. Without apology, I strongly disagree on both points. Both of these errant doctrines contradict Scripture's teachings regarding the essential character of God, one related to God's moral character and the other related to His essential Being.

Folks who interpret Romans 8:28 as if it were the only verse in the Bible, imposing a fatalistic meaning onto it, run headlong into our study passage. If every event that occurs in human history works together for good to them that love God, what about the things that Paul names in our study passage that Paul, by the inspired influence of the Holy Spirit categorically stated cannot and do not work together, much less for good to anyone?

They create a flagrant and foolish contradiction in the inspired Scriptures, but the contradiction lies in their errant fatalistic ideas, not in Scripture. If these folks interpret “all things” in the context of Romans 8:28, they must define this term so that it agrees with the same exact term in Romans 8:32 where Paul uses the term specifically with reference to what God freely gives to us because He spared not His own Son.

Beware the dishonest approach of advocates of the fatalistic view of this verse, “Don’t you believe that God **sometimes** intervenes in the affairs of men to bring something good out of something bad?” Do not miss that this dishonest question wholly contradicts their interpretation of the verse. There is a world of difference between “all things” and “sometimes” or “some things.” These people fiercely reject this precise “Sometimes—some things” idea and demand that we accept their “All things means all things without exception” interpretation of the verse. By making this “Sometimes” argument, they practice patent dishonesty in their guile to deceive and to gain disciples to themselves. Contextually, “All things” that God gives us because He spared not His own Son always work together, and they always work for our good. The same cannot be said of the list of sinful “Things” in our study passage, along with many similar “Things” named in Scripture.

The Oneness view of God claims that “Father,” “Son” or “Word,” and “Holy Spirit” are mere titles or “Modes” of revelation that refer to God as He “Wears different hats or performs different functions.” Okay, please explain Jesus praying to the Father and the Father answering from heaven? Was Jesus the world’s best ventriloquist? Did He pray to Himself? Or did He pray to the Father, and the Father answered Him? Any view of God that ignores or contradicts 1 John 5:7 is not a Biblical view of God and must be soundly—essentially—rejected by orthodox, Bible believing Christians.

*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (1 John 5:7)*

Are there three, or is there only one? John does not write that there are three gods who bear record in heaven, the typical straw man misrepresentation of those who hold the Oneness view against Biblical Trinitarians. He writes that there are three, along with “...these three are one.” We worship one and only one God, but this one God exists in three unique “Persons.” Think of the unique characteristics of individuality, “Will” as just one example.

1. Jesus said that He came to obey or to do the Father’s will. God, the Father, has a will. A will is a unique quality or trait of an individual. (John 6:38-39)

2. Jesus states that He “...quickeneth whom **he will.**” (John 5:21b) Jesus also has a will.  
3. Paul writes by the Holy Spirit’s inspiration that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts “...dividing to every man severally as **he will.**” (1 Corinthians 12:11b) Further, the Holy Spirit has a will.

Nothing in these passages suggests that the Father’s will, the Son’s will, or the Holy Spirit’s will contradict each other. Quite the opposite, all three wills are in permanent and perfect harmony. But the passages specifically attribute the personal trait of “Will” distinctly to each. One sentient, intelligent, being does not possess three distinct wills, but one. The Oneness denial of the Biblical doctrine of the Trinity is not a minor non-essential doctrine. It is central and essential to a Biblical faith.

Someone has observed that this one verse, 1 John 5:7, may be the one verse that Satan hates most in all the Bible. Look at any modern version of the Bible. The verse will be wholly omitted or so twisted as to be nearly nonsensical. Dr. Thomas Holland, *Crowned with Glory*, wrote an entire chapter in defense of the King James translation of this verse, concluding that the King James translation rests on correct first century Greek grammar and that the modern versions rely on a patently deviant first century twist of Greek grammar. The King James text stands on rock solid ground, fully supported by a large array of similar passages that teach the same truth of God in Trinity.

For these and many other similar and Biblical reasons, I make no apology for holding to what I believe to be sound Biblical doctrines related to the moral character of God and to the Trinitarian Being of God. I therefore with no ill will, but with sincere and strongly held Biblical convictions offer that I cannot hold true and full Biblical fellowship with folks who hold to these views. I can embrace them in limited fellowship that relates to other common beliefs, but our disagreement on such a fundamental teaching as these restricts the full concept of Biblical fellowship with them.

*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* What is the Biblical solution to such profound disagreement? Close your eyes, hold your nose, and pretend that you agree, or, far worse, pretend that such basic teachings of Scripture regarding the character and nature of God Himself are merely “Non-essential”? That is not at all Paul’s answer. If folks who believe in such different ideas want to establish true Biblical fellowship, those who hold to the errant ideas suggested by the language of the passage are directed to abandon those beliefs, repent of them, and turn to the Lord in sound and true faith, founded on Scripture.

Someone might suggest that neither of the ideas mentioned above are so grave. Think again. The idea that God personally works in everything that occurs (Or else He prevents it from ever occurring at all) means that God is in some way—directly or even indirectly, it matters not—involved in causing every depraved and sinful action that ever occurred. In legal terms, even indirect involvement makes God a criminal accomplice to the sin. How ever much advocates of this all-encompassing view of Romans 8:28 try to dance around the question, in the end, they do hold to this view. And some of them are honest enough to state their view in these terms. James 1:13-14 confronts and refutes this idea in categorical terms. Temptation is a fact; we all face it every day, but James makes his point emphatically that God is unequivocally not in the temptation business. Every gift that God gives to His child is a “good” and “perfect” gift, never a destructive and immoral curse. Your enticing temptation didn’t in any remote way, directly or indirectly, start with God. James tells us; it started with your own sinful nature and appetite. The first eight verses of Romans 3 directly confront and refute this fatalistic idea specifically in moral and legal terms. Legally and morally, if God so twists man’s immoral, sinful conduct as to use it to enhance His righteousness, instead of being a righteous judge, God becomes a guilty accomplice to man’s sin, and should rightly be judged by a righteous judge, not sit as judge of sinful man. Think in human legal terms. President Nixon didn’t go anywhere near the office that his associates burglarized. He didn’t break down a door or steal a single document. But he was guilty of being an accomplice to that crime, a crime in itself that cost him his presidency. And rightly so. ***Paul will have nothing of the errant and immoral idea that our God is a moral accomplice to man’s sin! In fact, Paul concludes that such an idea is a slander against what he taught, not an affirmation of his inspired teachings.*** Folks, the Holy Spirit who inspired Paul to write Romans 3 didn’t change—reverse—His mind when He arrived at Romans 8. Our interpretation of Romans 8:28 must harmonize with Paul’s words in Romans 3 and James’ words in James 1. The fatalistic view simply fails to so harmonize with these and many, many other Scriptures.

I have used these two doctrines as examples that a godly New Testament church should refuse to “Fellowship” or support. Other similar errant ideas might be offered. These came to mind because of the recent observation of tolerance toward them. We will study this question further. Throughout the New Testament, inspired writers consistently hold up a clear, consistent, and required doctrinal foundation that Bible believing Christians should “Fellowship” and defend, steadfastly so. Just as these New Testament writers confronted, refuted, and rejected both the ideas and the people who promoted grave errors,

present-day New Testament Christians should follow the historical and Biblical example. Scripture both positively teaches truth and negatively exposes and rejects errors that cannot be rightly dismissed as “Non-essential.” There is a difference between Augustine’s “Essential” and his “Non-essential.”

Little Zion Primitive Baptist Church  
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Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor