

**Tell Us What You Really Think!**  
**2 Corinthians 6:3-7:1**    **September 4, 2022**



What are the greatest dangers the church here in Brisbane will face in the next 50 years?

Probably the same great dangers it faced in the past 50 years.

Yes, there will be dangers from the outside. There will be growing community and government opposition to the gospel – but while this will be difficult – it may even strengthen the church.

Perhaps our greatest danger from outside has been and will be prosperity. The drive for a better lifestyle that focusses our energies on this life rather than His kingdom.

But honestly, what has affected the church and will affect us the most – are the dangers from within.

In particular, allowing the wrong men and women into positions of leadership.

If you look at the last 50 years in Brisbane churches have been greatly harmed by:

**Poor leaders.**

As one example. A number of churches put businessmen, doctors and movers and shakers into leadership – who then did not train the next generation, kept hold of power and had to have things run their way. Often good men – but not spiritual leaders. Often they oversaw divisions and splits. Those churches once had large Sunday Schools and powerful ministries. Today they are small, old congregations that may soon cease to exist.

But, for the most part those men and churches still faithfully preached the gospel.

But, while poor leaders are bad – there has been something far worse:

### **Unbelieving leaders.**

Churches rarely stop to think whether they are actually being led by unbelievers.

And most often these leaders don't even realise they are unbelieving wolves.

They look and sound like Christians – the church thinks they are of God – but they are not.

This was the issue threatening the church in Corinth.

So, in our passage this morning – Paul pulls no punches. He is incredibly bold and forthright.

In fact, if I am honest – I have a degree of discomfort at just how forthright Paul is.

The more I read the New Testament, being forthright is one area I know I have a lot to learn from Paul.

Paul speaks very clearly to his people.

In a couple of weeks, we will come to a passage that I have long felt more than a little uncomfortable with.

In chapters 8 and 9 Paul appeals to the Corinthians to give generously for the work of the ministry. Speaking directly about money and asking you to give more is something we rarely do – basically because I find it uncomfortable. But that is my issue.

However, talking to you about money and asking you to give pales in comparison to what Paul does in our passage this this week.

Paul says – church – chose to partner with godly men like me not with agents of Satan like the super apostles.

He then does two things. He commends himself in everything. He provides a long series of reasons why he is the one worthy of the Corinthian's partnership in ministry.

Self-commendation – especially as boldly as Paul does – is something that I feel uncomfortable with.

But then Paul does something even more blunt and direct. He says – those other guys – the super apostles – you absolutely **cannot** partner with them because they are unbelievers who are unclean and agents of Satan. They are lawless, dark and idolatrous. Have nothing to do with them.

I read this and feel like saying – OK Paul – tell us what you really think.

If I am honest, what Paul says **is** how I feel about cults like Mormons or JW's.

But, Paul isn't talking about cults outside the church – he is talking about men in leadership within the church.

These are not outsiders – they are insiders – and this makes them far more dangerous.

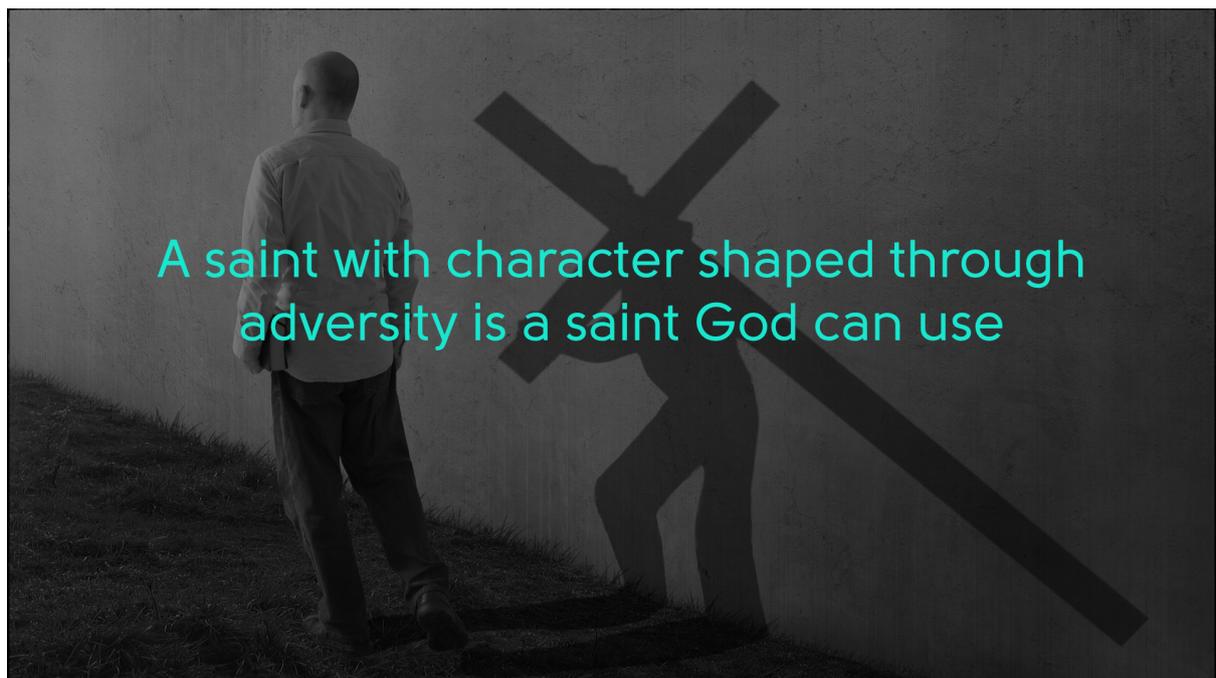
We are working our way through the book of 2 Corinthians.

Paul wrote this book because a group of men – self-styled super apostles – turned up in Corinth preaching a twisted man-centred version of the gospel.

And they sought to discredit the ministry of Paul.

2 Corinthians is Paul's defence of his ministry.

I have titled the series on this book – **crucified leadership**. And I want to sum up this book this way:



**A saint with character shaped through adversity is a saint God can use.**

**A saint with character shaped through adversity is a saint God can use.**

In this book, Paul gives the Corinthians and us a long series of:

1:1-2 God's church - God's leaders

## Marks of Crucified Leadership



### Marks of crucified leadership.

Leadership in the church is not like leadership in the world.

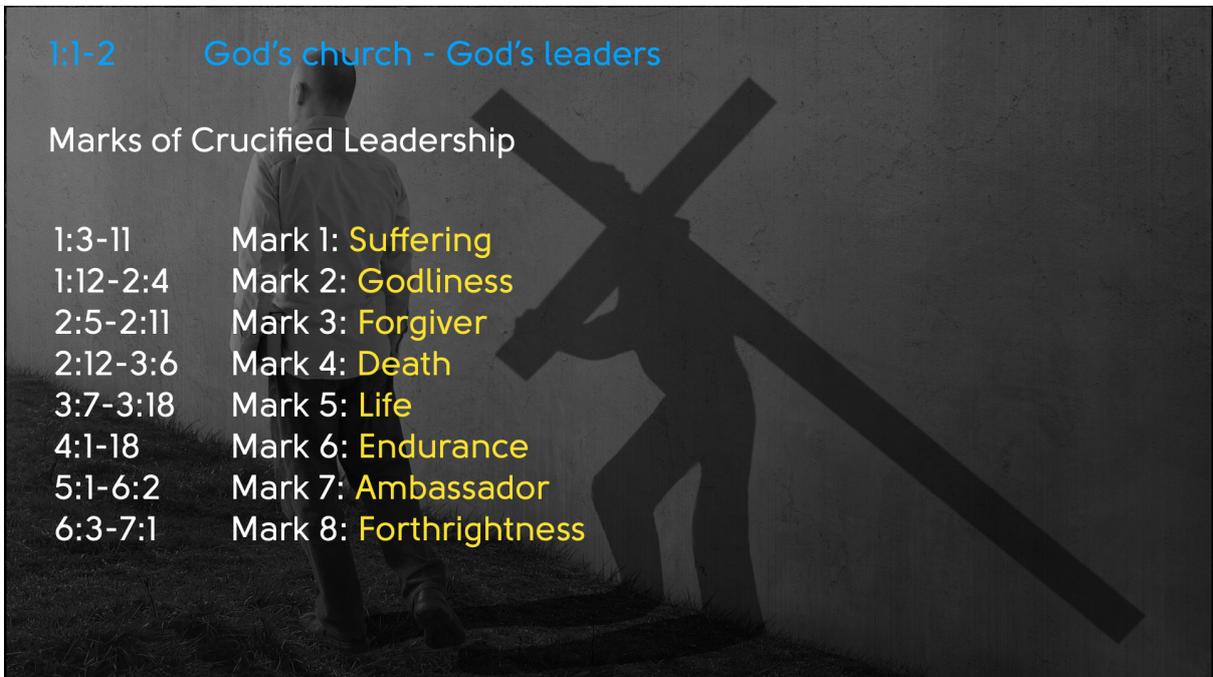
The head of the church is a crucified Saviour so the leaders of His church must exhibit crucified leadership.

This morning we come to the **eighth** mark:

1:1-2 God's church - God's leaders

## Marks of Crucified Leadership

- |          |                               |
|----------|-------------------------------|
| 1:3-11   | Mark 1: <b>Suffering</b>      |
| 1:12-2:4 | Mark 2: <b>Godliness</b>      |
| 2:5-2:11 | Mark 3: <b>Forgiver</b>       |
| 2:12-3:6 | Mark 4: <b>Death</b>          |
| 3:7-3:18 | Mark 5: <b>Life</b>           |
| 4:1-18   | Mark 6: <b>Endurance</b>      |
| 5:1-6:2  | Mark 7: <b>Ambassador</b>     |
| 6:3-7:1  | Mark 8: <b>Forthrightness</b> |



### Forthrightness.

In today's passage, Paul is about as direct, honest and forthright as you can imagine – uncomfortably and confrontingly so.

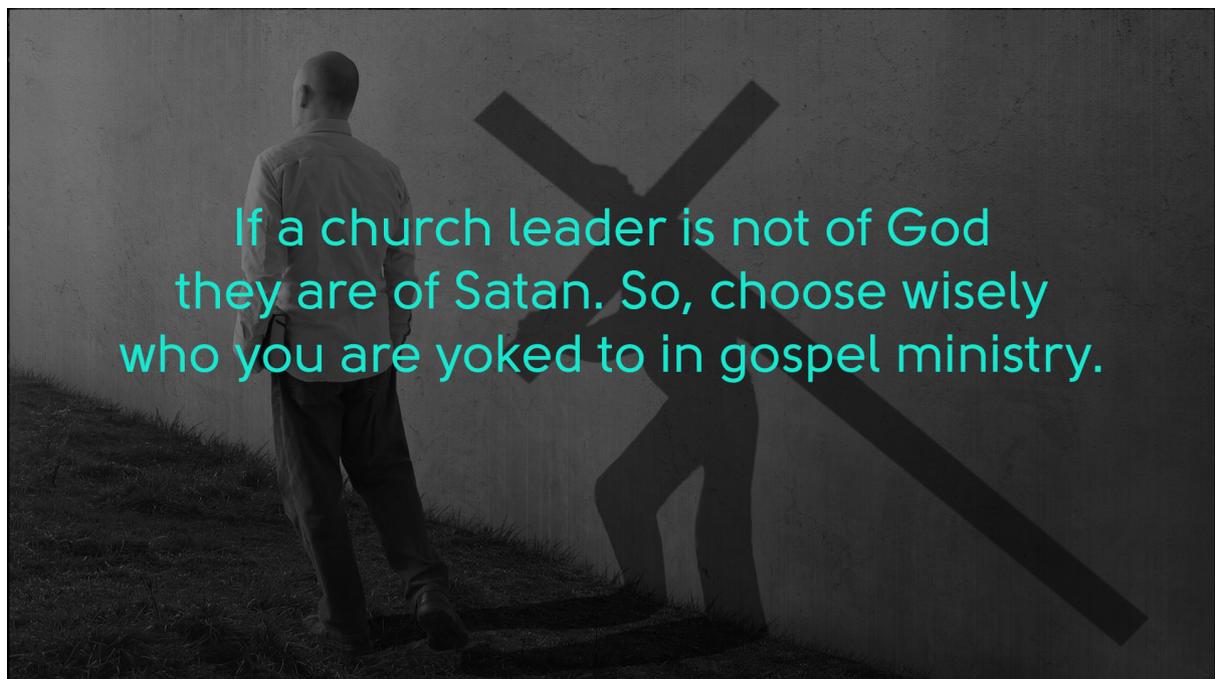
The stakes are too high to beat around the bush.

This church is weighing up who to follow.

Paul knows he has God's message that saves – and that they have a false message that condemns.

So, no niceties and no sugar-coating it when the eternal fate of men and women are in the balance.

Here is how I want to summarise this morning's message.

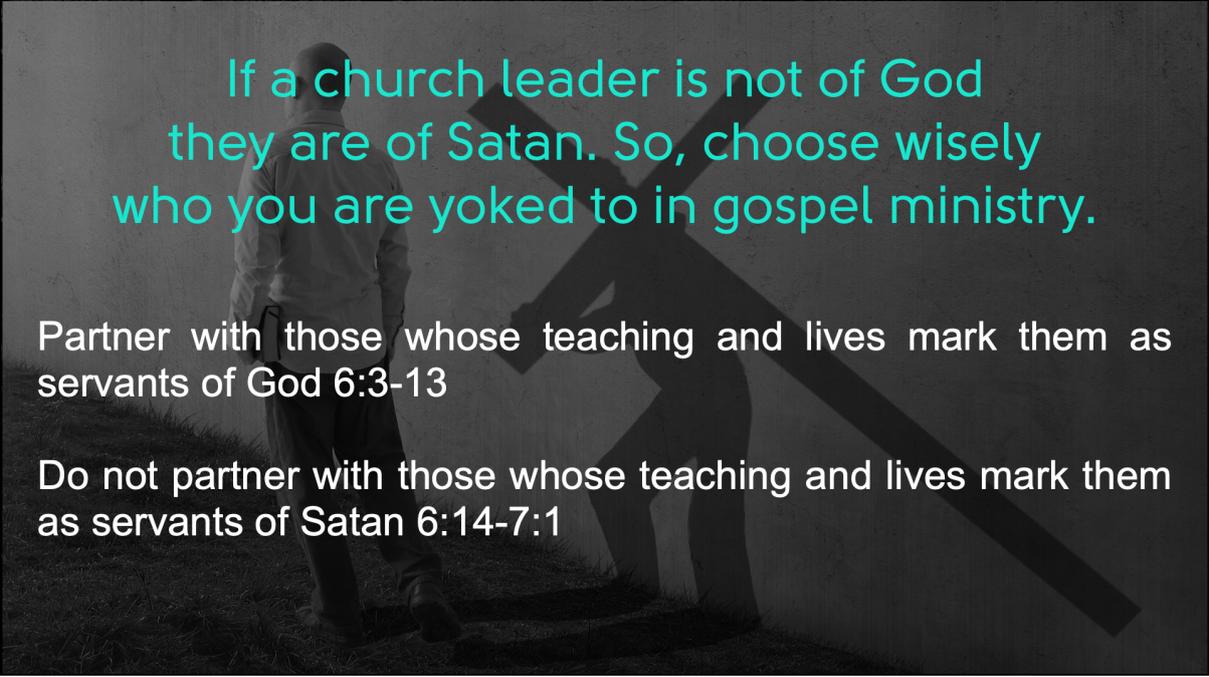


**If a church leader is not of God they are of Satan. So, choose wisely who you are yoked to in gospel ministry.**

**If a church leader is not of God they are of Satan. So, choose wisely who you are yoked to in gospel ministry.**

If a man or woman does not teach the true gospel and live it – it is not that they are a poor leader – name them for what they are – an agent of Satan.

Maybe it will help if I show you Paul's two points from this passage.



If a church leader is not of God  
they are of Satan. So, choose wisely  
who you are yoked to in gospel ministry.

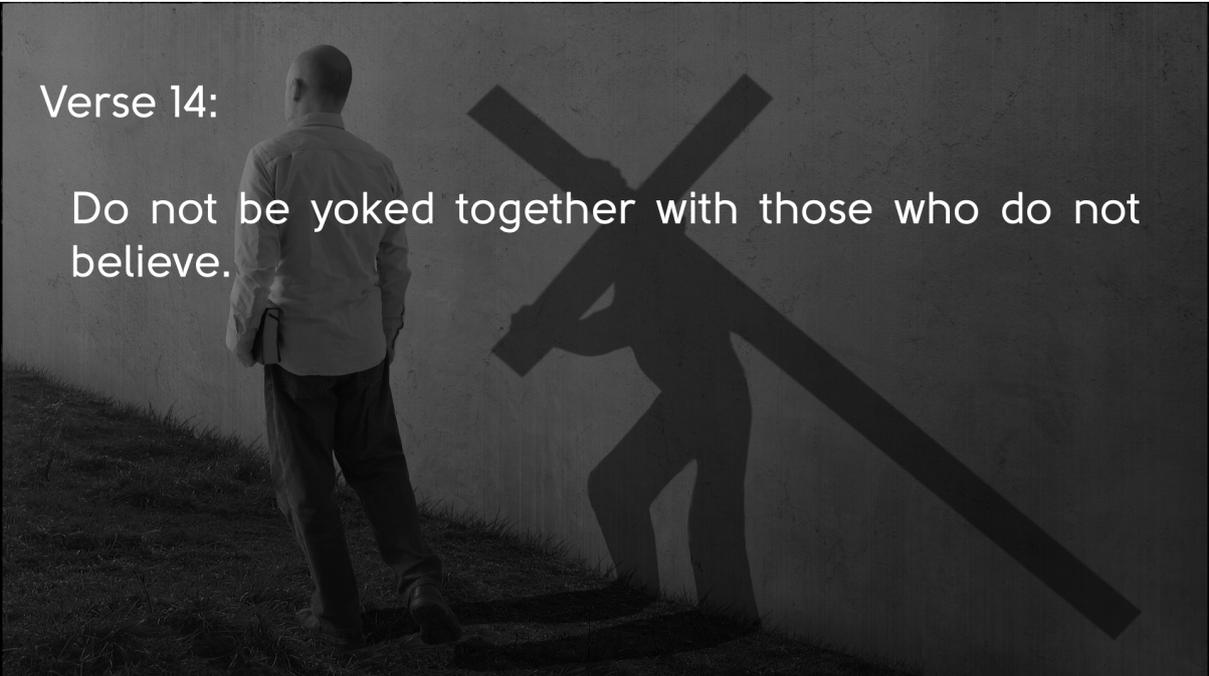
Partner with those whose teaching and lives mark them as  
servants of God 6:3-13

Do not partner with those whose teaching and lives mark them  
as servants of Satan 6:14-7:1

A church has only two choices. It can only partner with those whose teaching and lives mark them as servants of God or servants of Satan.

Before we look at this – I do have to deal with the fact that this passage has two very well-known verses – but for all the wrong reasons.

Have a look down with me at verse 14:



Verse 14:

Do not be yoked together with those who do not  
believe.

Do not be yoked together with those who do not believe.

This important verse has suffered so much. It has been pulled out of its context and used to support a variety of applications.

Now, before I get a barrage of emails from parents saying how could you deny me the verse I use to tell my kids they can't date an unbeliever – let me be very clear.

Believers should **not not not** be yoked in marriage with an unbeliever.

As well, it is often unwise to be yoked in a business partnership with an unbeliever.

But, I want to put it on record – this verse has absolutely **nothing** to do with either of these.

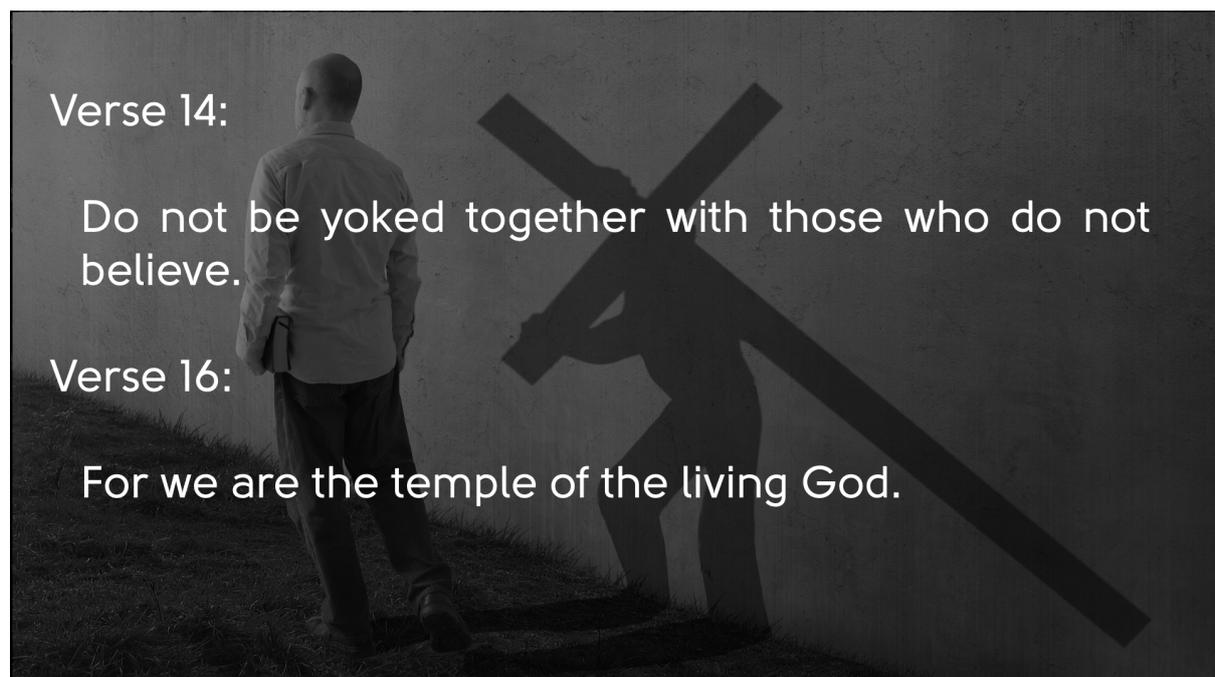
Nor can you use this verse to address the issue of whether Christians should only employ Christians in their business, or only work for Christians, or only use Christian tradesmen or only buy from Christian companies.

Let me say this clearly. Young people – yes – many of your parents and others use this verse to tell you not to date and far less marry a non-Christian.

But, the fact that they may quote the wrong verse does not detract from the crystal clear passages that *do* deal with this – such 1 Corinthians 7.

So, if your parents tell you not to be yoked with an unbeliever – just thank them and shock them by letting them know you actual do listen to the sermon by saying – mum, dad – by that I assume you mean by that I should only marry *in the Lord* – as 1 Corinthians 7:39 says.

Down to verse 16:



For we are the temple of the living God.

This verse is often portrayed as – our individual body houses the Holy Spirit – so look after your body.

Again, let me be clear. You should look after your body.

I *do* think it is unwise to smoke, drink too much, eat too much or fail to exercise.

It *is* wrong to use illegal drugs.

But put this on record as well – this passage has **nothing** to do with any of these things.

The temple here is **not** your individual body – but the church as a whole.

Paul is talking about linking the temple of the church with unbelievers.

So, please do not rip any of these wonderful verses from their context.

I also need to comment that when you read this chapter – you cannot help but be struck by how strong Paul’s language is.

There is an old saying – if you have nothing nice to say about someone – say nothing.

Paul says – that is fine when we are talking about some annoying habits.

But, when the spiritual wellbeing of the church is at stake – **no!**

If wolves are creeping in – you say plenty of bad stuff about them – even if it is uncomfortable.

And if you know you speak the truth – stand up and say plenty of good stuff about you – even if it is uncomfortable.

I know we live in a world where we are told it is hateful and proud to say what someone else is doing or teaching is wrong – let alone that it is of Satan.

But, when it is God’s truth – forget the niceties – the stakes are too high – the gospel does offend.

If Paul didn’t call them agents of Satan – the church might not get the message.

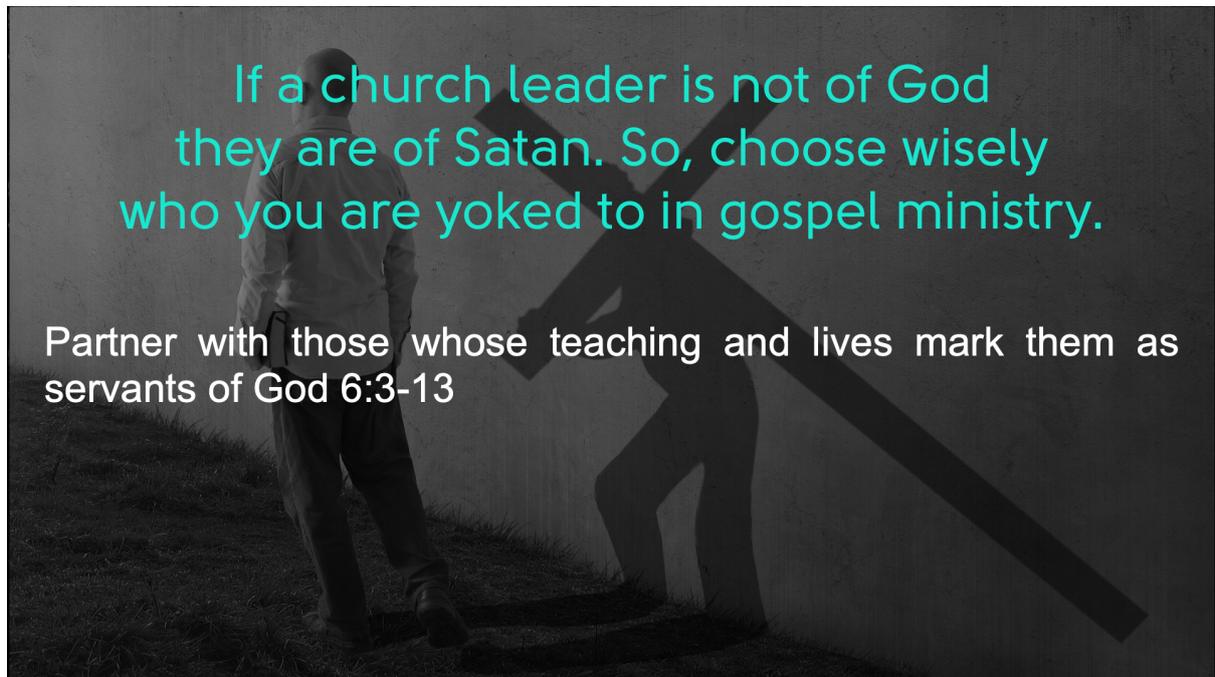
We know cults like Mormons and Catholics lead people to hell. We know false religions like Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are not other ways to God – they are ways to hell.

But if a man says – I am a true Christian. Often, we don’t apply the same scrutiny and then we are in grave danger.

**So, in such cases, Paul says – you just have to say it as it really is.**

*Choose to partner with men of God not agents of Satan.*

Paul's plea comes in two parts. First:



**Partner with those whose teaching and lives mark them as servants of God 6:3-13**

2 Corinthians 6:3:

We are not giving anyone an occasion for offense, so that the ministry will not be blamed.

Literally this reads – to no one in nothing giving a cause of stumbling lest the ministry be discredited.

What he means is: We strive not to put any kind of stumbling stone before anyone, so that our ministry might be discredited.

Paul is saying – I work hard – so my teaching and life – will not cause any to stumble away from Christ.

When you talk to people who have left churches or left the faith – much if not most of the time they left because of the leaders.

There was something about the leadership that made them say – I can't stay in that church – and at times – in fact I can't stay in any church.

Hypocrisy, conflict, pushing their agendas and their hobby horse.

Elders should encourage the flock towards Christ – not be a stumbling stone to the flock.

Verse 4:

Instead, as God's ministers, we commend ourselves in everything.

You read this and something just doesn't quite sit right.

Humility is crucial virtue for church leaders. Yet, Paul says – I commend myself in everything.

Sounds like a boast.

But we need to understand two things about this.

First, Paul has repeatedly said – these credentials don't come from me – they come from Christ in me.

Any fruit in me comes from God.

Paul is not boasting about himself – he is boasting in what Christ has done in the life of a blasphemous murderer.

The other thing is this verse basically means – I commend my teaching and my life to you.

My ministry is an open book – have a read.

If Christ is in me – the reading will be good. Not perfect – but good.

What comes next in verses 3-10 is an incredible summary of why the Corinthians should trust him.

It is hard for any preacher to improve on just reading it – so I will only make a few comments.

**By fruits of suffering for the gospel:**

by great endurance:

by afflictions, by hardships, by difficulties,  
by beatings, by imprisonments, by riots,  
by labors, by sleepless nights, by times of hunger,

**By fruits of the Spirit:**

by purity, by knowledge, by patience,  
by kindness,  
by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,  
by the word of truth, by the power of God;

**Through good times and hard times:**

through weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,  
through glory and dishonor,  
through slander and good report;

**As despised yet victorious:**

as deceivers, yet true;  
as unknown, yet recognized;  
as dying, yet see—we live;  
as being disciplined, yet not killed;  
as grieving, yet always rejoicing;  
as poor, yet enriching many;  
as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

Paul divides this into four sections by using three different prepositions – **by**, **through** and **as** and then dividing the first group into two using **plurals** and then **singulars**.

The first group:

**By fruits of suffering for the gospel:**

by great endurance.

This seems to describe all the nine that follow. Only God could give anyone the ability to endure what Paul did.

by afflictions, by hardships, by difficulties,  
by beatings, by imprisonments, by riots,  
by labours, by sleepless nights, by times of hunger.

You read Acts. You read chapter 11. Paul suffered immensely for the gospel.

Christ suffered and He called Paul to suffer.

Paul bore the dying of Christ in His body.

The super apostles looked at Paul – scarred, beaten, bruised and said – how can he be of God?

Paul says – show me a Prophet who didn't suffer.

Look at Jesus who suffered.

We are called to suffer for Him.

Suffering doesn't disqualify me – it affirms me.

**By fruits of the Spirit:**

by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness,

Purity here seems to mean integrity.

Knowledge – some translations use – understanding or discernment. Paul ministered with truth and discernment – and then patience and kindness.

His life had godly fruit.

by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

The Holy Spirit produces sincere love for those he ministered to.

by the word of truth, by the power of God;

The word of truth provides the power of God for ministry.

Paul ministers in the power of the Spirit and the Word.

The next group the ones beginning **through** – seem to mean:

**Through good times and hard times:**

through weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,  
through glory and dishonor,  
through slander and good report;

There are more opinions on what weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left are than you can shake a stick at.

I think the most likely explanation is you used an offense weapon in your right hand – like a sword – and a defensive weapon in your left – like a shield.

Paul's righteousness – the godly way he lived his life – at times allowed him to make inroads into the lives of others and at times led to him being attacked and having to defend himself.

Ministry at times brings honour – a measure of glory – many other times it brings dishonour.

Tell people at a dinner party you are a professional athlete, an influencer, an orthopaedic surgeon – they all have some honour.

Tell them you are a pastor – and I assure you that you will soon find what they think of the church – hypocrites, bigots, misogynists. The Crusades, global warming and most wars are our fault.

You face slander as well as some good reports.

In the final grouping you get how the world sees us – and also how we are in reality.

*They see us* **As despised yet victorious:**

First:

as deceivers, yet true;

The world says our gospel is untrue and deceives – but it is true.

as unknown, yet recognized;

We have no great recognition in the world – no fame – but God knows us.

as dying, yet see—we live;

We die to Christ and for Christ. We make choices that the world calls death – but in this we live.

as being disciplined, yet not killed;

Disciplined, punished – probably the beatings, lashings, imprisonments – but Paul is still standing – he is not dead.

as grieving, yet always rejoicing;

We grieve over sin, over this fallen world, over lost men and women – but we rejoice because in Christ our victory is won.

as poor, yet enriching many;

We do not have the assets to enrich others with the things of this world – but what we have enriches many with the only thing that truly matters – eternal life.

as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

We do not have many worldly possessions – but we possess everything.

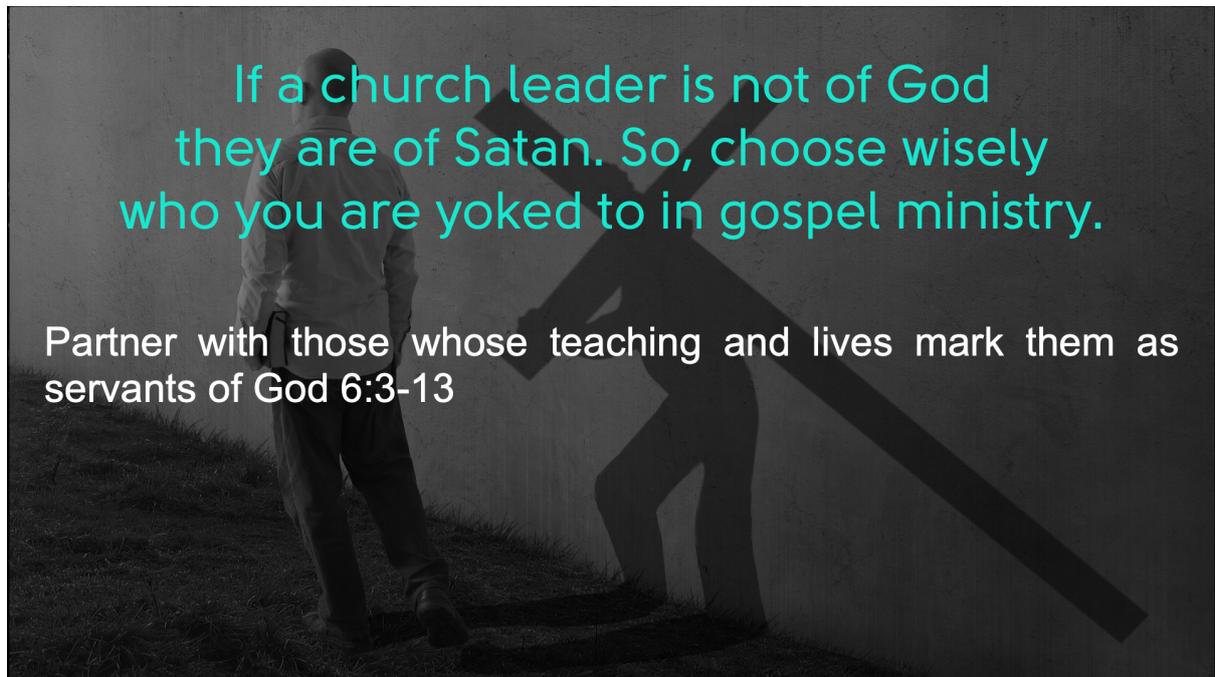
In this life we have Christ, brothers and sisters, hope – and in the world to come we have the new heavens and eternal life.

Clearly, Paul is not in it for the money, the fame, the women or the lifestyle.

He is in it for Christ. He is the real deal.

Ministry is a character profession. Your life **has** to match your teaching.

I have often wondered how easy Paul would be to work with – what his weaknesses were – but one thing I know – he was a man of integrity who counted the cost for Christ.



And Paul says – Corinthians – you know this about me. Verses 11-13:

We have spoken openly to you, Corinthians; our heart has been opened wide. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. I speak as to my children; as a proper response, open your heart to us.

Paul opened his mouth to them – sharing the true gospel.

Paul opened his heart to them – showing the true gospel.

They heard his teaching and they saw his life.

Paul loved them and poured himself out for them – but this love was not reciprocated.

Their hearts were being turned against him by false leaders.

These were his children in the faith – he begged them to respond and accept his God-given leadership of the church.

Don't miss what is going on here.

We are talking about the Apostle Paul here.

He founded this church – it would not exist if he had not walked up the dusty road to Corinth.

How many times have one of us said – when I get to heaven, one of the first things I do will be to find Paul and ask – what on earth did you mean about ...??? end times, remarriage, spiritual gifts, baptism for the dead?

Come on Paul – tell us – amill, premill, postmill!

The Corinthians heard it direct from Paul.

And when it came to the gospel – Paul knew how to share the gospel better than anyone. I would love to hear Paul preach an evangelistic sermon.

And in terms of integrity and character – his life screamed Christlikeness. He chose to suffer and lay down his life for the gospel.

Who wouldn't want Paul as their pastor? Most of us would move countries to have him as our pastor.

Yet many in the church of Corinth didn't want him.

Before we get too shocked – I suspect Paul would be rejected by many churches today.

He is not what many are looking for. He is too abrasive, too black and white, too polarising, far too forthright in his opinions. He sets the bar for Christian living too high.

He has an odour of death and suffering.

I suspect many would choose the super apostles. They look better, their gospel is more appealing and they don't set the bar too high. Theirs is a much more comfortable ministry.

But, Paul wants us to ask one question – about the men who lead our churches – do their lives have the aroma of authenticity?

Are they teaching right and living what they preach?

Paul's point is not that every leader has to meet all of these qualifications he pointed to in himself.

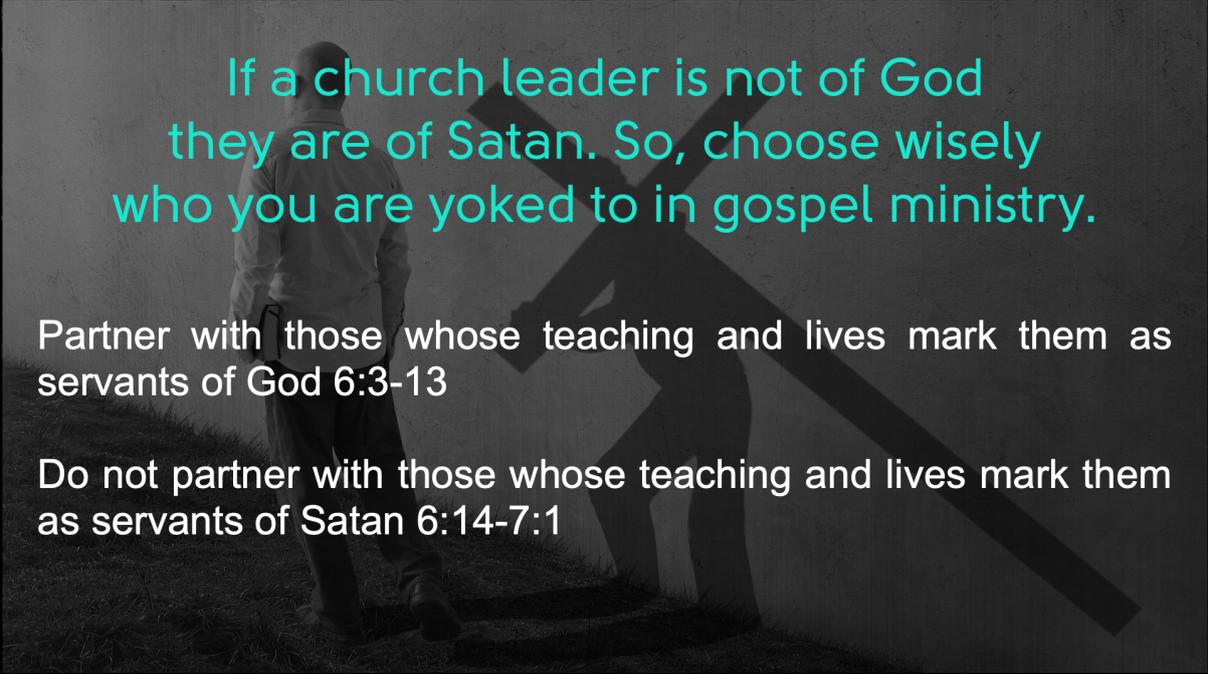
The last leader who met them all died almost 2000 years ago.

These were Paul's credentials.

His point is every church has to make sure they only allow men who teach right and live right into positions of leadership.

Paul urges us to – **partner with those whose teaching and lives mark them as servants of God.**

But then he gives the flip side.



If a church leader is not of God  
they are of Satan. So, choose wisely  
who you are yoked to in gospel ministry.

Partner with those whose teaching and lives mark them as  
servants of God 6:3-13

Do not partner with those whose teaching and lives mark them  
as servants of Satan 6:14-7:1

**Do not partner with those whose teaching and lives mark them as servants of Satan 14-7:1**

You might think – who would do that?

The issue is that these messengers of Satan did not come with horns and pitchforks.

They look like godly men and sound like godly men. Paul says they appear to be angels of light.

But they are not.

Verse 14:

Do not be yoked together with those who do not believe.

The Bible describes joining together in serving God as being yoked.

Our Christian service is designed to be done together – in the church.

We are to only accept believers into membership. Unbelievers can attend church and be associated with church – but they are not members and certainly not leaders.

We are to remove someone who says they are a Christian but are in fact an unbeliever.

So, who are these unbelievers?

In the context it is clear these are Paul's opponents – the super apostles.

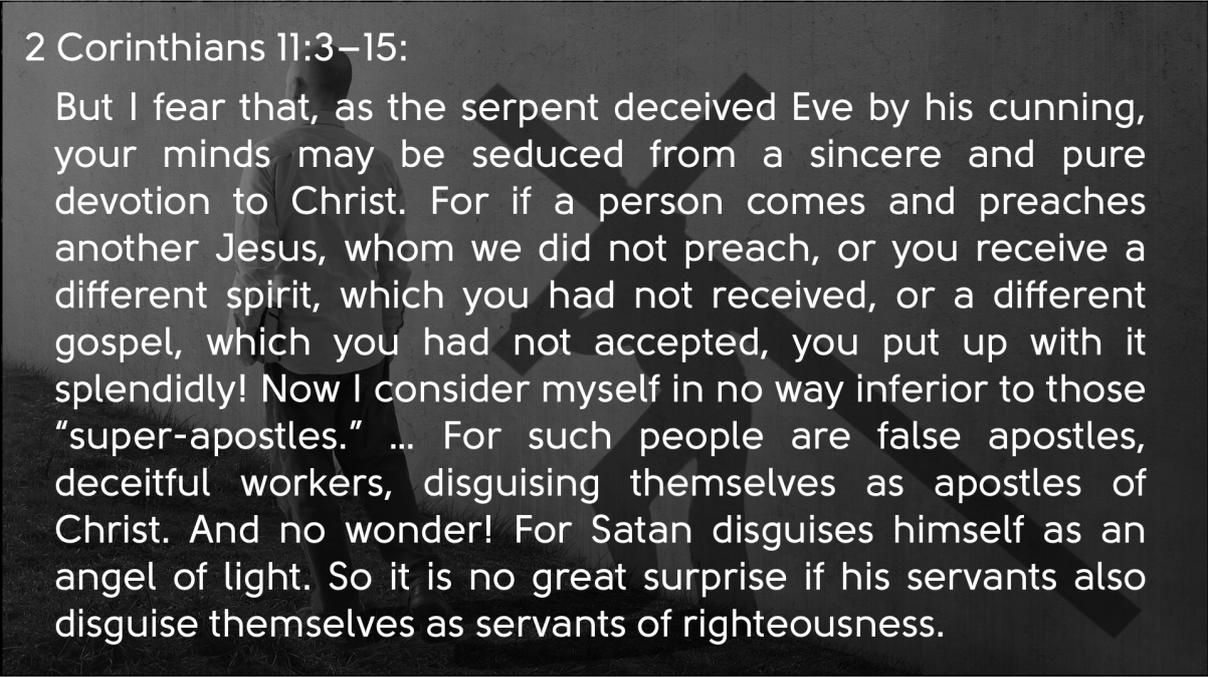
One reason many have found other ways to interpret this – like marriage – is that if these are church leaders – many have struggled at just how fiercely Paul attacks them.

I am not sure who the most liberal, deity of Christ denying, virgin birth rejecting, everyone is going to heaven pastor is in Brisbane – but I would feel uncomfortable naming them and saying – you are of Satan – get out of the pulpit.

But Paul does.

Look with me at 2 Corinthians 11:3–15:

### 2 Corinthians 11:3–15:



But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly! Now I consider myself in no way inferior to those “super-apostles.” ... For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly! Now I consider myself in no way inferior to those “super-apostles.” ... For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no great surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

Notice a few things about this.

2 Corinthians 11:3–15:

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The ones Paul is warning the church about are – **the super apostles**.

They are **false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ**. They are seducing the church. They are saying – we are your true leaders.

2 Corinthians 11:3–15:

But I fear that, as the **serpent** deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly! Now I consider myself in no way inferior to those "super-apostles." ... For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For **Satan** disguises himself as an **angel of light**. So it is no great surprise if **his servants** also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

And Paul is clear – they look like angels of light – but they speak the lies of the serpent – they are servants of Satan.

What makes them Satanic servants?

2 Corinthians 11:3–15:

But I fear that, as the **serpent** deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be seduced from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if a person comes and **preaches another Jesus**, whom we did not preach, or you receive a **different spirit**, which you had not received, or a **different gospel**, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly! Now I consider myself in no way inferior to those "super-apostles." ... **For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ.** And no wonder! For **Satan** disguises himself as an **angel of light**. So it is no great surprise if **his servants** also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

They preach **another Jesus**, their ministry involves a **different spirit** and they preach a **different gospel**.

And Paul goes on to say this means their lives are not marked by holiness and sacrifice.

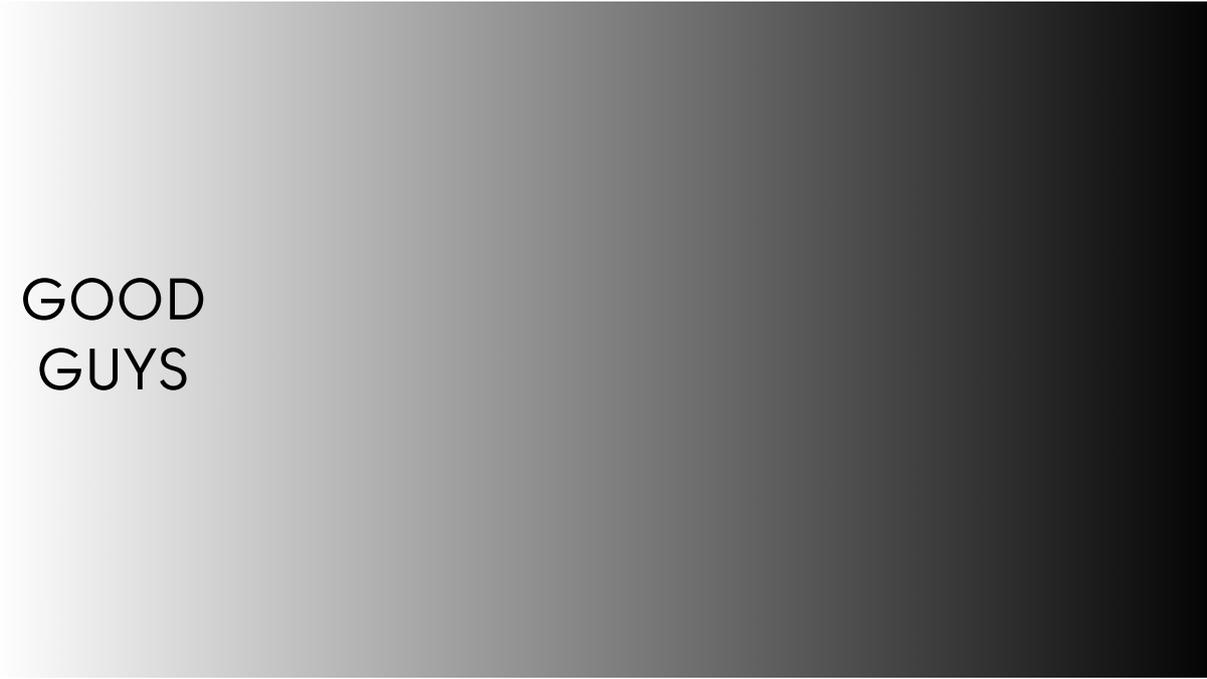
They have a gospel. They have a spirit. They preach a Jesus. They sound genuine. But they are all false.

If someone is preaching Brahma is god, telling you to receive the spirit of Beelzebub and saying that works save you – you say – begone O ye of Satan.

But if they preach Jesus, spirit, gospel – they sound like they are in our camp.

And that is what makes them profoundly dangerous.

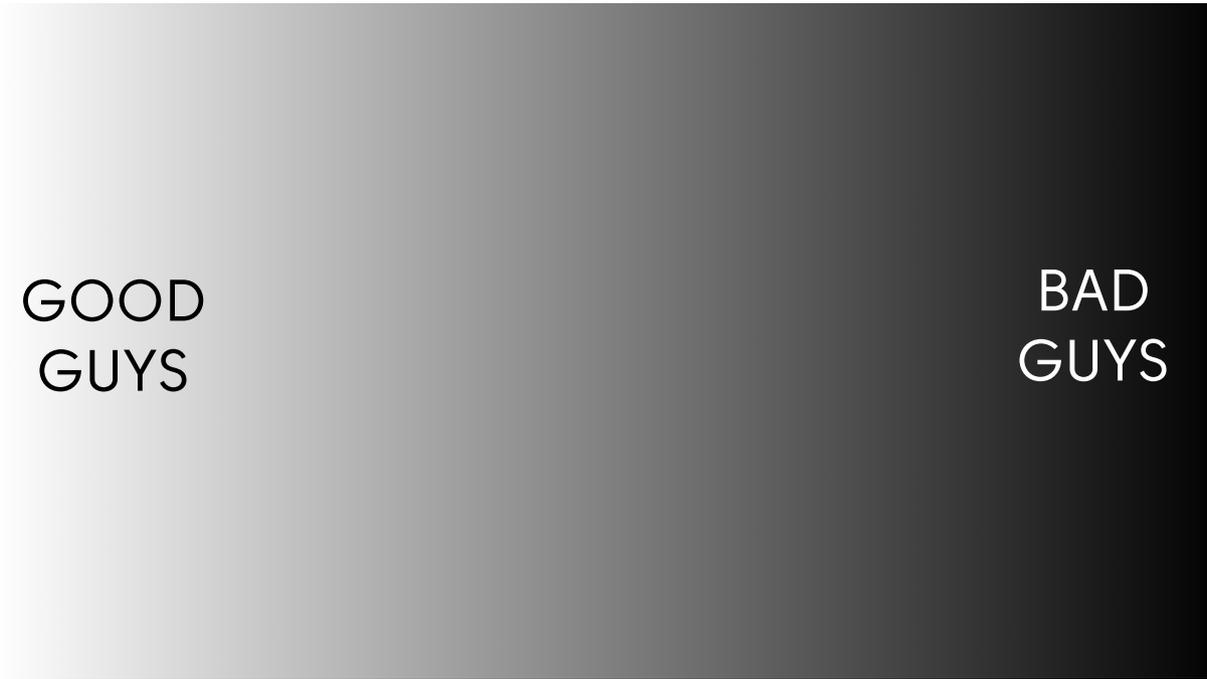
When we think about ministry and the gospel – we often view leaders as being on a spectrum.



GOOD  
GUYS

There are the **good guys**.

Evangelicals who preach the 5 solas and a crystal-clear gospel.



GOOD  
GUYS

BAD  
GUYS

Then there are the **bad guys** – cults – who have a Jesus that is clearly not like ours and a gospel that is clearly pagan.

GOOD  
GUYS

OK  
GUYS

BAD  
GUYS

But then there are the **OK guys**.

They sound somewhat Christian and orthodox and while they say some things a bit different to us – nothing overtly screams Satan.

What do we do about leaders like:

The charismatic pastor who preaches Christ but also says – you have to speak in tongues to be saved – and healing is part of the atonement?

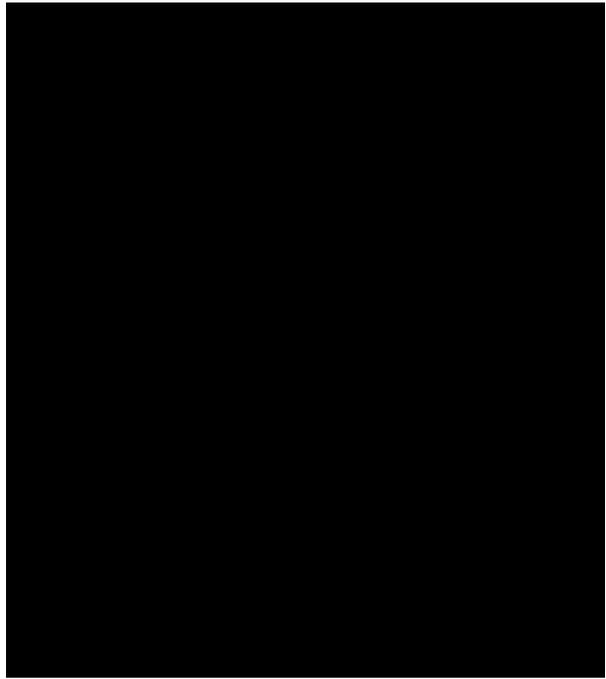
Or the Seventh Day Adventist preacher who seems to trust in Jesus to save – but insists we follow the teaching of Ellen White – and seems to think the Old Covenant Law applies today?

Or the Anglican rector who seems to love Jesus but is into Mary and the sacraments?

We are not sure if these are OK guys or not. And because we are taught to be nice and gracious – we say – who am I to judge – I have enough issues in my own ministry.

Here is how I think Paul wants us to evaluate groups like this.

Paul doesn't see shades of grey – just black and white.



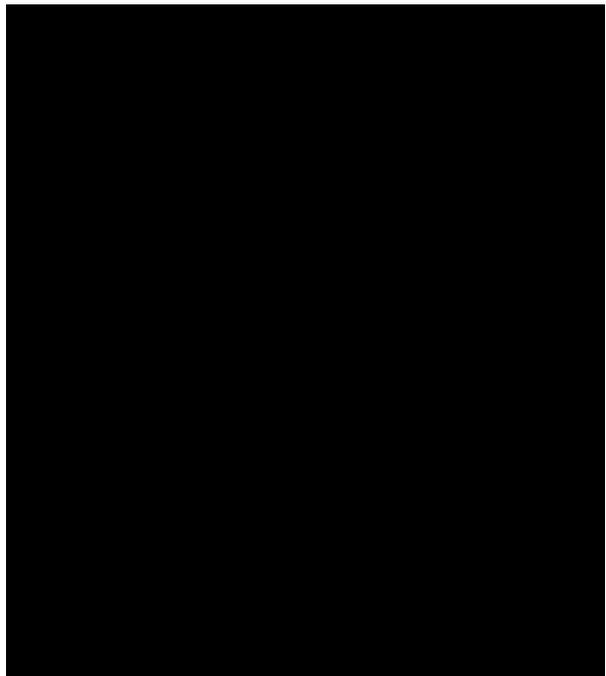
You either speak for God or for Satan.

GOOD  
GUYS

CLEAR  
CORRECT  
GOSPEL

GOOD  
THEOLOGY

HEALTHY  
CHURCH  
PRACTICES



There are the **good guys**.

They preach the gospel clearly and correctly.

They have good theology and healthy church practices.

GOOD GUYS	OK GUYS	
CLEAR CORRECT GOSPEL	CLEAR CORRECT GOSPEL	
GOOD THEOLOGY	OK THEOLOGY	
HEALTHY CHURCH PRACTICES	OK CHURCH PRACTICES	

He recognises there *are* **OK Guys**.

In some areas their theology and practice is not so good.

But, here is what makes them OK not bad – **they have the gospel right**.

Their Jesus is the Jesus of the Bible.

The Spirit you receive is the Holy Spirit.

Their gospel is a gospel that saves.

Paul would say to them to do more work digging into the Bible and practicing what it says – but he would call them brothers and sisters.

GOOD GUYS	OK GUYS	BAD GUYS
CLEAR CORRECT GOSPEL	CLEAR CORRECT GOSPEL	EVERYONE ELSE WHO ARE SPEAKING SATAN'S LIES
GOOD THEOLOGY	OK THEOLOGY	
HEALTHY CHURCH PRACTICES	OK CHURCH PRACTICES	

But then there are the rest – **bad guys** who speak Satan’s lies.

I know saying some leaders are not just a bit off – but bad – agents of Satan – is not at all politically correct.

I know we are told we should do the gracious, nice Christian thing:

Theirs may not be my gospel – but I’m sure we all have our errors – and God is gracious.

I know forthrightness is not a virtue our society values.

Many in the church want us to say – we are all good guys – all on the same team – we just disagree on a few things.

Calling a leader of a Christian church – an unbeliever in league with Satan – gets you on the front page of the Courier Mail and a good tar and feathering.

Tactfulness, being political, finding something nice to say is what is valued.

We are supposed to say – I value their opinion – but respectfully – I hold a different one.

Look, we can have different opinions about whether the umpire over-rule in the Lions-Tigers match was right or wrong. It was clearly right.

But, when we are dealing with the way of salvation – we do not get the liberty to say – well yes – there are other good opinions too.

If they have the gospel wrong – they are unbelievers – and whether they realise it or not they are doing the work of Satan.

Satan loves men and women who think they are doing God's work – when all the time they are doing his work.

These agents of Satan disguised as angels of light are incredibly dangerous.

So, Paul is about as forthright and blunt as you can get.

If they get Jesus wrong and the gospel wrong – Paul doesn't care if they have a lot right and their lives are fairly godly and they are very nice people – they are **not** some weird part of the church – they are minions of Satan.

Alright. I will be the first to say that determining when an OK guy becomes a bad guy is not always clear.

You have to listen carefully to who their Jesus is and what their gospel is.

It often sounds reasonable.

A Mormon comes to your door. You ask them the gospel and it sounds eerily similar. Maybe they *are* a weird part of the true church?

**No!** Their Jesus is different and what they mean by grace and faith is different.

The Bible tells us what the gospel is and what you have to trust in to be saved.

At its core the gospel seems to have four main parts.

1. God Is holy
2. We are sinful
3. The sinless Saviour
4. Our needed response

## 1. God Is holy

He is the uncreated Creator of everyone and everything. He alone is holy. He is perfect and without sin. Because God is holy, He can only have fellowship with those who are completely holy.

## **2. We are sinful**

The first man, Adam, chose to rebel and turn from God. His rebellion led to corruption of the entire creation, including all human beings. The result is that all people are unholy, sinful by nature, and thus under the judgment of a holy God, excluded from fellowship with Him.

## **3. The sinless Saviour**

God in His infinite mercy has graciously chosen to redeem and reconcile sinful people to Himself. Because the Father is love, He sent His Son to become flesh and live a perfect life. Jesus died a substitutionary, atoning death as full payment for the sins of His people, before rising from death in victory.

## **4. Our needed response**

We must accept God's gift of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. Repentance is a humble remorse over sin that turns God-ward in its orientation, submitting to the Lordship of Christ. Faith is relying completely on Jesus' all-sufficient death and resurrection to be forgiven of all our sins, reborn and renewed in the Spirit. Through this work of God, we are forgiven, justified and adopted as God's children.

We can quibble about a few other bits to share about the gospel, or saying things differently – but if you change this gospel at any point – you don't just damage it – it is not just an imperfect gospel – it is a false gospel.

If you change the nature of God and His holiness.

If you deny the sin and inability of man.

If you change who Christ is – deny His deity, His virgin birth, His atoning death.

If you teach we do not need to respond in faith and repentance.

Change it and you cross the line and you are no longer speaking the gospel of God – and Paul says you are actually doing the bidding of Satan.

Satan loves a gospel that has a lot of truth but enough error that it is impotent to save.

We have seen it.

**Liberalism.** Churches and denominations in Brisbane placed men and women in leadership positions who were trained in critical methods that denied the sufficiency and accuracy of the Scriptures. They then denied the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the resurrection – and once powerful churches were emptied of power and then emptied of people.

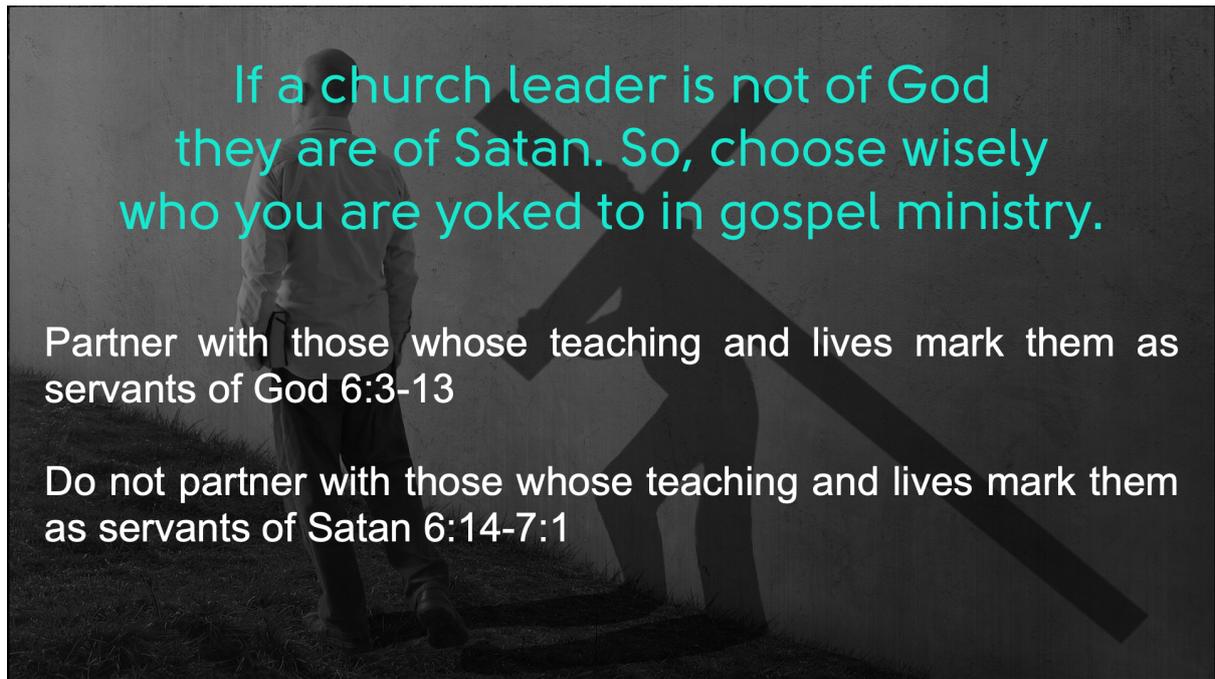
**Free Grace.** The truth that salvation is by grace alone is twisted to allow worldliness and sin to enter into the church. You are saved whether you repent or not – and

surprise – it became no repentance and not striving for holiness. This gospel does not save.

There are so many places you can distort the gospel. And it is hard to tell at times.

Some versions of the **prosperity gospel** still have the gospel in them to save – but some have become another Jesus, another gospel.

Paul knows it can be hard to tell when you get close to the line.



Thus, the reason for point 1 – **Partner with those whose teaching and lives clearly mark them as servants of God.**

Go with the unambiguously good guys. Don't even take the risk with the OK guys – because some may actually be bad guys.

Pick leaders who clearly teach right and live right.

The stakes are too high – so choose wisely who you are yoked to in gospel ministry.

Notice in these verses that Paul describes the relationship between the members of a church and its leaders using terms like – yoked, partnership, accord, agreement.

Ministry binds us together.

In Deuteronomy 22:10 we read:

Do not plough with an ox and a donkey together.

You don't yoke two totally different breeds together. They will pull in different directions and instead of a nicely ploughed field you will have a mess.

An unbeliever in leadership will destroy a church and take more than a few souls to hell.

Paul then asks five rhetorical questions about whether they can be partnership and association in ministry between believers – servants of Christ in who the Spirit dwells – and unbelievers – servants of Satan.



In each case the clear answer in case you were wondering – should be **no!**

**No partnership! No fellowship! No accord! No common ground! No agreement!**

You cannot be united with **lawlessness, darkness, Belial, unbelievers and idols.**

Look at this.

For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness?

Lawlessness here means wickedness.

Christ wants us righteous – holy. Satan wants us defiled.

You can't link yourself with someone who will lead you towards wickedness.

Christians are meant to strive for righteousness – holy living. The wrong leaders will pull you to the world.

In 1 Corinthians – these leaders were comfortable with a man committing horrendous immorality – sleeping with his mother-in-law – and being in the church.

There are countless accounts of churches where sins such as unmarried couples sleeping together, or members abusing other members, or greed – are just not dealt with and the grace of God and not judging others is used as justification.

You cannot partner with those who lead you towards sin.

Or what fellowship does light have with darkness?

We have been called out of darkness into the light. We now know God and what He desires.

Satan is darkness. Satan muddies the truth. Satan tells us sin is fine.

How can we say we are of the light and join with such darkness?

Verse 15:

What accord does Christ have with Belial?

I used the word accord because this word and the one translated *agreement* in verse 16 are different Greek words with very similar meanings.

Believers must have no accord with Satan.

The word Belial – worthless – became a common name for Satan in the intertestamental period.

It is somewhat of an understatement to say that Christ and Satan do not have the same goals.

Christ wants us holy and glorifying God.

Satan wants us defiled and bringing dishonour to God.

Satan uses whatever means necessary – but subtly usually works well.

In the garden – much of what he said to Eve was true – but had just enough error to deceive her and Adam and then corrupt the entire creation and every person ever born.

When Satan tempted Christ – he quoted Scripture – but out of context.

Satan's messengers sound Christian – but they are demonic.

You cannot partner with them.

Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

This is not – don't work with non-Christians, don't have non-Christian friends.

This is in the context of gospel ministry.

Believers have this in common – to glorify God and build His kingdom. Unbelievers do not have that in common.

They won't sacrifice for the kingdom. They won't make life choices that benefit the kingdom.

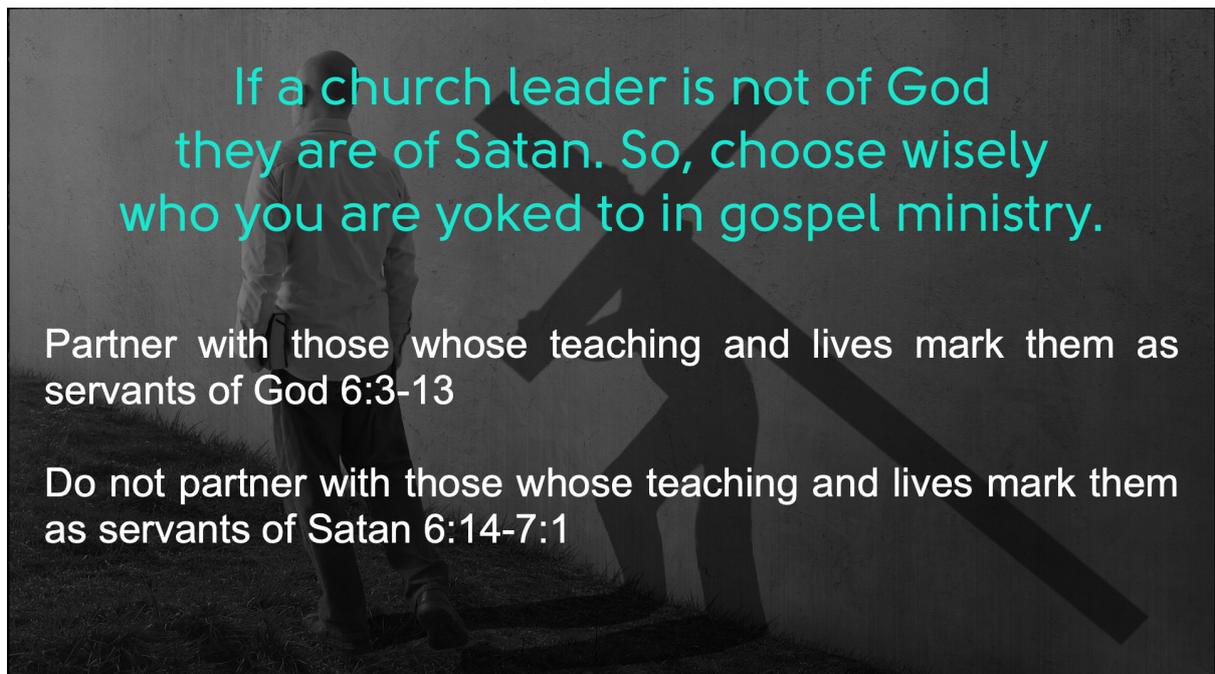
We have no goals, no worldview, no lifestyle in common with those outside the faith.

And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols?

We – the church – are the temple of God.

Anything other than seeking the true God is idolatry.

The Spirit of God dwells within us. We have the Spirit of holiness. How could we have an agreement with idols?



Nothing Paul says should come as a surprise.

Israel as the people of God received promises that the church inherits.

Verse 16:

For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: **I will dwell and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.**

The place the Spirit dwells moved from the Temple of Solomon to the temple of the church.

God is dwelling in us, walking among us. The holy One is our God and we are His people. We simply cannot partner with Satan.

Verse 17:

Therefore, **come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord; do not touch any unclean thing, and I will welcome you.**

God called us out from the world to be a holy people, living in the world – but separate from it.

How can we go back to the unclean?

How can we partner with unbelievers who lead us to sin and idolatry?

We are to remove the unbeliever, the unclean – not partner with them.

It is only when the church drives out the unholy that God welcomes us.

Verse 18:

**And I will be a Father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.**

God is holy, His sons and daughters must be holy.

If we have fellowship with the profane we have no fellowship with God the Father.

2 Corinthians 7:1:

So then, dear friends, since we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from every impurity of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

All of these promises cry that the church has to cleanse the impure – both of the flesh and spirit – not embrace the impure.

We strive for holiness and we remove the unholy from among us.

We do this so holiness can be brought to completion in the fear of God.

In 1 Corinthians 5:13 Paul was clear:

Remove the evil person from among you.

He was talking about someone in clear overt sin.

But now he uses the same principle to apply to those who would encourage sin, impurity and error.

God cannot bring holiness to completion while we tolerate the impure among us.

**No partnership! No fellowship! No accord! No common ground! No agreement!**

Drive them out!

Paul says – if it is another Jesus or another gospel – I don't care how nice they are – I don't care how impressive they are – remove them.

Look brothers and sisters – this passage along with chapter 11 and Galatians 1 are some of the most direct statements in Scripture.

**If a church leader is not of God they are of Satan. So, choose wisely who you are yoked to in gospel ministry.**

The leaders we choose will make or break a church. It is probably the biggest decision members make.

The membership of a church is meant to be regenerate, holy and serving Christ. How much more the leaders of the church?

Brothers and sisters – I think this passage speaks for itself.

If you want to find – don't marry an unbeliever here – whatever! Right teaching – wrong verse.

But let me close with some pointed application that does flow from here.

1. Know the gospel. Know what it says about Christ and salvation so well that you can identify a false gospel when you hear it. It smells wrong. The hairs on the back of your neck prickle.
2. Hold your leaders teaching and lives to the fire. I'm not talking perfection – but make sure we teach the real deal and live the real deal. Don't affirm us at the AGM if we are not God's servants.
3. If you need to move church – we don't ask to help you find a good church in your new area because we are control freaks. We love you enough to want to make sure you are going to come under true shepherds.
4. Pray for the churches in our city. Right this minute there are men and women in pulpits preaching a false gospel. I feel uncomfortable saying that – but it is true. Pray that the word of God and the Spirit of God would convict the true sheep – to get them out – or they get themselves out and into a good church.
5. Pray that God may see fit to raise up a generation of men and women who love Him, love His church, hate sin and will proclaim a true gospel to our dying world until Christ returns.

## **Tell Us What You Really Think!**

### **2 Corinthians 6:3-7:1    September 4, 2022**

**Main Point: If a church leader is not of God they are of Satan. So, choose wisely who you are yoked to in gospel ministry.**

#### **General Questions:**

1. What do you think Paul's main emphasis is in this passage?

Why has verse 14 – Do not be yoked together with those who do not believe – become the do not marry an unbeliever verse?

If you were going to argue that Christians should only marry Christians – which passage/s would you use?

2. Do you think the greatest dangers the church will face in the next 50 years will come from outside or inside? Why?

3. Why is ungodly leadership perhaps the greatest danger facing the church?

4. Why do churches all too often seem to end up with ungodly leaders?

5. Why don't churches recognise it when men are agents of Satan rather than messengers of God?

6. How is it that a church could end up preferring unbelievers to lead them over the Apostle Paul?

7. Why is Paul so forthright and confrontational in this passage?

8. Why does Paul commend himself? What do verse 3-10 teach us about what to look for in godly leaders?

9. What does it mean – ministry is a character profession?

10. What marks someone as a servant of Satan in the church?

11. What does it mean to preach the true Jesus?

12. What is the true gospel that saves?

13. Why does changing the gospel – destroy the gospel?

14. How can some men think they are Christians and godly leaders – when in fact they do the work of Satan?

15. What should a church do if someone comes among them with a different gospel?

16. Why does a wrong gospel often lead to impure living?

17. What is the best way to protect the church from such men?

**Application Questions:**

1. Do you know the true gospel well enough to spot a fake?
2. What teachings need to be in a gospel presentation to make it true?
3. Do you know what to look for in our Elders to see if they are men of God?
4. Do you pray for the churches in our city?
5. Do you pray for God to raise up a godly generation to lead His church?