

Assault of the Paramours: What Corporate Testimony Has a Believer with an Unbeliever? 2 Cor 6:15b; the Temple of God with Idols? 6:16; the Prohibition

2 Corinthians 6:15 - [3] And what harmony has Christ with Beliar [βελιάρ: Lucifer], or [4] what has a believer in common [μερίς, meris] with an unbeliever [ἄπιστος, apistos: faithless]? Nothing!

1. At this point the fourth query is lucid and logically demands a negative answer. The key words are “in common,” and translate the subject of the sentence: **μερίς, meris**. Its use in secular Greek sheds light on its definition in Koine Greek:

Kittel, Gerhard (ed.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 4:594, 596:

μέρος (meros) outside the New Testament. “To have a share in.” “Part” as distinct from the whole, especially ... “sphere of office” “circle of occupation,” “department of administration.” (p. 594)

μέρος (meros) in the New Testament. Religiously μέρος can be the party which has come into being for theological or political reasons. (p. 596)

NOTE: *Meris* is the word used in 2 Corinthians 6:15 whereas the entry in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* is *meros*. The two words are synonymous according to Balz & Schneider's *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, 2:409.

2. Both *meris* and *meros* share an important concept that pertains to our context. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* by Spiros Zodhiates (p. 961) defines *meris*: “destiny as assigned of God” while *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (p. 400) defines *meros* similarly: “destiny assigned to one.”
3. Kittel presents the idea from secular Greek that having something in common with someone can occur in an “office, occupation, or administration.” In the New Testament this includes a “party which has come into being for theological reasons.”
4. “Coming into being for theological reasons” defines the reason and purpose for the marriage of believers. Zodhiates and Thayer both agree that the two words speak of a destiny assigned to one by God. All these definitions come together to infer the doctrine of right man-right woman.
5. Therefore we can bring these concepts into our translation by emphasizing the corporate testimony that occurs when right people unite in the corporate relationship of marriage:

2 Corinthians 6:15 - [3] And what harmony has Christ with Lucifer? None! [4] What corporate testimony has a believer with an unbeliever? None!

6. The first four queries have been easily answered in the negative. It is impossible for anyone who perceives a real difference between believers and unbelievers to disagree.
7. The final query takes up the issue of the temple of God, which is the body of the believer, having an association with the idols that decorated the heathen temples of Corinth.

2 Corinthians 6:16 - [5] 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.”

1. The first word to examine is “agreement,” the subject of the final rhetorical question:
συγκατάθεσις, sunkatathesis - “agreement”

2. The root, *sunkatatithēmi*, is a compound which literally means, “to put down with.” Its use goes back to ancient elections and describes a voter placing his ballot into an urn, or ballot box. It came to mean, “to vote for,” “to agree with,” or “to consent to.”
3. The question thus proposes, “In what ways would the temple of God vote in accordance with idolatry.” The answer is, “None!” According to Exodus 20:1-6 there can be no agreement between God and idols:

Exodus 20:3 - “You shall have no other gods besides Me.

v. 4 - “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

v. 5a - “You shall not worship them or serve them.”

4. The believers in the Corinthian church remained associated with rituals that paid homage to the idolatrous bric-a-brac that appointed heathen temples:

Radmacher, Earl D. (gen. ed). *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 1503:

History reveals that the Corinthians were notorious for their associationalism. They had guilds, societies, or associations for practically everything. Every society had its own idol or protective deity. To fail to do obeisance to this idol would be to anger the god and bring its wrath down on the guild. Thus, the Corinthians tried to go along with this idol even though they did not believe in it. Evidently, the Corinthians were shutting Paul out (6:11-13) and developing a dangerous affection for the false apostles (11:4, 13).

5. Paul asserts that spiritually the Corinthians possess a disposition that is sympathetic with the practices of the heathen temples and their involvement with idols.
6. In other words, they played both ends against the middle. They came to hear Paul teach but their facilitated wheel-tracks in idolatry would not allow them to break away from its rituals.
7. This is not uncommon today. Often a person is saved and attends church regularly but continues his membership with some heathen religion because it taught him in his formative years that to withdraw would doom him to hell. This is clearly evident in the teachings of the Mormons, Catholics, and Mohammedans.
8. This presents major problems when a true believer becomes associated in marriage with an unbeliever who may attend church but has never renounced long-established religious teachings.
9. The word for “temple” is helpful in the analysis. The Greek word is **ναός, naos** which has a number of applications in the New Testament: (1) a heathen temple containing an idol, (2) the Temple in Jerusalem, (3) metaphorically of the physical body of Christ, (4) the mystical body of Christ made up of Church Age believers, (5) the local church, and (6) of Jesus Christ as the Temple of the new Jerusalem.
10. The reference in our passage is two-fold: (1) individually it refers to believers in the Corinthian church that make up the body of Christ or “living stones” and “spiritual house” as Peter describes them in:

1 Peter 2:5 - You, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house [**πνευματικός οἶκος, pneumatikos oikos**] for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

And (2) as the local church made up of these “living stones,” the organization made up of these organisms.

11. The word “idols” in the Greek is **εἰδωλον, *eidōlon***, the images of the various gods that are worshipped in the heathen temples throughout Corinth.
12. The verse continues by stressing that “we are the temple of the living God.” Paul then borrows from Leviticus 26:11-12, Ezekiel 37:27, and Zechariah 8:8 and applies their imagery to the “body of Christ” or the “spiritual house” that is constructed by the “spiritual stones” of Church Age believers.
14. Here is the expanded translation for the passage:

2 Corinthians 6:14 - Oxen, do not be bound together unequally with donkeys: cosmic paramours; **[1]** for what participation does Christian integrity have in common with one opposed to the truth? None! **[2]** What fellowship has light with darkness? None!

2 Corinthians 6:15 - **[3]** And what harmony has Christ with Lucifer? None! **[4]** What corporate testimony has a believer with an unbeliever? None!

2 Corinthians 6:16 - **[5]** In what ways would the temple of God vote in accordance with idolatry? None! 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.”

1. Six key words in this passage stress five logical reasons why a believer should never even consider marrying an unbeliever:

- (1) **[The prohibition] ἑτεροζυγέω, *heterozugeō*** (v. 14): *Hetero-* is an English prefix that is derived from the Greek **ἕτερος, *heteros*** which means “another of a different kind.” This is the same meaning assigned to the English prefix which is attached to several words that could describe the “unequally yoked” marriage:

Heterodox: Contrary to or different from an acknowledged standard, a traditional form, or an established religion: unorthodox, unconventional. Holding unorthodox opinions or doctrines.

Heterogeneous: Consisting of dissimilar or diverse ingredients or constituents: mixed.

Heterologous: derived from different species.