See That There Be No Worldly Person Among You

As part of our series on the Church, we will take up a more difficult subject. We will talk about the Body of Christ, that is, the Church, about its role, and about who its Builder is. We will turn our attention to the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 16, where, in the second half of verse 18, we find a powerful declaration from the Lord Jesus: *"upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"*. Here the Lord Jesus promises us that He Himself will build the Church.

To understand better what the Lord Jesus means when He speaks about building, let us also go to the Old Testament. Let us picture a building and the process of putting it up. In the Word of God, we believers are portrayed as living stones, the building blocks of the House of God.

Let us open to Zechariah, chapter 6, to explore the prophecy the Lord fulfilled in Matthew 16. In verses 12 to 15 of Zechariah 6 we read: "*Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*" Continuing with verse 15: *"And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you."* Amen. It is clear that *the Branch* refers to the Lord Jesus; there is no doubt about that. The Branch will grow up and build the temple of the Lord.

If there is still any confusion, let us make it plain: He shall build the Temple of the Lord, and that is no different from building the Church. We have read Matthew 16, and we see that there is a link between the two. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus declares: *"I will build my church."*

Let us also go to the Epistle to the Ephesians to see that, when we speak about the Temple of the Lord, we are in fact speaking about the Church, so these are not ideas foreign to one another.

We read from Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10: *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* Amen. So we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus. We also read from Ephesians 2, verses 19 to 22: *"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* Amen.

In the Apostle Paul's day, his epistles were not divided into chapters and verses; they were letters written straight through. In this epistle Paul speaks about the Temple of God and about the mystery of Christ, which is the Church, and he guides us to understand these things better.

In Ephesians chapter 4 he explains the role of the Church. Let us explore how the Lord Jesus builds this Church by reading from verse 4: "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling*". There is one body, one Temple, one Church. And then verses 5 and 6: "*One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*"

Then, from verse 11, we read: *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."*

The goal is that we all "*come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*"

So "*that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*" Amen.

The role of the Church, the Body of Christ, is to be built up, to be closely joined, well knit together. Every joint contributes to this process. We may ask ourselves whether there are people in this body, or in our midst, who are not building together with us. Zechariah says: *"And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD."*

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, urges us to be labourers together with God, and to consider whether a false prophet can contribute to the building, for the Word of God warns us: *"Beware of false prophets."* We read verses 5 to 9: "*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*" Amen.

The Apostle Paul, Apollos and we ourselves, not outsiders but the Lord's children, are the ones qualified for this work. God does not put a baby to work building or constructing. *"For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."* As chapter 2 tells us, God's building is God's Temple, also known as the Church of the Lord Jesus, the House of God, which is built on the foundation of the apostles and keeps on growing.

In the Old Testament we find clues about who may contribute to building the Temple of the Lord and how important it is to keep God's Word in this process. In the book of Ezra, chapter 4, we discover a parallel between the events of that time and those of our own day. The Jewish people, after spending seventy years in Babylonian captivity, were set free by God, and some of them returned to their land to rebuild the Temple of the Lord. At that time only the tribes of

Judah and Benjamin were present; the other ten tribes had been scattered and lost.

We read from Ezra 4, verse 1: "*Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.*" These people tried to join in the building. These adversaries, who in reality were not seeking to serve the Lord sincerely but rather to undermine the work, claimed that they too, just like the Jews, worshipped God and had been offering sacrifices since the days of Esarhaddon, who had brought them there.

Yet their intentions were far from pure; what they really wanted was to stop the Temple from being built. Today things happen in much the same way: many are trying to frustrate the work of the Church of Christ, which is meant for the growth and perfecting of the saints.

This account reminds us that not everyone who seems to be an ally in God's work is truly on our side. Sometimes those who offer to help may have hidden motives, seeking to bring disorder and hinder spiritual progress.

It is essential that we discern the intentions of those around us and make sure that those who contribute to God's work are led by a sincere spirit and a desire to serve according to God's will.

Do you remember what Scripture says about these peoples who came into Samaria? They found that wild beasts were coming and attacking them, causing them many troubles. So they decided to call for someone to teach them about the God of Israel, to keep these unhappy incidents from happening again. At the same time they served both the Lord and their own gods, their idols. They practised a mixed worship, giving part of their devotion to God and another part, we might say, to the world.

One example of this is the love of money, which can be considered a form of idolatry. If we were to put it in today's terms, these people in Ezra 4 might have said: *We offer sacrifices, we worship like you, we pray like you, we have our temples too, our churches. Come on, let's build together, let's be brothers*.

Yet we read in verse 3: "*But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.*"

Why did the Jews insist on building alone? Nowadays it is taught that in the Church there is both wheat and tares. No distinction is made any longer between the true and the false. We all take the Lord's Supper together, we work together, we build together, even when those at the top are corrupt. Many believe that God will do the final sorting when He comes.

But building the Temple is a weighty responsibility. First of all, the architect, the builder and the designer is the Lord Jesus Himself. He is the one who builds, and, as Scripture tells us in

Ephesians, He lovingly cares for His Temple, His body, which is the Church.

"Ye have nothing to do with us to build." When the adversaries of Judah heard this, they did not stop. We read from verse 4: "*Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.*"

During this period the Jews faced the challenge of *"the building of the Temple being put off"*. Despite the resistance of Zerubbabel and the chief of the fathers, the Gentiles managed to undermine the work of rebuilding.

In Ephesians 2:10 it is written: *"we are his workmanship"*, which underlines that we are created in Christ Jesus to walk in the works the Lord prepared beforehand. This raises the question of partnership in spiritual building: if Zerubbabel refused to work with the heathen in building the Temple, how should we act? The Lord Jesus Himself is involved in this building, but is it right to let *the tares build together with the wheat*? This question challenges us to think about who we partner with in God's work.

When we think of Paul and Apollos, it is clear that both are described as servants of God, not one as God's and the other as Satan's. In their work they are partners in building the Temple of God. There is no partnership between the servants of God and the servants of Satan in building the Temple of the Lord. It is essential that we stay watchful and understand that light cannot be mixed with darkness in this holy work.

Zerubbabel, back from captivity, was a man devoted to God, and even so the adversaries managed to stop the building of the Temple. This shows us that God's plan can meet with opposition.

The role of the Temple, or of the Church, the body of Christ, is vital for the growth and perfecting of the saints. God does not want this spiritual building to be carried out in partnership with the children of darkness; the children of light must be built up separately from the children of darkness.

This principle is also upheld in Deuteronomy, particularly in chapter 7, which stresses the separation between the chosen people and the heathen nations. Before we read from verse 1, it is worth mentioning the heading in our Bible, to understand the context: *"The Destruction of the Canaanites and Their Idols"*. The question arises: what do the adversaries of Judah intend when they propose building together? Their intention is to bring in their idols and set them up beside God, and so lead the Jewish people to begin serving many gods.

We read from verse 1: *"When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; and when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter

thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."* Amen.

These verses underline God's demand that His people be separate and holy, forbidding every kind of mixing with the heathen nations and their idolatry. It is an essential lesson even for us today: to keep our faith pure and avoid the influence of the ways of the world around us.

Why is it so vital not to build together with those who do not share the same values? What happens when we do build together? In this context, the people were warned of the danger of ignoring God's Word, of not keeping His commandments and of mixing with the heathen nations. We are told that this could turn the sons of the people away from God.

What happens when Light lives side by side with Darkness? If light stands for the Church, the Body of Christ, and the congregation also contains darkness, then the congregation is made up of members of the Church who are both *"children of darkness"* and *"children of light"*.

The children of darkness, when they are together with them, may try to turn the children of light away from the right path. The Lord warns of this very possibility, saying: *"For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods"*.

When it came to building the Temple together, in the Old Testament this was not possible; but in the age of grace the question is raised whether it is possible or not.

When it comes to building the Church, His Temple, the Lord Jesus does not allow it to be done together with Satan. It is unthinkable that the Lord Jesus would work together with the devil in building His Church. Therefore the children of light, the children of Christ, or of God, cannot build His Temple, the Church of Christ, together with the children of darkness, even though it is widely taught that the tares live together with the wheat.

In Numbers chapter 5, the Word of God shows us clearly who belongs in the Temple of God and who can be built into His Temple, what kind of stones are accepted. We read verses 1 to 4. "*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell. And the children of Israel did so, and put them out without the camp: as the LORD spake unto Moses, so did the children of Israel.*" Amen.

Looking at verse 3, we notice two important cross-references. One of them is to *2 Corinthians 6:16*, which tells us where God makes His dwelling. That verse speaks of His temple, of the church. Before we come back to this subject, we must ask what happens to God's camp and who lives in it.

God dwells in His camp. Scripture tells us clearly that light and darkness cannot both live in the Temple of God. So can they still build together? That is the question raised by 2 Corinthians 6:16: "*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.*" Amen.

God dwells in His Temple, and the Lord Jesus Himself builds His Temple so that God may dwell there. That is why the camp, the Temple, the Church, the body of Christ, must be clean. We must remove every impurity so as not to defile the place where God makes His dwelling, just as the children of Israel did at the Lord's command to Moses, putting the unclean out of the camp.

What does He command us today? To put away those who defile the camp, like the lepers, who are a picture of sin. When someone sinned, as Miriam did against Moses, they were shut out of the camp until they were cleansed and forgiven.

It is essential that we understand what God's Camp, the Church of Christ, is like and how it is built. Let us read from Deuteronomy chapter 23, from verse 9, about cleanness in the camp: *"When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing. If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp: but it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again. Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad: and thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee: for the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."* If the Lord sees anything unclean in the camp where He dwells, He may leave us.

Is it a light thing to be forsaken by God? Why did Zerubbabel refuse to build together with the enemies of Judah? Did they mean to build a Temple dedicated to God, or some other temple? What would have come of their building? In our day, how is the Cathedral of the Nation's Salvation (the huge national Orthodox cathedral in Bucharest) being built? Is it truly the temple of God? Is the Lord Jesus present there? Is He the one building it? What do you think? If the Lord Jesus were building, whom would He choose to build with? Surely He would build with the children of Light and not with the children of Darkness. We must not forget that He no longer builds temples of physical, lifeless stone. The Temple of Christ, the Temple of God, is built of living stones.

Let us also turn to Leviticus 26 to understand better the role of the Church. For it to be the Church of Christ, it must be clean. He is the one building it, and He does not share His glory with those who hate Him. In chapter 26, verses 11 and 12, it is written: *"And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."* Amen.

And in 2 Corinthians 6:16 we find the same idea. In Leviticus we read *"I will set my tabernacle."* What is God's dwelling place called today? Is it the Body of Christ, or just a building? The Church is the body of Christ, and we can call it the Temple of God. *"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* Those who are in darkness will not work alongside Me. *"I will walk among you."*

That is why the Church must be clean, because God walks in its midst, in our midst, and He calls us to be His people.

Let us read from Joshua 7 to see what happened when sin got into the midst of God's people, where He made His dwelling. It is vital that the body of Christ be kept clean. Let us see what happens when it becomes contaminated or corrupted, reading verse 1 and then from verse 11: *"But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against the children of Israel."* This divine anger broke out at the moment Achan committed his sin.

Looking at verse 4, we see that God was no longer with His people; He no longer stood by them. *"So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai smote of them about thirty and six men: for they chased them from before the gate even unto Shebarim, and smote them in the going down: wherefore the hearts of the people melted, and became as water."*

This situation raises hard questions: Why did God allow thirty-six men to die for the sin of one man? Why was Achan not the only one punished? These questions may trouble us, but they show how serious sin is in God's eyes and how it affects the whole congregation.

God gave Joshua a clear message, as we read in Joshua 7:10: *"Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you."* This is not merely a threat; it is a reality to be taken seriously. God's presence depends on the purity and obedience of His people.

In the context of the Church, the Lord Jesus, who is its head, does not tolerate sin in His body. If God required every filth and uncleanness to be removed from the camp in the Old Testament, then the Lord Jesus has the same expectation of His Church today. It is essential that the body of Christ be clean, without spot, without blemish, without wrinkle. So when sin appears in the Church, it must be faced and dealt with urgently, to keep unity and holiness in the body of Christ. *"Neither will I be with you any more."*

Once He had promised, *"I will be with you."* That is what the Lord promised: *"they shall be my people. I will be with you and walk among you."* And in Achan's case He tells us: *"neither

will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you."*

This promise of the Lord reminds us that He wants to be in the midst of His people, but there is a condition: purity, and the removal of what is evil. The example of Achan, who was destroyed and removed from the midst of Israel, shows us the consequences of not meeting this condition. The people must keep themselves from sin, so as not to draw further wickedness into their ranks, and so as to make room for God's work in their spiritual growth.

Cleanness is essential, just as it is in an operating theatre, where everything has to be sterilised to prevent infection. In the same way, the body of Christ must be kept clean. Let us return to the teachings of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. In Matthew 18, beginning at verse 15, we are told: *"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."* Amen.

Achan sinned against his brothers by stealing, even if at first glance it looks like a matter between him and God. In the congregation, in the body of Christ, whether it is George, Peter or anyone else, theft or any other sin affects the whole community, whatever kind of sin it may be.

We need to think about the impact our actions have on others and strive to keep the body of Christ clean. What does sin committed by one member do? God cannot abide in the presence of sin, even if the church does not see it and does not know what Peter or George has done. In the parallel case, the church, the camp, Joshua, did not know that Achan had sinned. They did not know that Achan had stolen and hidden things away, and yet God condemned the whole congregation. The problem is that God cannot abide in the presence of sin, uncleanness and filth.

And if my brother has sinned against me and I see it, what must I do? Every sin that is committed is against me. Now we understand why: because it brings God's anger upon the congregation. If I let a sin be tolerated in the congregation, in the body of Christ, a filth that is never dealt with, what does that sin do? Does it drive God away from our midst? How many sins does it take to drive God away?

So what must we do? *"Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee,"* if he admits it and asks forgiveness, what have you done? *"Thou hast gained thy brother."* We can think of Achan. If Achan had confessed his sin before the casting of lots began, could he have been forgiven by God or not? Did Achan confess his sin, or not? We all know that Achan confessed nothing.

He saw the lots being cast, he saw them closing in on him, and he made no move. The casting of lots went on to the very end. Achan did not ask for forgiveness, did not confess his sin, and no one rebuked him so that he might ask for forgiveness. We do not know whether he would have been forgiven, because the Word of God does not tell us. What is certain is that Achan had to be put to death, or, in our case, removed from the congregation. Here He tells us: *"But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but

if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* Amen.

What does it mean for him to be to us as a heathen man and a publican? It means that if someone will not listen to the Church, then he is to be regarded by everyone as a heathen and a publican. This means being removed from the Church, put out, so as not to contaminate it, or, as Scripture says, so as not to *"defile the camp"*, the body of Christ. We remember the words in the Acts of the Apostles: *"Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation."*

This means having nothing to do with such people. This is the method the Lord Jesus uses to remove sin from the body of Christ. It is not about getting rid of the person for good, but about correcting them. If the person listens to the rebuke and acknowledges the wrong, then he is considered won back for the Church. The sin is thus put right and cleansed. But if he will not listen, then he must be put away.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 5 we see that God has specific ways of dealing with problems in the body of Christ. We have learned that the children of light cannot work together with the children of darkness, and that when sin appears in the fellowship of those who walk in the light, it must be dealt with so that the body remains clean and makes room for the growth and perfecting of the saints.

If sin goes unpunished, it can lead others to sin as well, as happened in Achan's case. We must also think of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, whose sin was not theft, lying or fornication, but disobedience. Submission is essential in the body of Christ. They claimed that the Lord spoke through them too, but if Moses had let them carry on with their rebellion, the whole congregation would have been affected.

In the end, their rebellion drew in another two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation. If sin is not dealt with according to the Word of God, the people will run wild, as it says: *"Where there is no vision, the people perish"*. In the Church at Corinth there were several problems, with some people behaving in worldly ways, and other troubling matters besides. One particular case drew attention: a gross sin that led to a person being put out of the church.

This was no ordinary sin, but one that went beyond all bounds of decency, even by the standards of the heathen. In 1 Corinthians 5, verses 1 and 2, we read: *"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you."*

This sin was comparable to the one Achan committed, and it required that person to be removed from the congregation, unlike other sins that can be dealt with through rebuke and correction.

The Apostle Paul warns in verse 6: *"Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"* Here Paul uses a metaphor to show how a single sin can affect the

whole community, just as leaven works its way through the whole batch of dough. He calls for a spiritual cleansing, saying: *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."*

In verse 9 Paul clarifies an earlier instruction: *"I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators."* He explains that he does not mean avoiding immoral people in the world altogether, but not keeping company with those who, though they call themselves believers, go on practising grave sins such as fornication, covetousness, idolatry, slander, drunkenness or extortion. *"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat."*

Paul stresses that the church's responsibility is to judge those within it, while God judges those outside. He ends with a call to action: *"Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person."*

Paul reminds believers that they are the Temple of God, as he writes in 1 Corinthians 3:16: *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?"* This statement underlines the importance of cleanness and holiness in the life of the church.

"*The Spirit of God dwelleth in you*", and in verse 17, "*If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy*." The Temple of God is holy, and you are that temple. The question is: who can destroy the Temple of God, and by what means? The answer is sin.

Whoever comes and destroys the Temple of God, that is, the Church, through sin, will be destroyed by God. We are the Temple of God, and His Spirit dwells in us, jealously longing for us to be wholly His, and that is why we must not tolerate sin in the congregation.

I will read a few more passages and then close from this angle of the Word of God. From the book of Hebrews, chapter 12, we read a warning: *"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."*

It is important that there be no fornicator or worldly person among us. We do not mean only fornication in the everyday sense, but spiritual fornication, which God condemned throughout biblical history. This means bowing down to strange idols, serving both God and other things.

There must be no worldly person among us, because the Light, which is God, cannot live alongside darkness. Men loved darkness rather than Light when the Light came into the world. If we allow darkness to dwell together with the Light, what happens?

In 2 Corinthians 6, the Word of God explains that God makes His dwelling in His Temple, which we are, if we are His people. As we read verse 14, let us also think of Ezra 4, where we read about the building of the Temple, and of 1 Corinthians 5, verse 9, which is in fact a cross-reference here: *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"* How can the children of Light build with the children of Darkness? Is the Lord Jesus still there,

building together with them? "*And what concord hath Christ with Belial?*" Can there be any agreement? None at all! "*Or what part hath he that believeth*", who is subject to Christ, "*with an infidel*", who is subject to Belial? How can they build together?

"*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.*" We are the Temple of the living God. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. "*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 was the problem in the old days? Why did they touch unclean things, and why did God withdraw from the midst of the people? When they touched something unclean, or themselves became unclean or leprous, God would leave the camp; they had to put that person out, and the leper had to cry: *"Unclean, unclean, unclean!"* Why unclean? Watch out, I'm unclean, don't come near me, don't come near, because leprosy… What was the thing about leprosy? It is contagious; it spreads. The leprosy of sin spreads. That is a great problem. They will lure us into a trap; we mix with them and we learn their ways. That is the problem. And God will be angry with us. That is why: come out from among them.

Verse 18: *"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* So, in view of the promises God has made us, it is essential that we touch nothing unclean, and that we do so with reverence and the fear of God. Amen.

Having these promises, let us be watchful and help one another keep clean. If God withdraws from us, we are left with an enormous void, and the consequences can be devastating. It is written that if we do not put away the evil from among us, we will be destroyed. Tolerating sin in the congregation can lead to chaos and bring down God's anger.

Psalm 106 shows how disobedience and failure to keep God's commandments brought divine anger upon the people. We must be aware that we too can fall into the same trap. People often ask which particular sin we must put away, and without a clear understanding we risk allowing those who live in sin to remain among us, such as spiritual fornication or love of the things of the world, wrongly believing that these things do not affect us.

Psalm 106, verse 34, says: *"They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works."* This led to serving idols, which became a snare to them. Today we must ask ourselves: which ties must we cut? We must avoid keeping company with the worldly, so that we are not contaminated and do not learn their ways, which can become snares for us. Idolatry led to the sacrifice of their own children, to the shedding of innocent blood, which defiled the land and brought God's anger upon His people.

This is a serious matter; if we do not put away the evil, the consequences can be extremely grave. I have said it before and I say it again now, as an example, that people have allowed sin to

spread. In the very places where they ought to be worshipping, they watch football matches. They have brought in the television and focused on their idol, football. Does football belong to the heathen, or to the children of God? Was it a snare to them or not? They did not cut their ties with the world; they did not destroy them.

"Let's go together, let's build together, let's work together", but with no result whatsoever. And at the end, what will God do? He will separate the tares from the wheat. But when we bring in the television and all sit watching the match, what are we then? Wheat or tares? What have we become? This is a serious and unpleasant example.

There are other examples, perhaps less serious, but which in the end lead us to the same place. Recently a music group well known to many Romanian believers went on tour. I heard that yesterday there was a concert in Arad, a city in western Romania, in the very church where the football World Cup had been watched.

What choice did people make? Where did they go? They said: *"This is how we serve; there's no problem. Let's go and build together with them."* About fifteen hundred people gathered at that concert. *"It doesn't matter if these people are doing wrong. We'll go along with them."* They mingled with one another. That is a great danger, isn't it? May God help us to be watchful and not fall into this trap, for it is so serious.

We are toying with our salvation and our sanctification alongside the worldly. They will draw us into a trap if we mix with them. This is what Scripture says: *"They provoked his spirit, and did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them."* May the Lord help both you and me to take care not to let sin get into our midst. Amen.

Source: *See That There Be No Worldly Person Among You* — Unmodified Word
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