

The Watering Can

RELATIONSHIPS

Introduction.

In this letter, I will cover marriage & divorce and what the Bible teaches, non-Christian relationships and why they are not right and a guide to good living (if room permits, I will also cover the fruit of the Spirit or What a Christian's life is to reflect).

Separation.

The first verses chosen to highlight the relationship topic are found in 2 Corinthians 6 v 14 to 7 v 1. I know this is a difficult passage and I will try and explain it verse by verse to make things easier for you.

Verse 14 *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"* This sets the groundwork for us. Here we are commanded to not have relationships with unbelievers. When you committed your life to Christ, you gave Him everything. You are no longer part of the world. Your destination is completely different to that of the unbeliever. As we covered in the previous letter, hell is a real place and we have been saved from going there. We deserve the punishment that Christ subjected Himself to on the cross. The people did not like Jesus and they most certainly do not like His followers. Therefore, although we are in the world, we must not be part of it. Look at the comparisons presented in this verse alone. Righteousness with unrighteousness. Righteousness literally means one whose character has the quality of being "right or just" (again, this is taken from W.E. Vine.) Our characters should be noticeably different to the unbeliever (or unrighteous one). The next comparison is stronger still. Light and dark. If you use a torch in a darkened room, the darkness will be destroyed by the light of the torch. So it should be when we are going about our daily lives. The Bible says that Christ is the Light of the World (John 8 v 12 *"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"*) Therefore, because we are Christ ones (or Christians), we have Him dwelling in us. The light in our lives should destroy the darkness all around us. These are very dark times and not much light is shining, but we should shine brightly for our God. If we stand for God and the truth of His word, the Bible, then the darkness will have to flee from us as the enemy fled when all his tempting could not corrupt Christ (again, this was contained in my last letter.)

Verse 15 *"And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?"* This verse is a little more difficult to understand because of the words contained herein. I have turned to W.E. Vine again, to try and get a clear understanding of what this verse is trying to tell us. According to Vine, concord means "a sounding together" or a "symphony". A symphony is where you get a lot of musicians all playing together to one glorious tune. Now, this speaks volumes to me. How can I call myself a Christian and not be in tune with the Father? Vine states that Belial is set to contrast Christ and it represents a system of impure worship. I have a bible commentary, which I turned to, and it says that Belial is a name for the enemy (Satan) and asks the question "can there ever be peace between Christ and Satan?" So this means that we are unable to be at peace with Christ and still serve the evil one. Christ's own words confirm this in Matthew 6 v 24 "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (riches)." Dear beloved friends, I cannot make this clearer. We cannot serve two masters. When we accepted Christ into our lives, the evil one was dethroned and the heart was thoroughly cleaned. Now this on it's own is not enough (read Luke 11 v 24 to v 26. This is the account of an unclean spirit leaving and returning. It was able to return because nothing had taken its place.) This is why we have the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. So that when the evil one tries to return, he finds his old

dwelling place inhabited by someone stronger and the evil one is not able to get in. An infidel is another word for unbeliever.

Verse 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 I will be their God, and they shall be my people."* I want you to remember the important truth that we have located in this verse. We are the temple of the Living God. In 1 Peter 2 v 5 we have this, *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."* Lively means living. We are living stones, used by God to build His church on Earth. There is some confusion over the meaning of the church. I am not speaking about the wonderful buildings that we have on this planet. Here in Winchester we have a Cathedral which is very impressive. The first time I went in to it, the sheer size and architecture was fantastic. However, it did not take long for me to feel that the splendour drowned out the still small voice of God. It is a God-less place. It was built to honour God, now it stands as a memorial to the power of God. Our lives can also reflect this. On the outside, we are wonderful people, with riches and honour which we have earned. But on the inside, nothing. We don't recognise that God gave us all. My warning is to remain poor on the outside but very rich through God on the inside.

Verse 17 *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."* These words are very important and remind us that we are to come out from among the world. One question you should ask before going anywhere is am I able to maintain my testimony by entering this place? If the place that you are about to enter is where large amounts of alcohol are consumed on a regular basis and your friends see you in there, how are you going to make them believe that you are different? As I thought about in my last letter, we cannot share our faith with others when they cannot see a difference in our lives. A prime example of this from the Old Testament is Daniel. Daniel and his friends were commanded by Nebuchadnezzar to eat the King's meat and drink wine. Daniel immediately found fault with this and proceeded to plead with the steward that he might be given pulse (or vegetables) to eat and water to drink. Whatever the reason for not eating of the meat, he stood firm and it says about him in Daniel 1 v 8 *"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the King's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."* When I discussed this with some friends of mine, we concluded that the reason for this could be (we are not told the exact reason): a) The meat was 'unclean' meat. or b) It had been offered to an idol first. We don't read why this stand was made but we know why we should make a similar stand, especially as standards are slipping and slipping. We need to stand and stand firm, looking to the Bible to guide us by the Holy Spirit's power and in prayerful consideration of all that we do. The promise when we do these things is also in this verse. I will receive you. Our faith is the only "religion" that has an assurance. We know that we will be received by the Father because His word tells us so. Jesus died so that we can be in heaven with Him forever (John 14 v 1 to v 3).

Verse 18 *"And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."* This is confirming the promise already made. Notice that He will be a Father unto us. Look at the one who said this. The Lord God Almighty. Never lose sight of the fact that it is the creator God who is our Father. He who made everything and *"...the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways..."* (Daniel 5 v 23) has sent His only Beloved Son to die upon a cross for our sins and is risen from the dead and is now in Heaven preparing a place for us. This should encourage you to be careful where you go and who you go with because our Father sees all. Jonah found out the hard way that you cannot hide from God (remember, he was told to go and preach to Ninevah. He had better ideas and got on a ship and went abroad. A storm came and Jonah realised that it was the Lord's doing. He was thrown overboard and the storm stopped immediately. The Lord sent a big fish to swallow Jonah and he spent 3 days before he asked for forgiveness. The Lord gave him a second chance to preach to the wicked. He went and they were forgiven.) This emphasises the fact that we cannot escape from the Lord. He is the creator of this world and as such, knows every single place upon it. Don't think that you can hide, for it is very clear that we cannot.

Chapter 7 verse 1 "*Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" As we have considered above, this verse confirms that we must be separate from the world around us. Our lives need to represent our Lord God and not the standards of the World. Let us consider the words in this verse. Paul says let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh. The flesh is our body, or our physical being. As I have already stated, we need to show Christ forth in our bodies. However, Paul does not stop there and neither will I. "...and spirit" The spirit contains our thoughts and our motives. It means that our very thoughts must be guarded against filthiness, our desires must be clean and our motives must be for God. Also, Paul continues with "*perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*" We need to have a fear of God which seems to be sadly lacking all around us. If we fear God, we will serve Him more. God did NOT have to send His Son to die for us, he could have destroyed us instead. What I am trying to get across to you is the fact that God is an almighty being and therefore, needs to be feared. Now, because we are saved does not excuse us from fearing God. Yes, it is true that we are safe because of the blood of Christ, but we still need to fear and reverence the One who created everything you see. He created man and He gave man the ability to learn and to create the buildings and vehicles around us. However, man seems to have forgotten where his ability has come from. I am typing on a computer, but God created the most powerful computer ever and man's attempts to recreate this has so far failed. I hope that it is clear to you that we must fear God. If we fear God, then attempting to perfect holiness in this fear will become easier to manage.

I hope that the above has made it clear to you that we must not have relationships with the World. How can we? We are light, the world is dark. The two cannot dwell together, for the light will always show through the darkness.

Marriage.

The next passage for consideration is about marriage and divorce. There are many passages available on this subject, but I would like to concentrate on 1 Corinthians 7 v 1 – 17. Marriage and divorce is a difficult subject to deal with. Let us consider together what the Bible teaches. The apostle Paul starts this subject with these words "*...let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.*" What the apostle is stating is important even today. We should have only one wife or husband, and not to do what the world does, and that is to divorce and remarry. These words do not come easy to me, as my own parents have been married and divorced and remarried a number of times now. Therefore, by writing these words, I am condemning the actions of my own parents. I can do no more but to hold to the teaching of the Bible.

Turn with me to the Old Testament, and there we will learn, from example, the problems of having more than one wife. Turn to Genesis 29. Here we have Jacob presented before us. Jacob went to his mother's family to meet with them. If you remember, Abraham told his servant to find a wife for Isaac from his family. The servant found Rebekah and she went to meet Isaac. Rebekah and Isaac had twins, Esau (the hairy one) and Jacob (the deceiver). Jacob left to find a wife because his father had decreed that he should not find a wife from among the daughters of Canaan. Jacob obeyed and left, and rested that night in a place called Beth-el. What he did not realize, is that the place where he rested (and used a stone for a pillow) was holy ground. He dreamed that night of a ladder going up to heaven with angels ascending and descending (going up and down) it. It was then that he saw the Lord above the ladder and the Lord spoke to Jacob (Chapter 28). When Jacob woke up, he said, "*surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.*" The unsaved can see the buildings that we go to, and see us arriving every week, but it is only when they enter in that they can repeat these words. The Lord can use everything to reach the lost. Jacob continued his journey and eventually came to a well where some shepherds watering their sheep at a well when Rachel came along. Jacob announced who he was and was taken to meet her family. He then made an arrangement where he worked for 7 years to marry Rachel. When the 7 years had expired, he was tricked into taking Rachel's older sister. When found out, he was not happy for he loved Rachel. Now, to get Rachel, he had to work another 7 years (that's 14 years of hard work to be able to leave with the one he loved.) The problem was that he now had 2 wives and, as a result, he loved Rachel more than Leah. What all this waffle is trying to

explain is that when we have more than one partner (whether it be husband or wife) inevitably we will love one more than the other. The same goes in spiritual life. Matthew 6 verse 24 says "*No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.*" This means that we cannot serve God and Satan. If we are for God, then we are against Satan. .

God first.

The next point from the passage is verses 10 and 11 "*...unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away her wife.*" These verses confirm that marriage is for life and not for the moment. I know that many of you are not married but these words are for all of us, not just the married people. You see, the Lord may lead us into married life in the future but it is important that we see from the Bible that we are not to divorce (as mentioned above). The apostle Paul is speaking the direct command of the Lord in these verses. It is vital that we see that the Lord speaks to us today and commands us from the pages of His word, using the Holy Spirit to emphasise it. I want to bring your attention to this passage and, with the Holy Spirit's help, bring to you how important it is to choose wisely (and with lots of prayer) a marriage partner. I myself am single, and am prepared to accept the Lord's will for my life. Whether this means I will remain single, I do not know, but He does. Some are able to cope being single, whereas some are not (see 1 Cor 7 v 7 – 9). The Lord realises this and He knows how difficult it is for some to remain single, especially the younger element. To you, I want to say that instead of seeking a partner you should be seeking the Word of God. The Lord speaks to His disciples regarding earthly things in Matthew 6 v 33 "*...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" Notice please that it says seek ye first the kingdom of God. Not, seek ye first the riches and praise of man or even seek ye first a wife/husband, then seek ye the kingdom of God. God must come first in every aspect of our lives, whatever the circumstances that we find ourselves in. A practical example from Scriptures of this is the Lord Jesus Christ, our wonderful example. He came from Heaven to do the Father's will. If you look carefully at His life, He spent hours in prayer every morning. When was the last time that YOU spent an hour or longer (other than in the prayer meetings) in prayer with God? Spending time alone with God should take an active role in our lives and not put aside into a few minutes at the end of the day. I know that some of you are studying for a future, but without God there is no future. John 15 sums this up nicely and I want you to look at it, read it and read it again until you fully understand the consequences of this chapter. You see, Jesus is the vine, we are the branches and the branches cannot survive if they are removed from the vine, the place where the root is (the roots are there to take up necessary food from the soil). If we are removed from the vine, we are condemned to shrivel up and die. Our only means of survival is to commit ourselves to God through Jesus Christ His Son and to take nourishment from the Holy Scriptures. This is why you are reading these words that are in front of you. These are written so that you may be fed from the Bible and that you may grow in the Lord and go on to feed others. Peter was told to feed the lambs by Jesus. The act of feeding requires great effort to round up the sheep and then to provide the food. The spiritual food is found in the Bible and we must take this food and desire more and more of it. Now the relevance of this to marriage and the decision of who to marry is that we must seek the things of God first and foremost and He will guide us into the right relationship when His timing is right. The way that the world thinks is as follows: I must have a boyfriend or I must have a girlfriend. My friends all have them.

Oh my beloved friends, read these words carefully. Forget the creations and get back to the Creator!!! Without the Creator we can do nothing. I met with some friends on a Friday night, in order to study God's Word. The passage that we had got to is Daniel 5 and when I looked at this passage to be able to present something to my Brothers, I came across this verse, "*But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of Heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:." (v23)* These are the words of Daniel to

Belshazzar the king and they are very powerful words. Belshazzar was the king of Babylon and is the second king mentioned in Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar being the first. Belshazzar held a feast and worshipped idols. He had the vessels from the temple of God (which Nebuchadnezzar took from Jerusalem) and drunk wine from them. As soon as he did so, a hand appeared and started to write upon the wall. No one in the kingdom could read what the hand had written. Daniel was sent for because the queen remembered what Daniel had done during Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Daniel came and read the writing but first condemned the king with words above. Daniel makes it clear that the idols could not hear, see, or know and we would do well to remember that. I was horrified when I heard that the Sun newspaper had encouraged its readers to worship the foot of David Beckham so that it may heal quicker. I trust that no one who is reading this participated in it and was just as horrified as myself to discover it happening. It is a foot of a man, and has no spiritual significance. Football has become a modern idol to many and we must separate ourselves from it. I am not a football lover, but I do not condemn football in itself. I condemn the worship of football. It is sad to hear believers talking more about Manchester United than about Jesus Christ. We need to redress the balance. Jesus Christ gave everything for us, so why should He take the second place in our lives? He shouldn't. Everything we do and say should reflect Christ first and foremost. All other activities should be put to one side and Bible Study should take up all of our spare time. The time and effort that we put into the world would be better spent looking into the word of God, trying to find the hidden treasures contained within.

Divorce.

I want to bring before you why divorce was brought into being in the first place. Turn with me to Matthew 19 v 3 to v 11. In this passage we have the Lord being tempted by the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to find some reason to have Christ arrested. They found nothing, of course. In this particular event, the Pharisees ask Him about divorce. I want you to look at His answer to this. *"Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh'? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* Here Jesus says that what God has joined together, let no man put asunder (or separate). He states that divorce is not to be done. This is why it is important to make sure that we have the right partner when we marry because we will be with that person until the end of our lives on this earth. The Pharisees were not happy with this answer and proceeded to question further by saying that Moses had provided a bill of divorcement. The Lord's answer to this is wonderful to see. *"Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall but away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."* Think about these words and think about what this means to each person around us. The woman at the well in Sychar was told that she had had 5 husbands, but the Lord did not condemn her, even though He could of. He had compassion on her because she did not know any better. We are in a world of ignorance, and we need to let them know gently that the practices that they are engaged in are contrary to the written word of God.

The Christian life.

I think that I have said enough on the above subjects, and I would like to move on to a guide for good living. If we take an example from the world around us, good living would lead us into sin. Therefore, we must look at the Scriptures and take our example from there. I would like to turn to Colossians Chapter 3. Read the entire Chapter before proceeding.

Verses 1 to 4 sums up all of the above. *"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."* I want you to realise that we are saved from the world and into the life. Therefore, we should have nothing to do with the world unless it is to reach the lost. We are to keep in touch with things so that we are not distant from the problems but they should not affect us in the way that they

affect our colleagues or school friends (this includes those at college and university). We should be above the circumstances of this world. This can be difficult to achieve. When the planes flew into the towers in New York, it was an earth changing moment, but it was not a Heaven changing thing. Jesus tells of a disaster that happened while He was here in Luke 13 v 4 "*or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*" The Lord is saying that while the event is a tragedy, we need to realise that those who know Him not, will all be lost in Hell unless they repent. When put into this context, the event is less significant other than to remind us who believe that we need to preach Christ and Him crucified to the lost around us (1 Cor 1 v 23).

Verse 5 tells us the things which ought not to be evident in our lives and if they are, then they need mortifying (or put to death (Vine)). These things are:

- Fornication
- Uncleanness
- Inordinate Affection
- Evil Concupiscence
- Covetousness (which is Idolatry)

To make things clear for you, I have used Vine once again to try and understand what these words mean:

1) Fornication means (and these are the words of Vine and not me) illicit sexual intercourse. This is relevant to today's society. We have to be so careful in what we do and what we say and even our attitudes. I would like to say just one thing on this. If we as a people do not have control over our desires, then it will be easier for us to be tempted and we may fall. Exercise control over all your desires and it will be easier to flee temptation. As an example for this, think of Joseph in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39). Every day Potiphar's wife would come to Joseph and would ask him to "*lie with her*" but he resisted. One day she sent all the other slaves out so that there was only herself and Joseph in the house. She caught hold of his cloak and he left her standing there with the cloak in her hand. He fled the temptation rather than to sin against God. This decision was not popular and he was thrown into prison. Standing for God will not always be popular and we may be punished for failing to weaken our resolves, but God always rewards those who love Him.

2) Uncleanness means physically or morally dirty. What do the world notice about us? Do we tell jokes that we should not just because we heard it at work or do we just walk away and try to forget what we have heard? We need to be clean in our actions and our life. A practical example from my life would be the time when I had been working with a company for 6 months, and one of my colleagues came up to me and said that he had not heard me tell any jokes. The reason I have included this is not to make me seem more spiritual than you because I have my list of faults but I do try to keep my mouth closed when around the world rather than let something slip out that shouldn't. An example from Scripture would be Cain. This is an example of what we should not be like. When he was asked of God "*where is Abel thy brother?*" his answer was "*I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?*" We know that Cain had killed Abel and when it was time to confess to what he had done, he lied to God. Now, I am not suggesting that we lie to God, but think of it this way. Every time we tell a lie, God knows. He knows the truth before we tell the lie. By the same token we are told that Satan is the Father of Lies (John 8 v 44). Just think about this before you tell someone a lie.

3) Inordinate Affection means lust. When we look at the beautiful girl or handsome man with the wrong intentions towards them, think of the words of Christ. "*...That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matthew 5 v 28). Just think on this. We have to be so careful what we do and this is another example of it. My friends, I warn you to guard your hearts and minds from the lust of the world. All around us the comments fly. Once again I would urge you to flee from temptation.

4) Evil Concupiscence means evil desires. These are the desires of our hearts which take over the desires of spiritual goodness. What our desires should be is that the will of God

will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. We need to make sure that our desires are right in the Lord's sight.

5) Covetousness which is Idolatry. Covetousness is the thought of wanting what we cannot have. Idolatry is worshipping Idols (or anything that is not the Lord our God). We must not covet that which the others have. If a person can preach the Gospel message very well, we should not covet to do the same. Each person has his own gift. The whole idea of coveting is worshipping the object that we covet. This can relate to a whole number of things, which appear in our day-to-day lives. Please be careful, as the evil one will attack at all times.

These verses contain many other things that are not to be in our lives, but I am wanting to present what should be present. For this, I want you to turn with me to Galatians chapter 5 and verses 22 and 23 "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*" Before I close this issue of the newsletter, I want you note that this is the fruit (singular) of the Spirit. These are the things which should be evident in our lives. As it is the one fruit, this means that we get all and not just one aspect. My dear friends, it is my desire to see each one of you grow in the spiritual realm. I hope that these newsletters will encourage each one of you.

Epilogue

Before I depart from this letter, just follow down the page to Galatians 5 verse 24 "*And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*" These verses sum up what I have been trying to get across in this letter. Notice that it is those that are Christ's have not just put to death the flesh, but have crucified it (i.e., identified it as being against what God wants and hung it upon a cross.) We need to crucify the flesh on a daily basis and make sure that we study God's word as often as we can. In preparing these letters, I normally use 3 Saturdays, where I will do nothing else but study the word of God in order to be able to write what the Holy Spirit gives me. I look forward to writing again soon.

May God be glorified, not man.