

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "No Paradoxes In Scripture" (Colossians 3:16-17, John 3:16, 1 John 2:15-17)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 10/19/2014

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Today we are continuing our study of the Biblical doctrine of separation – this vital imperative that is commanded in Scripture for every Christian, to be separated from the world, and separated unto God. As we begin, let me call your attention once again to our theme passage for this series, which is found in Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse 16. Colossians chapter 3, verse 16:

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

In our last several messages in this series, we have been taking up ten propositions or great truths that we find in the Word of God concerning the doctrine of Biblical separation. Thus far we have covered five of them, and before we continue with number six today, I want to briefly review the first five.

Propositions vs. Declarations

But before we do that I would like to raise another point with you that I believe is very important. Thus far in this series I have used the word "proposition" to describe these great truths. But I am more and more convinced that this is far too weak a word to describe Biblical truth. We often hear defenders of the Bible talk about the fact that it is a Book of "propositional truth." They speak about the Bible's "truth claims."

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But the Bible does not merely *claim* to say something. Jesus did not merely claim to speak the truth. The Old Testament prophets did not merely claim to speak the Word of God. The New Testament apostles never spoke in terms of "propositions."

This is how they spoke: It was always said that "the word of the Lord came" unto Isaiah or Jeremiah or the other prophets. It was that way even with Abraham and Samuel. And in the New Testament the Apostle Paul speaks on several occasions of his authority from the Lord to declare the truth of God. And he tells Timothy and Titus in his pastoral epistles that there must always be this note of Divine authority in the preaching of the Word. And in Galatians chapter 1 at verse 11 and in other passages the Apostle Paul explains why this is true. He says that the truth that he wrote and preached was "not according to man" but through revelation from God.

And so that is what we are dealing with here, dear friends. The Word of God is not merely "propositional." God's Word is *declarative*. God's Word is *prophetic* – in the sense of being a Word directly from God. God does not merely propose, He *declares*. Second Peter chapter 1 tells us that God's Word is *revealed* truth. It was not man deciding what is true or not true. It was God *declaring* to man what is true.

This singular fact gives the Bible it supreme and irrefutable authority. And dear friends, we either bow the knee to that authority to the saving of our souls, or we reject and rebel against that declarative authority of the Word of God to the peril of our souls. There is no middle ground.

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And so as we continue today, let me speak of the matters that we are dealing with in relation to the doctrine of Biblical separation not in terms of "propositions" but in terms of God's declarations. God's declarative truth.

The First Five Truths

And as we have seen, the first great declarative truth that we find in the Word of God concerning the doctrine of Biblical separation is the truth about our status before we were saved. The first great truth that we considered is this: Those who are now in Christ, those who are saved, were once aliens from God and from the kingdom of God. We have seen this in passages such as Colossians chapter 1, and Isaiah chapter 59, and again in Ephesians chapter 4.

The second great declarative truth we find in Scripture concerns the change that has taken place. Truth number two is this: The status of the true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ changed as soon as you were converted. The true believer in Christ is immediately upon conversion an alien in this present world. No longer at home here. We saw this in Ephesians chapter 2 and in Hebrews 11.

The third great declarative truth that we find in Scripture concerns the reason for this great change in the status of the believer. Truth number three is this: In the eternal plan of God, Christians have been made aliens in this present world, and citizens of the world to come, for an eternal purpose. That purpose has to do with the good works that God ordained, even before the foundation of the world, for us to do in this present life to accomplish His purposes in this present world and also

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to prepare us for the life to come and the world to come. We saw this truth also in Ephesians chapter 2 and Hebrews 11.

The fourth great truth concerning the doctrine of Biblical separation has to do with the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has made this great change in us possible by coming into this world in human flesh and shedding His blood for our sins. Truth number four is this: Jesus Christ, the God-man, was himself an alien while He was in this world in a human body. We saw this in the Gospel of John in chapter 3 and again in chapter 8, and also in Jesus' great high priestly prayer in John chapter 17, and also in the great statements about the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ in Philippians chapter 2, and in the great statement concerning the sinless perfection of our Lord Jesus that we find in Hebrews chapter 7 at verse 26.

And then the last of the great truths that we have covered thus far regarding the doctrine of Biblical separation has to do with the demand or the imperative that our new status in Christ places upon us. Truth number five is this: The Christian's alien status in this present world demands that we become increasingly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. In our last message dealing with these truths we saw this in particular in Romans chapter 12, verses one and two.

The Apostle Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us in those verses that how you think, and what you do, and what you say, needs to agree with who you are, needs to agree with your new status, if you are indeed a Christian. If you are truly a Christian, it is a sinful falsehood for you to think and to act and to speak like

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the unbelieving world. That is an outward worldly appearance that does not agree with the inward nature that is yours because of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

And so this is the imperative: Do not think, do not talk, do not act like the unsaved world. If you are truly a believer, to do that is a deception. Your thinking and your speaking and your actions must reflect your new life in Christ, and the eternal values of the Word of Christ dwelling richly within you, and the person of Christ who won the victory over sin and darkness on your behalf. Indeed, instead of being "conformed to this world" you are to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind."

If God's Word is not renovating your thinking, if God's Word is not separating you more and more from the ways of this present evil world, then you cannot honestly say that you are seeking to fully please Christ. If you are truly a believer in Christ, spiritual separation will be more and more of a concern in your heart and your life, as you think and meditate upon God's will as it is revealed in His Word, and as you put that knowledge into action in your life.

And so, I closed our last message on these great declarative truths concerning Biblical separation by asking a question that I want to take up with you again today: Is the Word of Christ truly renovating your thinking? Are you truly interested in spiritual separation? Is that an imperative for you?

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Truth Number 6: Do Not Love the World

Now these questions bring us to number six of the ten great declarative truths concerning Biblical separation that we are considering together. Truth number six is this: The Christian, as an alien in this present evil world, is not to love this world. Because of all the other things of which we have spoken thus far, because these things are true of the genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then this also must be true.

We must not love this present evil world. We are aliens in this present world. We are being delivered from this present world by the cross-work of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing in this present world that we should love and hold onto rather than loving and holding onto Christ and His Word.

Let me take you to a key passage where this great truth is set before us. Please turn with me in your Bible, if you are able, to First John chapter 2 beginning at verse 15. First John chapter 2 beginning at verse 15. The Apostle John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote these words:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

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Now dear friends, this is not a passage that you will hear read or preached in many churches today. Today, I would submit that most professing Christians simply pretend that this passage is not in the Bible. Instead of the church being a great and godly influence on the world today, the world is an evil and ungodly influence on the church.

No Paradoxes in Scripture

There is great confusion about this matter in the church today. And I would submit to you that that is because we live in a time when many preachers – even many self-described evangelical preachers – want you to believe that there are paradoxes within the Word of God. And they would cite this passage as part of a paradox within the Word of God. I have heard men do it. I have heard preachers do it. I've heard church members repeat this kind of un-Biblical thinking.

These preachers and teachers will tell you that it is not possible to reconcile the fact that this passage in First John chapter 2 tells us that we are to not love the world, but yet the Gospel of John chapter 3 verse 16 tells us that "God so loved the world." They will tell you that this is a paradox within the Word of God.

And the reason that they do this is because they have a very low view of Scripture. And often preachers and teachers will use the alleged presence of a paradox or contradiction within the Bible to ignore what the Word of God says, or to twist what the Bible says to suit their own fleshly agendas.

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And so, a great many false teachers in the visible church today are effectively rejecting the doctrine of separation, and they are instructing their people to reject the doctrine of Biblical separation, because they suppose that there is this contradiction within the Bible. And because they see a contradiction, a contradiction that is not really there at all, they on their own sinful authority reject the part of the Bible that they don't like, and they accept, so they think, the part of the Bible that they do like. And so, they say, the church can look and act like the world. You as a Christian can look and act like the world. You don't need to be separated from the world and separated unto God.

Dear friend, this is a lie. This is a grievous sin in the church today. Let me make this very clear to you, on the authority of the Word of God: There are no contradictions in the Bible. We cannot, on the basis of alleged contradictions, embrace one part of the truth of God's Word and at the same time reject other parts of the truth of God's Word. To do so is to put ourselves in the place of Almighty God.

There are no logical paradoxes in the Bible. A logical paradox is a statement in which two or more things are self-contradictory. They cannot both (or all) be true at one and the same time. Let me give you some very basic examples. White cannot be black. Truth cannot be false. A man cannot be either a horse or an automobile. And Scripture contains no such logical paradoxes. God could not assert a logical paradox without ceasing to be God, because to do so would make Him a liar.

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I regret to have to say this, but I believe that it is true: A great many people today within the visible church have invented a god of their own imagining, just as the pagans of Greece and Rome and other civilizations even further back invented gods who were like themselves. They were fickle. They were arbitrary. They were inconsistent. They changed their minds on a whim.

God Is Not the God of "Yes" and "No"

But dear friends, the God of the Bible, the one true and living God, the God who is revealed to us perfectly in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, this God is not a God of paradox.

The absolutely trustworthy God of the Bible does not contradict Himself. Numbers chapter 23, verse 19 declares to us that "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent." In Malachi chapter 3 verse 6, the Lord declares, "I am the Lord, I do not change." In James chapter 1 verse 17, we read that God is the One "with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

Second Corinthians chapter 2 tells us that God is not the God of "yes and no." And Hebrews chapter 13 verse eight tells us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Dear friends, that is the nature of the God we serve. That is the nature of the God unto whom we are to be separated. God cannot lie, God cannot contradict Himself. And therefore the Bible that He has written for us, the Bible that He has given to us

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– revelation given by inspiration by God the Holy Spirit – this Book cannot contradict itself. If it did it would be a lie. The nature of Scripture is the same as the nature of its Divine Author. In Psalm 138 verse two, God declares that He has exalted His Word even above all His name.

And therefore, when anyone says that there is a paradox or contradiction within the pages of the Bible, that is serious sin. The problem is with us, not with God or His Word. Romans chapter 1 verse 25 tells us that sinful man has "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever."

As Christians we dare not do that. We must bow the knee to the Word of God. We must recognize, as Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12 tells us, that "the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

"God So Loved the World" – "Love Not the World" – How Are Both True?

And so we know that when we are told in John 3:16 that "God so loved the world" and we are also told in First John 2:15 to "love not the world" that this is not a paradox or a contradiction. God is not double-minded or double-tongued. Both of

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these things are true at one and the same time – God *does* so love the world, and God *does* command His people not to love the world.

Now I have told you very often that we need to ask questions of the Word of God. There is nothing sinful about humbly asking legitimate questions of the Word of God. And so it is perfectly right for us to ask the question, "How can this be?" How can it be true that God does so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, but at the same time we as Christians living in this world are not to love the world?

In order to understand how it is that both of these things are true at one and the same time, but yet there is no contradiction within the Word of God, and in order to understand the attitude toward the world that the doctrine of Biblical separation demands of us as Christians, we need to understand what the words of these passages mean in the original language of the New Testament.

In particular, we need to understand the meaning of the word "world" as it is used by the Lord Jesus in John chapter 3, and by the Apostle John in First John chapter 2. And we also need to understand the meaning of the word "love" as Jesus uses it in John chapter 3 and as John uses it in his epistle. In order to understand the truths that God is placing before us, we need to understand the meaning of these words in their context in the original Greek.

Dear friends, we need to carefully understand these things in order to understand the mind of God on this critical issue, to understand the position of separation that

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God requires of us, and why He requires it of us. And so this is the very crucial question that we are going to take up, the Lord willing, as we continue this series in our next message.

About the Broadcast

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