

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "Separation: Abiding Forever" (1 John 2:15-17, John 8:28-40)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/18/2015

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Today we are continuing our study of the Biblical doctrine of separation, and at this point we are particularly focusing on the great statement that we find on this vital subject in the First Epistle of John, in chapter 2. If you are able to do so as you are listening, please turn with me to First John chapter 2, beginning at verse 15. First John chapter 2, beginning at verse 15:

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. (1 John 2:15-17)

What We Have Seen Thus Far

Today, the Lord willing, we are going to complete our study of this particular passage, which is so important to a correct understanding of the Biblical doctrine of separation. Let me remind you again briefly of what we have seen thus far.

First of all, in the original language the Holy Spirit tells us, literally, to "*stop loving* the world, [and] the things in the world." The natural tendency of the flesh is to love this world, to exercise *agape* love, self-sacrificial love, for this present evil world and the things of this present evil world. But the Holy Spirit through the Apostle John commands those who have become Christians to stop doing that.

Secondly, this passage tells us that separation from the world is a key indicator

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of whether or not an individual is a Christian. If you profess to be a Christian, but you are living a life of self-sacrificial love for this present evil world and the things of this present world, verse 15 declares that "the love of the Father is not in [you]."

In other words, if you are living a life of self-sacrificial love for this present evil world, you need to examine yourself to see if you are truly in the faith. Worldly living, an agreeable, harmonious, friendly attitude toward this present evil world, is evidence that the individual who exhibits such thinking and such behavior is not truly born again. This is what characterizes the truly born-again individual: His love for this present evil world is diminishing and dying; his love for his Heavenly Father and longing for the consummation of the holiness that Christ has purchased for us is living and growing.

Thirdly, we have seen that all that this present evil world under the sway of Satan can offer is governed and characterized by two great evils, lust and pride. Lust is the desire or craving for that which God has forbidden. "The pride of life" of which this passage speaks is sinful man's foolish confidence in the resources of this present evil world, and coupled with that, a contempt for the law of God. These things, the Holy Spirit declares through the Apostle John, are "not of the Father... but of the world."

And fourthly, we have seen that verse 17 declares to us the doom of this present evil world. We saw that the original language tells us that this present evil world is being *compelled* to pass away. The word in the original speaks of a parade that is passing by. The parade of sinful man under the sway of Satan

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seems endless to our finite eyes. But God tells us that it will come to an end, and in fact He has already set in motion the passing away of this present evil world through the cross of Christ.

Dear friend, as a Christian you must never forget that this world that seems so permanent, and the ways and the thinking of this world that seem so powerful, are even now in the process of passing away. That is the unstoppable plan and purpose of God. Therefore the true Christian must be looking beyond this present evil world to the world to come, in which righteousness will dwell, unmixed and unpolluted, forever under the reign of Jesus Christ.

A Final Question

These four great points bring us to the final phrase of verse 17: "But he who does the will of God abides forever." In contrast to all that has been said before – in contrast to the natural tendency of the flesh to love this world, in contrast to the nature of the flesh which is opposed to the love of God the Father, in contrast to the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, and in contrast to this present evil but dying world-system – in stark contrast to all this, "he who does the will of God abides forever."

We saw in our last message that the sanctification of the believer is the will of God. Separation from the thinking and the words and the ways of this present evil world is the will of God for every believer. It is not merely the will of God for a certain select few, or for a certain class of believers. It is not merely the will of God for the leadership of the church. It is not merely the will of God for those

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who prefer it. It is the will of God for all believers. It is not optional. It is essential. And "he who does the will of God abides forever."

The person who endeavors to live in a Biblically separated manner, the person who endeavors to forsake this present evil world under the sway of Satan and the things of this present evil world, the person who endeavors instead to do the will of God and pursue holiness, that person "abides forever."

What does it mean to "abide forever"? That is the critical question that I want to take up with you today. I want to answer this question by placing two things before you.

The first thing I want to place before you is the meaning of the word that is translated "abide" in this passage and in many other passages of Scripture. The second thing I want to place before you is a passage of Scripture in the Gospel of John in which Jesus Himself uses this same phrase, "abides forever." And it is a passage of Scripture in which Biblical separation is likewise at issue.

The Word in the Greek

So first of all, let us examine the meaning of the word that is translated "abides" in First John 2:17. The word is used 128 times in the Greek New Testament. In other places the same word is translated "remain" or "endure". It is used to describe the enduring nature of the three persons of the Godhead. It is used to describe the enduring nature of the love of God.

It is used to describe the immutability of God, and the immutability of His

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councils, which cannot be changed. This same word that we find in First John 2:17 is used to describe the enduring nature of truth. It is used to describe the enduring nature of the Word of God. And frequently, the word is used in passages that draw a sharp contrast between the eternal and the corruptible.

The separated saint of God, this passage tells us, will remain and endure forever – just as surely as the persons of the Godhead, and the love of God, and the Word of God will remain and endure forever. Just as surely as the councils of God will endure forever.

And why is that? It is because the individual who continually endeavors to practice the will of God demonstrates that he is truly the eternally blood-bought child of God. The individual who is seeking to stop loving this world and the things that are in the world, and instead to do the will of God, demonstrates that he is "in the faith." He will "abide forever."

True Sons Abide Forever

Now with this in mind, I want to call your attention to a passage of Scripture in the Gospel of John in which our Lord Jesus Christ uses the same phrase. Please turn in your own Bible with me if you are able, to the Gospel of John chapter 8, beginning at verse 28. The Gospel of John chapter 8, beginning at verse 28.

Before we begin reading, let me set the scene for you. In the eighth chapter of John, Jesus is dealing with the Jewish religious leaders of His days on earth – the scribes, the Pharisees, the teachers of the law.

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Now to finite human eyes, the Pharisees appeared to be the most separated people imaginable. But the fact is, they were not separated saints of God, they were unbelieving legalists. They claimed to be the true sons of Abraham, but they were not true sons of Abraham at all.

The Pharisees placed burdens of legalism on the backs of the Jewish people that God never intended them to bear. They placed the people in spiritual bondage. They claimed to be doing the will of God, but Jesus declared that they were in fact doing the opposite of the will of God. He said that while they appeared righteous on the outside, they were as unclean as stinking graves on the inside.

And so with these things in mind, let me call your attention to Jesus' words in the Gospel of John chapter 8, beginning at verse 28:

Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever

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commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. [There we have the phrase.] Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

"I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My Word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father."

Jesus would tell them that their father was not Abraham, but the Devil. And then verse 39:

They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. (John 8:28-40)

Let me call your attention to several things in this passage that relate directly to the Biblical doctrine of separation.

The Standard of Separation Is Objective

First of all, notice that in verses 28 and 29 Jesus sets Himself before the Pharisees – before these people who claimed to be so separated but were not at all – Jesus sets Himself before them as the perfect living Standard of one who does the will of God. "I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught me, I speak these things... I always do those things that please Him."

Dear friend, when people in the world or even people in the church criticize you for maintaining a Biblical standard of separation from this present evil world,

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let this be your answer. Endeavor to think and to live and to speak in such a way that you can give this kind of an answer: I am living as I am living, I am speaking as I am speaking, because it is my desire to do the will of my Heavenly Father. It is my desire, following Jesus' perfect example during His days on earth, to "always do those things that please" God the Father and to speak the things that please Him.

And that is going to mean that there are going to be many times when I cannot do what other people want me to do. There are going to be many times when I cannot say what people want me to say. But they are not my standard. They are not the ones whom I must ultimately please. I must please my Father in Heaven.

Dear Christian, may this always be at the forefront of your thinking and your living. Biblical separation is not a matter of personalities or preferences. The standard is not a subjective one. When you are asked why you are seeking to live a separated life, hold up the objective standard of God's Word.

Don't make the issue about persons or personalities. Other people may try to do that, but you must never do that. The issue must always be the objective standard of the truth of the Word of God. That is the standard Jesus sets forth in verse 31: "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed."

Mere Granting of Certain Facts vs. True Saving Faith

Secondly, notice in verse 31 that Jesus said these things, we are told, to "those Jews who believed Him." Now the sense here is *not* that these people were believing on Jesus in a saving way. The sense is that they were, *for the sake of*

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argument, granting the claim that He had just made about Himself.

There is a difference between merely granting that certain facts about Jesus are true, and actually believing on Him to the saving of your soul. You can grant facts with an un-bended knee. But you cannot be saved with an un-bended knee, with that kind of heart-attitude.

Salvation involves confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord. These people aren't doing that. Jesus is still speaking to unsaved people here. The verses that follow make this clear. "You are endeavoring to kill Me," Jesus says in verse 37. No genuine believer would do that.

If you are endeavoring to please God, if the Word of God is your standard and your authority for all of life and ministry, then it demonstrates, as Jesus said, that "you are My disciples *indeed*." Not merely those who *say* they are My disciples, but those who actually *are* My disciples.

Not Bondage But Freedom

Thirdly, notice that doing the will of God, living the separated life, is not a matter of bondage but it is a matter of freedom. Notice Jesus' words in verse 32: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Knowing the truth of the Word of God, knowing the standard of Scripture, is the basis of true Christian liberty. True Christian liberty is freedom from the bondage of sin. True Christian liberty is the ability of the individual thus freed from bondage to do the will of God. Biblical separation and Christian liberty are

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always in agreement, and never in conflict.

Many Things Masquerade As Separation

Fourthly, notice the response of the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders in verse 33. It is not the response of those who are practicing true separation from this present evil world and separation unto God. It is rather the response of the heart which is in bondage to the "the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life." Notice again, the Gospel of John chapter 8, verse 33:

They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendents, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free'?"

Dear friend, many things can masquerade as Biblical separation. Self-righteousness. Spiritual pride. National pride. Reliance upon your church pedigree or your family history. Reliance upon, and pride in, the trappings of a religious culture. These things defined the attitude of the unbelieving Jewish religious leaders when they would often say, "We are Abraham's descendents."

Unsaved Slaves vs. Separated Sons

And this brings us to the fifth point regarding the doctrine of separation that we find in this passage. Notice Jesus' response in verse 34: "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."

What Jesus is saying is that whoever lives a life that is characterized by the constant production of that which displeases God – that person demonstrates that

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he is still in bondage to sin and has not been freed by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. If this is your habit of life, if your life is not producing the fruits of Biblical separation, then it is an indicator of the fact that you are not saved. But notice the contrast that Jesus sets forth in verse 35: "A slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever."

The one who is in fact still in bondage to sin may nevertheless put on appearances. He may be "in the house" for a time. He may be a member of the visible church. But he is still a slave. He is in bondage to the things that take the place of true Biblical separation.

That person is a slave to self-righteousness, a slave to spiritual pride. That person may also be a slave to national pride, or a slave to reliance upon parentage or pedigree, or a slave to reliance upon the outward trappings of a so-called "Christian culture," or a slave to any number of other deceptions.

But what does Jesus say about such a person? He says, you are a slave and not a true son. It is the true son who desires to do and to practice the will of his Father. It is the true son who has been freed from the bondage of sin by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

It is the true son who has been freed from self-righteousness, from spiritual pride, from reliance upon a family or church pedigree, from reliance upon national pride, from reliance upon the trappings of a so-called "Christian culture". Those things are not genuine Biblical separation.

Biblical separation is rooted in the holiness that comes only by the work of the

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Holy Spirit in applying the saving and sanctifying work of the Lord Jesus Christ to a sinner. It is the truly separated saint of God – the one who truly demonstrates and declares the power of the saving work of Christ by living a life that is more and more separated from the world and separated unto our holy God – it is that person who is the true son who "abides forever."

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