

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "Separation: Biblical Realism" (Colossians 3:16-17, Matthew 10:16-22 )

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/25/2015

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Today we begin a new phase of our study of the Biblical doctrine of separation. As we do that, I want to 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, beginning at 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.

This passage speaks to us of the separating authority of the Word of God and of the person of Jesus Christ. As we begin a new phase of our study today, I want to remind you of the great facts that we have seen thus far in our study.

First of all, we have seen that we who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, were aliens from God and from the kingdom of God before we became Christians.

Secondly, we have seen that the status of an individual changes as soon as you are converted. The true believer in Christ is no longer an alien from God, but the true believer in Christ is now an alien in this present evil world.

Thirdly, we have seen that Christians have been redeemed from their alienation from God, and made aliens in this present evil world, for an eternal purpose, which

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is to live the separated lives that God ordained for us to live from before the foundation of the world.

Fourthly, we have seen that Jesus Christ, God made manifest in the flesh, was Himself an alien while He was in this world in a human body.

And number five, we have seen that the Christian's alien status in this present evil world demands that we become increasingly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Number six, we have seen that the great hallmark of the Christian, the great differentiating characteristic of the separated believer, is that we are to stop loving this present evil world.

And in that connection, number seven, we have seen that if an individual does not think and act as an alien in this present evil world, does not act as a citizen of the world to come, there is reason to question whether that individual is truly in the faith, is truly saved.

### **Separation Requires a Biblical Attitude**

And this has now brought us to number eight of the ten great truths we are considering together, which is this: The Christian can only live as an alien in this present evil world by the power of the Word of God and the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God. To put it a different way, the Christian can only have *a Biblical attitude* concerning the necessity of separation by understanding of the Word of God says on the subject, and by submitting to the work of the Spirit of God.

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We are told in many places in the Scriptures that we ourselves are the temples of the living God in this present age. Dear friends, I submit to you that that is the central truth of the Biblical doctrine of separation. The presence of the written Word of God at your disposal, and the presence of the living God Himself dwelling within you and illuminating His Word for you, *must* make a separating difference in your life.

And it is only as individuals are separated unto God and separated from this present evil world that the church can truly be separated unto God and separated from this present evil world.

### **A Fourfold Attitude**

Now with these things in mind, let me put this question before you: What must be the attitude of separation that characterizes the thinking and the speaking and the living of every true believer in Christ? What must your attitude be – your attitude toward God, and your attitude toward the world?

We could say many things on this subject, but I believe that on the authority of Scripture we may summarize these things into four categories.

First of all, the separated Christian must cultivate *a realistic attitude* toward this present evil world.

Secondly, the separated Christian must cultivate *an uncompromising attitude* toward this present evil world.

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Thirdly, the separated Christian must cultivate *a soldier's attitude* toward this present evil world.

And fourthly and finally, the separated Christian must cultivate *a new creation's attitude* toward this present evil world.

A realistic attitude, an uncompromising attitude, a soldier's attitude, and a new creation's attitude. Those four characteristics summarize the Bible's distinguishing marks of separated living and thinking.

Today I want to begin to take up each of these aspects of the Biblical attitude of separation with you. And as we do so, we are going to look at a number of passages of Scripture together, and I hope that you will follow along in your own Bible if you are able.

### **A Realistic Attitude Toward This World**

So first of all, we see that Scripture declares to us that in order to live the life of separation that God calls upon us to live, the Christian must cultivate a realistic attitude toward this present evil world.

Every Christian must recognize that this world, this present world-system under the sway of Satan, and the unbelievers who are living the life of this present evil world under the sway of Satan – they too have an attitude. The world, despite its outward attractions, despite its seeming friendliness and cordiality at times – despite those outward appearances, this present evil world-system, and those who

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live in this present evil world apart from Christ, hate Christ and the Christian.

As Jesus tells us in John chapter 3, they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. They will not come to the light. And the world's hatred of Christ and the Christian is not merely a passive matter. It is an active hatred. The unbelieving world wants nothing more than to pollute the Christian and to undermine the church that seeks to take a separated stand.

And so the separated Christian must cultivate a realistic attitude about these things, an attitude that recognizes that the difference between the true Christian and this present evil world is not a matter of shades of gray, but it is the great divide between the blazing light of God and His holiness and the horrible darkness of sin and Satan.

### **"Wise As Serpents"**

Many passages of Scripture speak to us of this fact. Let me call your attention to just a few of them. First of all, Matthew chapter 10 beginning at verse 13. Matthew chapter 10, beginning at verse 13. Jesus said this to His disciples:

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues.

You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to

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you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

The realistic attitude of the separated saint of God toward this present evil world understands the true nature of this present evil world. We are the Lord's sheep in the midst of a world that is full of wolves. Therefore we must be, as Jesus put it, "wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

The word that is translated "wise" in this verse has to do with exercising prudence, recognizing where your best interests are situated. Christian, your best interests are not to be found in this present evil world. Your best interests are not situated in a position of compromise with the people of this present evil world.

It is utterly foolish – it is utterly unrealistic – to ever think that we live in a world that is Christ-friendly, or Christian-friendly, or Bible-friendly. Far from it. We have the word of our Lord Himself on that.

Christian, your best interests are to be found not in this present evil world or in the things of this world, but in the firm foundation of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Your best interests are to be found in the glories of the world to come.

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Understanding this is the realistic attitude of the separated saint of God.

### **Too Heavenly-Minded?**

The people of this present evil world, and even people within the church who have been deceived by the world, will try to tell you that you can be so heavenly-minded that you are no earthly good. Oh no, dear friend, think again! To be heavenly-minded is the only way you can truly be of earthly good to your holy God. Remember the words that we studied some time ago at the beginning of Colossians chapter 3:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

You, dear friend – if you are indeed a blood-bought child of God – you must have a realistic attitude about this present evil world. This world-system, this world's inhabitants, those who are apart from Christ – they want to pollute you, they want to drag you down, they want to bring you down to their sinful level. But God

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commands you to look above, where Christ is. God commands you to put to death the things that have to do with this present evil world.

### **Stop Marveling At The World's Hatred**

And you must be realistic in understanding what the ungodly attitude of the world will be toward you, as you adopt and practice a Godly attitude, a Biblical attitude of separation, regarding this present evil world.

The Apostle John said this, in the epistle of First John chapter 3, verse 13. First John chapter 3, verse 13:

Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

Once again, as John by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit used a very forceful term in First John chapter 2:15 when he said, literally, "Stop loving the world," likewise in this verse he uses a similar form in the original Greek. He says, literally, "*Stop marveling* at the fact that the world, in the very nature of the case, hates you." Stop marveling that the world hates you, because it is no marvel.

Jesus said this, in the Gospel of John chapter 15, beginning at verse 18. The Gospel of John chapter 15, beginning at verse 18:

If the world hates you [and these words are more accurately rendered, "*since* the world hates you"], you know that it hated Me [Jesus] before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet

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because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you, "A servant is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.... all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

Jesus goes on to say this a few verses later in the same discourse, in John chapter 16, at verse 2. Chapter 16, verse 2:

They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me.

The realistic attitude that the separated saint of God is to cultivate based on the firm foundation of the Word of God takes these things fully into account.

### **The World Seeks to Corrupt the Church**

Furthermore, we must recognize that the world not only seeks to pollute us as individuals and to drag us down and to drag us away from the holy standard of God, but the world also seeks to do this in the church, the body of Christ.

Let me call your attention to the epistle of Jude, near the end of the New Testament just before the book of Revelation; the epistle of Jude beginning at verse 3. The epistle of Jude, beginning at verse 3. Jude under the inspiration of the Holy

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Spirit writes these words:

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For [notice] certain men have crept in [that is, have crept into the church] unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The realistic attitude of the separated saint recognizes that these things happen in the church. There will be those who will come into the church who are seeking to pollute the church in its doctrine, in its worship, in its message.

They won't do this directly, Jude says, at least not in the beginning. They will creep in "unnoticed." Literally, in the original language, this could be translated as saying that they "gain entry by slipping in through a side door." The influences of this present evil world come into the church of Jesus Christ through people. And they come in with subtlety.

We must recognize that they do and will come in. Count on it. Be realistic about this. Satan will never rest. He will continually send his emissaries to seek to pollute the church. They will seek to substitute another gospel for the one true Gospel. They will seek to substitute the words and philosophies of fallen men for the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God. The realistic attitude of the separated

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saint therefore recognizes the need "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

### **The Separated Saints' Great Resources**

But dear friends, the realistic attitude of the separated saint of God also recognizes that God has given us the greatest resources we could possibly have, in order to think and to live and to act in holiness.

In John chapter 15 a few moments ago, I deliberately skipped over some verses that deal with this fact. But I want to bring them to your attention now. John chapter 15, beginning at verse 26. In the midst of His exposition of the hatred of the world for the church and for the Christian, Jesus gives us the promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit. John chapter 15, beginning at verse 26, Jesus says this:

When the Helper [that is, the Holy Spirit] comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning. These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.

And not only do we have the Spirit of God living within us as our great resource to equip us to live lives of separation and holiness, and to maintain a realistic attitude toward this present evil world – not only that, as wondrous as that is, but God has also given us the sure testimony of His written Word.

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Notice the words of the Lord Jesus in His great high priestly prayer in John chapter 17. Please turn with me, if you are able, to the Gospel of John chapter 17, beginning at verse 14. John chapter 17, beginning at verse 14. Jesus, praying to the Father, said this:

I have given them Your Word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by your truth. Your Word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

And in verse 20 of John chapter 17, Jesus made it clear that He was praying this prayer not only for the disciples then living, but for believers down through the centuries – He was praying this for us as well. John chapter 17, verse 20:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in Me, and I in you; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that you sent Me.

### **The Foundation of Realism**

It is on this sure foundation, on the foundation of the written Word of God, illuminated by the indwelling Spirit of God, that the separated Christian stands. It is

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on this firm foundation, and with this Divine enabling, that the separated saint of God can maintain a realistic attitude toward this present evil world.

Well dear friends, we have much more to say on this. Time has only permitted us to cover the first of the four things that characterize the attitude of the separated saint of God. We have seen that it must be a realistic attitude. We must be realistic in understanding the nature of this present evil world, and realistic also in understanding and making every use of the great resources that God has placed at our disposal.

It is on this firm foundation, and with this great equipping, that the true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can cultivate and maintain an uncompromising attitude toward this present evil world. And that, the Lord willing, will be our focus as we begin our next message.

#### **About the Broadcast**

*The Scripture-Driven Church* airs each week across the United States and around the world. Our goal is to obey Christ's Great Commission: preaching the Gospel to all, and equipping believers in Christ to live every area of life by the sole authority of Scripture, to the glory of our Lord and Savior.

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