

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "Separated From A Passing World" (Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/4/2015

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As we continue our study of the Biblical doctrine of separation, let me call your attention once again to the two passages of Scripture that we are focusing upon at the present time. The first deals with the separating *authority* of Scripture, and the second deals with the separating *imperative* of Scripture.

First of all let me remind you once again of the words that we find in Colossians chapter 3 beginning at verse 16. And as always, if you are able to do so, I hope that you will open your own copy of God's Word and follow along as we look at these passages together. We are studying the Word of God, not the word of man, dear friends. This is our sole authority. So first of all, I encourage you to turn with me to 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. (Colossians 3:16-17)

Here we have a declaration of the separating *authority* of Scripture. The Word of Christ is to dwell in the Christian richly. More literally, the Word of Christ must be the sole authority of the Christian. And because that is true, we are also subject to the authority of the Lord Jesus. Every word that we say, and every deed that we do, must be worthy of being done in His holy name.

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That is the separating authority of Scripture. Those who are truly born from above must separate themselves from the spiritual authority of this world, and separate themselves under the authority of the Word of God. Scripture commands it, and our Lord rightfully demands it.

And exactly what is it that Scripture commands, and that our Lord demands of His saints? The answer to this question brings us to the second passage of Scripture that we are dealing with at present. First John chapter 2 beginning at verse 15 gives us the *imperative* of separation.

We find this imperative in many places in the Word of God, but we find it stated to us in a particularly direct way here in the first epistle of John. 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)

Contrary to Human Tendencies

Today we are going to be focusing on verse 17, "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." In order that we might properly understand what the Holy Spirit is saying to us in verse 17, let me

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briefly review what we have seen thus far in verses 15 and 16.

First of all, we have seen that the imperative of separation from this present evil world, and separation unto our holy God, is something that is contrary to our natural human tendency. Our natural tendency is to love this world which is under the sway of Satan, and to love the things of this world, which can be so attractive to our flesh and to our pride.

And it is for this reason that we have this very emphatic statement at the beginning of verse 15. In the original language, it actually reads like this: "*Stop loving* the world..." Stop doing what you have been doing. *Agape* love, self-sacrificial love, for this present evil world is the natural tendency of the heart of a sinner. But the Holy Spirit through the Apostle John commands those who have become Christians to stop doing that.

Friendship With the World Is Enmity Against God

Secondly, we have seen in verse 15 that separation from the world is a key indicator of whether or not you are a Christian.

The Holy Spirit through John first puts this in the negative. And today, the Lord willing, we are going to go on to examine the positive aspect of this command. But the negative, as we saw in our last message, is this, in verse 15: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

In other words, if you profess to be a Christian, but you are living a life of self-

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sacrificial love for this present evil world and the things of this present evil world, then dear friend, you need to examine yourself to see if you are truly in the faith.

Why? Because worldly living, and 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. James chapter 4 verse 4 tells us that friendship with this present evil world is spiritual adultery.

Do you not know [James declares] that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)

The Biblical doctrine of separation is a most serious matter, dear friend. In these messages we are dealing with a vital matter for your soul.

This World's Lust and Pride

And this brings us to a third point. First John 2:16 tells us that all that this present evil world under the sway of Satan can offer is governed by two great evils, lust and pride.

Lust is the desire or craving for that which God has forbidden. And so verse 16 speaks of "the lust of the flesh." The lust of the flesh has to do with the fact that apart from the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, apart from the new birth, the body of every human being is controlled and energized and motivated by our fallen nature. In thousands of different ways, we all desire what feels good to our flesh even though

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so much of it is harmful to our spirits.

And then verse 16 also speaks of "the lust of the eyes." This is the second component or expression of the sum total of all that is in the world under the curse. This present evil world lives according to "the lust of the eyes," according to the false values that are based upon outward appearances rather than inward reality. As we saw in our last message, man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart. Outward appearances can and do deceive us.

And sinful man's tendency to follow after outward appearances rather than inward reality has to do with the third component of "all that is in" this present evil world, and that is "the pride of life."

As we saw in our last message, in the original language, this term "the pride of life" speaks of empty thinking. It speaks of a vain confidence in the resources of sinful man. And it speaks, worse yet, of sinful man's foolish confidence in the things of this present evil world – and coupled with that, "the pride of life" speaks of a contempt for the law of God.

But the Holy Spirit through the Apostle John declares to us that the individual who is truly growing in the knowledge of God, the individual who is truly separating himself from the world, will not seek to have such pride.

The individual who is letting the Word of Christ dwell in him richly in all wisdom will have a greater and greater understanding of the rightful authority of Jesus Christ

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and His written Word in the believer's life. And if you realize that, dear friend, you will therefore say, as John the Baptist said in the Gospel of John chapter 3 verse 30, "He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease."

This World Is Passing Away

"The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," John says, are "all that is in the world." These things are all that this world under condemnation and under the curse can offer. That is the negative. But then in verse 17, the Holy Spirit through John states the positive to us. Notice verse 17 once again: "The world is passing away, and the lust of it, but he who does the will of God abides forever."

Dear friends, this is the great hope of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. If all we ever had to look forward to, for all eternity, was continually living and struggling and dying in this present evil world, and battling against the lusts of this present evil world and the pride of this present evil world, that would be a most miserable prospect.

As the Holy Spirit tells us through the Apostle Paul, in First Corinthians chapter 15 verse 19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." If this world were all that there is, if this world were the extent of what we could hope for in Christ, that would indeed be a pathetic situation.

But Christ by His death, burial, and resurrection, has done so much more. First John chapter 3 verse 8 tells us that Jesus came into this world in order "that He might

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destroy the works of the Devil."

In the original language, the word that is translated "destroy" is a very powerful word. It indicates first of all that Jesus, by His finished work, has deprived this present evil world under the sway of Satan of its spiritual authority over the Christian.

This word in the original also indicates that Jesus has, by His finished work, already accomplished the ultimate destruction of this present evil world-system under the sway of Satan. And the word further indicates that by destroying the works of the Devil, Jesus has loosed the bonds of those who were once imprisoned by "all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." We can have victory over these things.

Separation: The Christian's Only Reasonable Course

Look at First John 2:17 once again: "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it." In fact, the wording in the original language is even stronger. Notice first of all the connective word "and" at the beginning of verse 17. The imperative of separation that we have before us is a very logical statement. The Biblical doctrine of separation is the only reasonable course for the believer in Christ in view of the facts that this passage places before us.

The Holy Spirit through John commands us to stop loving the world. And then He tells us why we must stop loving the world. It is because, verse 15, of the fact that the

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redeeming love that God the Father has, the love that is to be in us, is totally incompatible with love for this present evil world. There can be no "peaceful coexistence" within the true believer between love for this present evil world under the sway of Satan and love for the things that are precious to the heart of God the Father.

And in verse 16, the Holy Spirit tells us why that is true. It is because all that the world has to offer is not "is not of the Father." It is not that which pertains to His redeeming love. It is not that of which He approves. It is, in fact, that which He condemns. But if these things, these negative things, were not reason enough to stop loving this present evil world, the Holy Spirit through the Apostle John then gives us these positive reasons.

And thus we have that word "and" at the beginning at verse 17. What is this passage saying? It is saying, not only are all these negative things true, but furthermore, this "world is passing away, and the lust of it."

The Doom of This Present World-System

And in the original language, the term "passing away" literally means that this present evil world "is being *compelled* to pass away." God is causing this world to come to an end. The word in the original language speaks of a parade that is passing by. That is what is happening in this present evil world. Sinful man under the sway of Satan is parading by, in a continual vain show of lust and pride, generation after generation.

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And it seems so powerful doesn't it? It looks so powerful. It looks as though this sinful parade will never end. But it will. Because of the cross-work of Jesus Christ, the passing away of this present evil world is, in the mind of God, an already accomplished fact. The doom of this present evil world-system, and the doom of Satan and his minions who presently control it, is absolutely certain. We find this great promise in many other passages of Scripture. Let me point out three of them that are especially significant to the doctrine of separation.

First of all, 1 Corinthians 7:31. Paul declares that "the *form* of this world is passing away." In the original language, this verse is telling us that the very constitution of this present world-system, which seems so strong, so permanent, so indestructible, is in fact at this present time in the process of passing away. That is the unstoppable plan and purpose of God.

Secondly, First John 2:8 tells us that "the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining." It may not appear so to fallible human eyes, dear friend. As the Gospel of John chapter 1 tells us, light has come into the world in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John chapter 3 that sinful men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

"But," Jesus said in John 3:21, "he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." The true light is already shining, dear friends. It is shining in those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is shining in those who are living lives that are separated from this

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present evil world, and separated unto Him.

Jesus said, in the Gospel of John chapter 8 verse 12, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." And Jesus also said this, Matthew chapter 5, beginning at verse 14:

You [you who believe on Me] are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven.

The light that is to shine before men, dear friends, is the light of Christ. It is the light of a separated life. And that brings us to a third passage that I want to call to your attention that speaks to us of God's firm promise that this present evil world is passing away.

We find it in Second Peter chapter 3, beginning at verse 10. Here the Holy Spirit gives us a very graphic picture of the destiny of this present evil world under the sway of Satan. Second Peter chapter 3, beginning at verse 10:

But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the Earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

And then notice what the Holy Spirit says through Peter in verse 11. It is the same

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imperative that we are seeing in First John chapter 2. Second Peter chapter 3, verse 11:

Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for New Heavens and a New Earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him [by Jesus] in peace, without spot and blameless...

And now, dear friend, if you are following along with me, turn back once again to First John chapter 2, verse 17:

And the world is passing away [literally, God is compelling it to pass away], and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The Great Contrast

Here we have the great contrast. Just as the destruction of this present evil world is the unstoppable will of God, so also the preservation and perseverance of the separated saint is the unstoppable will of God. "He who does the will of God abides forever."

Dear friend, do you understand these things? Are you living in the light of these

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things? Biblical separation involves taking hold of and loving and nurturing that which abides forever, and putting off and hating and putting to death that which is passing away, because this present evil world is passing away.

The separated saint of God "abides forever." Just what does this mean? What is the significance of those words for you, dear Christian friend? How does this bear upon your struggles in this present life? How does it bear upon the glories of the life to come? Once again, we are going to find that this is a very rich statement in the Word of God.

What is great resource of the separated saint of God? What is the glorious hope of the separated saint? Those questions will be our focus, the Lord willing, as we continue this study on our next broadcast.

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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