

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "The Tragedy of Compromise" (Colossians 3:16, 1 Kings 11:1-11)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 5/25/2014

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Today we are continuing our series of messages on the Biblical doctrine of separation. As we begin, I want to call your attention once again to the passage that has been the theme for us in this series, in Colossians chapter 3. Please turn with me in your Bible if you are able today to Colossians chapter 3 verse 16. Let us hear once again this command of God. 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.

The words on which I want to focus our attention today are the words that are found at the beginning of that passage: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."

The Dangers of Compartmentalization

Now if you have been listening to this series of messages, you have probably heard me say before that the word that is translated "dwell" in verse 16 is a very special word in the original language. Literally, in the original language, verse 16 would read like this: "Let the Word of Christ be fully and abundantly at home within you." It could also be translated this way: "Let the Word of Christ have unrestricted influence within you."

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Unrestricted influence. What does this mean? What does it mean for the Word of God to have unrestricted influence within you? It means this: You cannot compartmentalize your life. You cannot set aside any area of your life or your thinking nor your living and say, in effect, that something other than the Word of God is going to have the authority in that area of your life.

As a Christian, you cannot have any locked rooms within the house of your heart. You cannot have any barred doors. You cannot have any area of your life in which you effectively place a "DO NOT ENTER" sign for the Word of God and the Spirit of God. You have no right to do that. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." Let the Word of Christ have unrestricted influence within you.

Dear friends, this is where we as individual Christians, and where we as the visible church as a body, stand or fall in the matter of Biblical separation. The issue in Biblical separation is the authority of the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God. People try to make many other things the issue or the focus. But the issue, as we have seen in previous messages, is the standard of separation. And that standard is holy Scripture.

In Second Peter chapter 1, at verse 20, we read that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation." Now many people misunderstand what those words mean. But here is what they mean: they mean that the Word of God is not the thinking of fallible, sinful man. The Bible is not what sinful men decided was true

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or not true. It is not what sinful men decided should be the standard or should not be the standard. No.

And we are told in the very next verse of Second Peter chapter 1, in verse 21, why this is the case. "Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The Bible is not the mere word of man. The Bible is not from the heart or mind of man. The Bible is revelation from God given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to holy men of God who were driven by the Holy Spirit to write the words of the supernatural Book that we hold in our hands.

This is the authority. It is the only authority. We are not the authority. No church tradition is the authority. No word of any pope or counsel is the authority. No book by any human being is the authority. And what you or I may think is practical is not the authority. What you or I may think is the pragmatic thing to do in a certain situation is not the authority.

God's Word is the authority. And so God's Word must have unrestricted influence within the individual believer and within the church as a body. This is where we stand or fall in the matter of separation: Will we submit to the Word of God or will we not? And so, God tells us that we are not to compartmentalize our lives. We are not to compartmentalize the life of the church.

Now I can remember, and I am sure many of you can also, that nearly 20 years ago there was a great scandal involving the President of the United States at that

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time, Mr. Clinton. This President of the United States committed great sin, right in the White House, right in the Oval Office.

Now his defenders said that his private behavior had nothing to do with his public ability to serve as President. In other words, they said that he had the right to compartmentalize his life. He had the right to be exceedingly sinful in his private behavior, and they claimed that this would have no effect on his discharge of his public duties.

These people were wrong. And I believe that now, almost 20 years later, we have not yet seen all of the evil results of the evil this man did, and its effect on America and the world. There are long-term consequences yet to be seen and realized.

Now, that is an example from recent times. But we find an even more graphic and tragic example in the life of a man named Solomon, who was king of Israel. Solomon began exceedingly well, but then he failed miserably. And as a result, Solomon and the nation he led into wickedness fell under the chastening hand of the holy God. We find the historical record of King Solomon in the book of First Kings, in chapters 1 through 11, and in the book of Second Chronicles, in chapter 1 through chapter 9.

Solomon's Great Beginning

When we think of King Solomon in the Old Testament, we often think of the things that we were perhaps taught in Sunday school long ago. We think of the

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great temple that Solomon built as the dwelling place of God among the people of Israel, and as the place of the true worship of God in Israel, as it was intended to be. We think also of the great wisdom of Solomon, wisdom that he asked God to give him, wisdom that God granted to him.

We may also think of the greatness of Solomon's kingdom, of the expansion of the geographical area that was under the rule of the King of Israel, and the great wealth that Solomon and Israel came to have. We read in Second Chronicles chapter 9 verse 27 that because of the great wealth that Solomon accumulated, silver was as common in Jerusalem as stones.

No nation has seen wealth like that before or since. Israel was at the peak of its power. Israel was doubtless the greatest nation on earth at this time. Solomon was famous throughout the world. Other rulers came to Solomon to see his greatness firsthand and to experience his wisdom firsthand. We read of all of this in the first ten chapters of First Kings.

Solomon's Tragic Compromises

But then, if you read the account of Solomon in the book of First Kings, you come to chapter 11. And you find Solomon falling away from the Godly beginning that he had. You find Solomon entering into compromises with the world.

As early as First Kings chapter 3, you find Solomon entering into ungodly

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political alliances which God had forbidden for the people of Israel. And God forbade those ungodly political alliances because such alliances would also be spiritual alliances with unbelievers that would bring about spiritual downfall in Israel. In First Kings chapter 3 you find Solomon making a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and marrying Pharaoh's daughter for political advantage.

Solomon sought alliances with Egypt and with other surrounding pagan nations because he believed that they were necessary for the protection and the prosperity of Israel. Solomon was looking not to the mighty arm of God to defend and to prosper the nation of Israel. Solomon decided that he needed to look to the arm of fallen man for peace and prosperity.

We also see Solomon taking many wives from among the pagans. Part of this had to do with the fact that taking these wives aided Solomon in achieving the political alliances that he established with the ungodly nations. But when Solomon took on these wives, he also took on their gods. We read this in First Kings chapter 11, beginning at verse one. If you are able to do so, please turn with me to this passage in your Bible, First Kings chapter 11, beginning at verse one:

But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites – from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love.

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And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom [or Molech] the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David.

Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is East of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded.

Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant." (1 Kings 11:1-11)

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Separation Requires Singleness of Heart

Dear friends, this was not a new pronouncement from God. God had warned Israel all the way back in the wilderness, before they entered the land of Canaan, that they were to be a people separated from the world and separated unto the Lord their God. And God had warned Solomon personally about these things way back at the beginning of his reign. In First Kings chapter 9, God said to Solomon:

If you walk before Me... in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever...

But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house [this temple] which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

Notice the way God put this command before Solomon. It is the same way in which He puts the command before us in Colossians chapter 3 verse 16. God said to Solomon, "If you walk before Me in integrity of heart..." – "Integrity of heart" – in the original language, this means, "with your whole heart." With singleness of heart. Nothing excluded. No compartmentalization.

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And God said to Solomon, "If you will... do according to all that I have commanded you..." In other words, all of My authority. If you will walk before Me in such a way that there is no part of your living and your thinking that is not under My authority and under the authority of My Word, "if you keep My statutes and My judgments..."

And that word "keep" in the original language has to do not only with obeying the statutes and judgments of God, but also with keeping watch over the commandments and judgments of God, setting those commandments and judgments before the people as that which is to be obeyed, and preserving and protecting the Word of God in Israel as the spiritual leader of the people.

This was the great charge that God placed before Solomon. It is also the great charge that He places before the people of God today. It is the great charge that God places before the leadership of the visible church today. Not only wholeheartedly and without exception keep My commandments yourself, but also preserve and protect the pure Word of God and set it before the people as the standard of separation that they are to follow.

God's Warning to Solomon and Israel

God said to Solomon, if you do these things, you will be blessed. And it will not simply be a matter of material blessing, but it will be a matter of spiritual blessing and it will be a matter of a spiritual legacy for the people of Israel. But if you do not obey My Word, God said to Solomon, calamity is going to come. And

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it will not merely be political or military or economic calamity. It will be all of that too. But above all, God said, it will be spiritual calamity.

And we see that in the subsequent history of Israel during the latter days of Solomon and for hundreds of years afterward. The kingdom was split. The northern kingdom of Israel went into deep and continual compromise with paganism, and this eventually led to their destruction and captivity.

And although there were some periods of brief revival in the southern kingdom of Judah, that part of the split kingdom also went into spiritual compromise that led to their destruction and captivity as well. The temple that Solomon had built was destroyed, just as God said it would be. Jerusalem was destroyed. The people were taken captive and taken away to a foreign land.

Dear friends there is much more that we need to say about these things, and because of the limits of time we will need to reserve those things for our next message in this series. But let me conclude today by saying that Christians individually, and the church of Jesus Christ as a body, stand in danger of God's chastening hand today, just as Israel did many centuries ago, because we individually and corporately are not taking the spiritually separated stand that God commands us to take. The evidence is all around us.

A Warning for Christians and the Church Today

Dear friends, as I preach this to you today I am also preaching it to myself. And

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let me explain to you why I say that. Let me ask this question: Is there anyone listening to my voice today, who can raise the right hand before God and say, honestly, "I have never compromised" – "I have never compartmentalized my thinking or my living" – "I have never blocked off an area of my life and said in effect that it was off-limits to the authority of God and His word" – "I have never held onto and refused to give up the habit or a relationship or a way of thinking that I know God's Word says is wrong"?

Can any of us, as individual Christians, say that we have never been guilty before God in such matters? Can any of us, in our churches, say that we have never done these things or that we are not now doing these things in some shape or form?

In First Corinthians chapter 10, the Apostle Paul calls to mind the history of the evil practices of the nation of Israel even as far back as their days in the wilderness, before they ever entered the promised land. And he says that these things are given to us in our day as examples, in the Word of God, so that we will not fall into the same evils.

"They were written," Paul says, "for our admonition" so that we might not fall into the same things. Paul says, First Corinthians chapter 10 verse nine, let us not tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted Him. In other words, let us not do those things and think those things and make those compromises that would cause the chastening hand of God to come upon us.

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Paul says this, in First Corinthians chapter 10, verse 12: "Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Do not think that you are exempt from these things. Do not think that you can get away with compromise. Do not think that your church and its leadership and its congregation are not susceptible to these things. Do not think that you do not need to cling to the Word of God ever more steadfastly. You do.

There Is No Such Thing As a "Harmless" Compromise

Dear friends, as we continue in this study we are going to see that there is no such thing as a "small compromise." There is no such thing as a "temporary compromise." There is no such thing as a "harmless compromise." There is no such thing as a "pragmatic compromise" that will lead to a Godly result.

Today's compromise may seem small, but God's Word demonstrates to us, and the history of the church demonstrates to us, that seemingly small compromises have great and devastating results. Supposedly temporary compromises are not at all temporary. Supposedly short-term compromises inevitably have long-term evil results.

Supposedly harmless compromises in fact do great harm. Romans chapter 3 verse eight warns us against the sin of saying "Let us do evil so that good may come." That is the philosophy of the pragmatist, and God hates it.

Dear friends, we must not compromise with the world. We must not

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compromise with the god of this world. We must be separated from the world and separated unto the living God and the Word of God.

Separation may have a temporary cost. But God will honor our separation here and now. And the temporary cost of separation will lead to far greater and eternal reward in the life to come. And we shall see these things more clearly, the Lord willing, as we continue this series of messages.

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