

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "The Pride of Compromise" (Colossians 3:16-17, 1 Peter 5:5-9)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

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Let me call your attention once again to the passage that has been the theme for this series of messages, in Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse 16. And as always, I hope that if you are able to do so you will turn with me to these verses in your own copy of God's Word. Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse 16. The Apostle Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit writes this:

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.

At the present time we are particularly focusing our attention on the words that are found at the beginning of this passage: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." I am especially encouraging you to be mindful of these words because they are a command of God, and they are a key to the issue that we are addressing in this series of messages.

God's Word Must Have Unrestricted Influence

Today we are once again taking up the issue of Biblical separation. God calls upon His people to be spiritually separated from this present sinful world, and to be separated unto Him. And so the question immediately confronts us: How are we to do that? How is it possible to live life in this present evil world, but to

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maintain a spiritual separation from the world? And how is it possible, in a world that confronts us with thousands of temptations and distractions – how is it possible for a Christian to be truly separated unto God?

As we have been seeing in these messages, the answer to these questions is to be found, first and foremost, in a Christian's attitude, and a church's attitude, toward the Word of Christ, the Word of God.

Let me remind you once again that the word that is translated "dwell" in verse 16 is a very special word in the original language. Literally, in the original language of the New Testament, verse 16 could be translated this way: "Let the Word of Christ have unrestricted influence within you."

What does it mean for the Word of God to have unrestricted influence within you? It means that no individual Christian, and no church as a body, has the right to say that anything is off-limits to the absolute authority of the Word of God.

Now you may say, "Well, I am not like that" – "My church is not like that." And dear friend, if that is indeed true of you, and if that is indeed true of your church, I praise God with you that this is true. But let me also say to you that we can never rest on our laurels, spiritually speaking. We can never assume that the battle is over.

We Are In a Spiritual Battle With the Father of the Lie

The Word of God tells us that we are in a spiritual battle against the forces of Satan until the day God calls us home to glory. Satan is constantly seeking to

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cause our feet to slip. First John chapter 2, verse 16 tells us that the things of the world are ever before us – "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" – and these are the things that Satan constantly employs to try to separate us from our God and from His Word.

In John 8:44 Jesus declared that Satan is a liar from the beginning, and the father of the lie. And in the original language, when Jesus said that Satan is the father of the lie, He was not merely saying that Satan is the inventor of the lie. Indeed, Satan is that. But he is more than that.

Satan is the one who has infused lying and falsehood into the very fabric of this present evil world. Satan is the one who actuates and governs the minds of unbelievers. And so Satan has a perverse, we might say fatherly, attitude toward lies and lying. He wants to see lying grow. He wants to see truth suppressed.

And nowhere is Satan more actively engaged in this perverse fatherly work than in the minds and lives of individual Christians, and in the minds and lives of churches and church leaders. Satan is constantly seeking to restrict the influence of the Word of God within us. Satan is constantly at work trying to get us to effectively place certain areas of our thinking and our living off-limits to the authority of the Word of God.

Two Kinds of Separation

You see, dear friend, this is the issue of separation: You are either separated

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from the world, or you are separated from God. It is a matter of the will. You are either seeking to be separated from the sinful influences of this world and of false religion and the philosophies of man, or you are in fact seeking to be separated from the holy influence of God and His Word.

This is why James chapter 4, verses 6 and 7 declare to us that

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore submit to God. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you. (James 4:6-7)

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." That is a quotation from Proverbs chapter 3, verse 34 in the Old Testament. Peter, in his first epistle, also quotes that verse – First Peter chapter 5, beginning at verse 5. We read this:

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith... (1 Peter 5:5-9)

The sad fact is that as we look at the lives of professing Christians generally today, and as we look at the life of the typical professing church in our day, we see very little resisting of the Devil in our time. We often find much more of

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separation from God and His Word than we find of separation from the god of this world and his lying words.

Few Christians today are truly separated Christians. Few churches today are truly separated churches. We see compromise with the world all around us. And I believe, dear friends, that if we hold up the standard of the Word of God and look honestly at ourselves against that holy and supreme standard, we must admit that we see compromise not only all around us but also within us.

Compromise Bespeaks Pride – Separation Bespeaks Humility

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." It is pride that walls off areas of our living and our thinking. It is pride that thinks we can get away with that. But God resists the proud – literally, in the original language, He opposes the proud, He sets Himself in battle array against the proud. That is the meaning in this verse.

God stands in opposition to those who stand in opposition to the authority of His Word. And Scripture is not talking only about unbelievers, dear friends. God stands in opposition even to the Christian who stands in opposition to the authority of His Word.

That is why the spiritual lives of so many Christians are so weak today. That is why so much of the church is so spiritually ineffectual today. Many Christians, and much of the church today, is wealthy in the things of this world but in poverty

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concerning the things of God. And the reason is because many individual Christians and many assemblies of Christians are not practicing the doctrine of Biblical separation. Pride has entered in. Man's word, instead of God's Word, has taken preeminence – Satan's lies instead of God's truth.

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." God, through His Word and through His indwelling Spirit, exerts a sanctifying influence upon the souls of those who humbly submit to His Word and His Spirit. God does not resist those who do not resist Him.

"Draw near to God," James chapter 4, verse 8, "and He will draw near to you." Do not resist God, but resist the Devil. God will draw near, James declares, and the Devil will flee. This is the promise of God. And this is how God works. This is how the influence of God's Word works. Do not reserve any part of your thinking and your living for the Devil. Reserve it all for God. That is the essence of Biblical separation.

Words Solomon Failed to Heed

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." I mentioned a moment ago that these words, which are quoted multiple times in the New Testament, are from Proverbs chapter 3, verse 34. They are one of the proverbs of King Solomon.

In our last message, we saw that the life of Solomon was a tragic life. The tragedy of Solomon's life, which also became the subsequent tragedy of Israel for

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hundreds of years, was the tragedy of compromise with the world. Solomon began well. Solomon began in humility. He asked God not for riches, but for wisdom. And so God gave Him both.

But Solomon became proud. What is the essence of pride? The essence of pride is to say to God, in effect, "I come first." God does not come first. I come first. What I want comes first. What I think comes first. My interests come first. My opinions come first.

And as pride develops, it treasures "my things" – "my way" – "my opinions" – "the way I see things." And beyond that, as pride grows, it also develops into a disdain for anyone else's things, anyone else's opinion, anyone else's way. And what we have among many professing Christians today, and in many churches today, is just that – "We know better than God." We know that God's Word says this. We know that God's Word tells us to do certain things, and not to do certain things. We know that God's Word tells us to think in certain ways and not to think in certain ways. But we know better.

That was the downfall of Solomon. There was no doubt what God required Solomon to do. There was no doubt how God required Solomon to think. God's commands to be separated from the world and separated unto the Lord were clear. Solomon had them in writing. And Solomon had them from the mouth of his father David. And Solomon had them when God Himself appeared to him, more than once.

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In the same way, dear friends, we have the written Word of God. We have more of it than Solomon had. We have the complete Scriptures. And we have the Spirit of God living within us, if we are truly believers. Solomon had no excuse, and we have no excuse. We are commanded to be separated from the world, and separated unto God, and God has given us every resource necessary to do that.

What Was the Difference Between David and Solomon?

In our last message, we saw that God's hand of resistance came against Solomon because Solomon thought that he knew better than God. We find Solomon entering into compromises with the world even at the very earliest stages of his kingdom. In First Kings chapter 3, verse 3 we read that "Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David" – but with one notable exception. That notable exception was that Solomon "sacrificed and burned incense at the high places," the places where the people of Israel offered worship to pagan gods. This was even before Solomon built the temple.

Also at that very early stage of his kingdom, we find Solomon entering into other compromises with the world. He entered into ungodly political alliances which God had forbidden for the people of Israel, because those political alliances would also involve spiritual alliances with unbelievers that would bring about spiritual downfall in Israel. We find that very early in his reign, Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married his daughter for political

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advantage. And later on we find in First Kings chapter 11 that Solomon took hundreds of foreign wives from the surrounding pagan nations,

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."

And that is in fact what happened. Solomon instituted the worship of pagan gods which involved gross immorality and even child sacrifice.

And we also read in First Kings chapter 11 that Solomon's "heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David... Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David."

Now someone who is listening to this message may be saying, "But what was the big difference between David and Solomon? David committed great sin against God. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. And then he arranged the murder of Uriah in order to hide his adultery."

And yes indeed, David did those things. And God did not let David get away with those things. God through Nathan the prophet confronted David with his sin. But in all of this, David never went after the gods of the pagans. David never led the nation in idolatry or in any other kind of spiritual compromise.

And when God confronted David through Nathan the prophet about his great sin, David fell on his face before God in repentance. And we have the record of

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that repentance, in Psalm 51, from the pen of David.

We have David crying out to God for mercy. We have David confessing his transgression to God. We have David coming before the Lord with a broken and contrite heart. We have David acknowledging his transgression, acknowledging the fact that he had sinned against God and done evil in His sight, and repenting of his sin and asking God to cleanse his sin.

We have David asking God to deliver him from the guilt of bloodshed. We have David asking God to create a clean heart within him, and to renew a steadfast spirit within him, and to restore to David the joy of the Lord's salvation.

But dear friends, we never find the equivalent of Psalm 51 from the pen of Solomon. In Proverbs chapter 3, beginning at verse 3, we find Solomon writing words to his own son that Solomon himself would fail to heed:

Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:3-6)

Solomon failed to trust in the Lord with all his heart. Solomon leaned to his own understanding. He made many spiritual compromises. He acted as though he knew better than God. He partitioned off areas of his life and set himself up as the

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lord of those things. In Proverbs chapter 4, beginning at verse 14, we find Solomon giving this exhortation to his own son, which Solomon himself did not follow – Proverbs chapter 4, beginning at verse 14:

Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on....

And then later in the same chapter, beginning at verse 23, Solomon writes this:

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil. (Proverbs 4:14-15, 23-27)

But Solomon did not follow his own advice to his son. And so Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes writes of the vanity of his life, of the vanity of human wisdom apart from God, of the vanity of sinful pleasures, of the vanity of building up things for himself instead of building for God, of the vanity of popularity, and of the vanity of riches. And Solomon comes to the end of his life, and in the end of the book of Ecclesiastes he says this:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into

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judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

A "David" Church or a "Solomon" Church?

Dear friend, we might very well put the issue of Biblical separation in these terms: Are you like David, or are you like Solomon? Is your church a "David" church, or is it a "Solomon" church?

As we look around us today, we must honestly say that we see many more professing Christians acting like Solomon than acting like David. We find many more congregations following the ways of Solomon than following the ways of David. We find many congregations that are like the Laodicean church of Revelation chapter 3 verse 14, a church that Christ called on to repent. The Lord says this to the church that is in compromise, and refuses to be separate – Revelation 3, beginning at verse 15:

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked — I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your

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eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 3:14-22)

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