

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "Separation: Stop the Charade" (Colossians 3:16-17, Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 2:5-11)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

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As we continue what I pray will be a careful and thorough examination of the doctrine of spiritual separation in Scripture, let me call your attention once again to the passage that has been our anchor point for this series of messages, in Colossians chapter 3, verses 16 and 17:

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.

Indeed it is the Word of Christ, the Word of God, the inspired, infallible, inerrant Book that we hold in our hands, that must be our sole authority and our infallible critic as we examine what God requires of us concerning this vital matter of spiritual separation.

Clearly, the Word of God does command this of us. It is not an option. It is an imperative for every Christian and every congregation. As we have been examining God's command for His people to be spiritually separated from the world and separated unto their Lord and King, we have begun to look at ten propositions from the Scriptures. So far, we have seen four of them.

First of all, we have seen that those who are now in Christ, those who are saved, were once aliens from God and aliens from the kingdom of God. But we have seen, secondly, that the status of the true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ

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changes as soon as you are converted. The individual who was once an alien from God but fully at home in this present evil world, is now an alien in this present world, and a citizen of the world to come. Thirdly, we have seen that Christians have been redeemed from their alien status toward God, and made aliens in this present evil world, for a Divine eternal purpose. That purpose is so that they might accomplish the work in this present world that God ordained from before the foundation of the world for His people to do.

Now these first three truths or propositions brought us to a critical question: How does God now accomplish this? And this brought us face to face with the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fourth proposition that we saw in the Word of God is that Jesus Christ – the God-man, God made flesh, dwelling among sinful men, coming into the world to redeem sinful men from the wrath of God – Jesus Christ was an alien while He was in this world in a human body. We saw that in our last message.

Now, this brought us to yet another critical question at the end of our last message: How is it that Jesus walked and lived among sinful men, but still, as the book of Hebrews tells us, remained absolutely separate from sinners? Today I want to take up the answer to that question with you.

Scripture's Focus On Holiness

Now, from my own conversations with many people, and from the correspondence we receive from listeners, I gather that many people have never

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a preacher speak of the doctrine of separation in the terms in which we are approaching it in this series. Or perhaps you have never heard anyone speak of the doctrine of separation at all. I think that the latter case is more common among Christians today, it is sad to say. But we must examine the doctrine of separation in the particular way that we are doing it, because Scripture makes it clear that the doctrine of separation focuses on the issue of holiness. It focuses on the fact that God says over and over in His word, "Be holy, because I am holy."

We saw in an earlier message in this series that God Himself is the standard of holiness. God Himself is the standard of separation. That is what those words mean – "Be holy, because I am holy." And that is why these verses in Colossians chapter 3 have been the anchor point of this series of messages. The Word of Christ is our standard of holiness, our standard of separation. The person of Christ is our standard of holiness, our standard of separation.

That is why it is vital to let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, to have full and unfettered influence in your life. That is why it is vital that the Christian do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus. If you cannot do it in His holy name, then it should not be done. If you cannot think it in His holy name, it is an unholy thought that is not worthy for the separated believer. If you cannot say it in the name of the Lord Jesus, it is a word coming out of your mouth that is not fitting for the separated believer in Christ.

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And so there is nothing more important for the spiritual separation of the believer in Christ than to know the Word of Christ, and there is nothing more important for the separated believer in the Lord Jesus Christ than to know Christ Himself. In Philippians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul told the Philippian believers that his great quest in this life was "that I may know Him" – the Lord Jesus – "and the power of His resurrection." "Indeed," Paul said, "I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Is Your Church Preaching the Authentic Jesus?

Now dear friends, there is a very serious problem about this in most of what is called the evangelical church today. There is a tragic tendency in much of contemporary preaching to overemphasize the humanity of Jesus to the point of dangerously diminishing or even denying His deity. The kind of preaching that is going out from so many pulpits today is the preaching of "another Jesus" and not the authentic Jesus. The true Christ, the One who we are truly to know, the One whose power we are to seek, was – and is – both fully God and fully man. It is for that reason that He was able to live the separated life perfectly when He was in this present evil world and dwelling among sinful men.

There is a passage earlier in that same book of Philippians that is a key to understanding the true nature of our Lord Jesus. And it is only as we understand His true nature that we truly understand the way in which He is all of the things that I mentioned in our last message. He is, first of all, the Savior of sinners. He is, secondly,

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the great example of righteousness and holiness and separation from sin for the believer living in this present evil world. And thirdly, He is the standard of perfection that sheds the blinding light of Heaven on the sinfulness and the condemned state of those who are still lost in their sins and under God's condemnation.

Turn with me in your Bibles, if you are able, to Philippians chapter 2, beginning at verse 5. Philippians chapter 2, beginning at verse 5. We read this:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

We could say a great deal about these verses, but I want to point out certain things in particular to you. First of all, when the Apostle Paul under divine inspiration speaks of Jesus "being in the form of God" and "taking the form of a bondservant," he is using a Greek word which means "to have an outward

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appearance that agrees with the inward nature."

Scripture tells us that Jesus, God the Son, before He came into this world, had His being "in the form of God." These words in the original language tell us two things. First of all, Jesus' deity is the outward expression of His inward nature. And secondly, the way the word is used here in Philippians tells us that Jesus' deity is a continuous state – past, present, and future. In other words, when Jesus came into this world in a body of flesh, He did not empty Himself of or, in any way diminish, His deity. In taking on the form of a servant, Jesus voluntarily laid aside heavenly privileges and prerogatives in obedience to God the Father, but His deity was not changed or diminished. Jesus was still the God of the universe while He was in this world in a human body.

And there is another phrase in these verses that is in harmony with this. The Apostle Paul speaks of Jesus "taking the form of a bondservant." This tells us that servanthood was also an outward expression of Jesus' inward nature. His deity remained intact when He took on the form of a servant. Humanity was the means by which He manifested His servanthood. Jesus spoke of this Himself in Matthew chapter 20, verse 28: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus is the Suffering Servant spoken of in Isaiah chapter 52 verse 13: "Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high." And then in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 11: "My righteous Servant

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shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities."

Now dear friends, why am I making a point of this? The reason I making a point of this is that the deity of Jesus Christ is being diminished and denigrated in many churches today. There are actually churches and church leaders who would tell you – and I almost hesitate to say the words because I believe that they are blasphemous words, but I think I must say them – these false teachers will tell you that Jesus, when He was here on earth, was "the kind of a guy who would go with you to the bar on Saturday night." I have actually heard that said.

Dear friend, listen to me carefully: The preacher or church leader who says this or implies this sort of thinking about Jesus is setting forth an unholy "Jesus". Setting forth an undemanding "Jesus". Setting forth a "Jesus" who is a false Jesus, who is no example of separation, of holiness, of absolute righteousness. Many churches and church leaders today are setting forth a false god made after their own sinful image. They are setting forth an example based on their own sinful lives, not the holiness of God.

Dear friends, my job as a servant of the Word of God is not to present such a false "Jesus" to you but to present the authentic, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners" Jesus who is proclaimed to us in Scripture (Hebrews 7:26). He is the One whose Word must dwell in you richly. He is the One whose Name must be at the forefront of everything – all of your thinking, all of your speaking, all of your conduct must be worthy of His name. As Paul exhorts us

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Philippians 1:27, "let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ."

Separation: The Imperative of Conformity to Christ

And that, dear friends, is the fifth of our ten propositions regarding spiritual separation: The Christian's alien status in this present world demands that we become increasingly conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. And it must be the authentic Jesus, not a counterfeit Jesus. First Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification..." First Peter chapter 1, verses 15 and 16: "As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.' "

Holiness is at the very core, the very essence, of the will of God. But too often, we don't find that in the postmodern evangelical church. We find churches that have made a corrupt bargain with the Devil to attract and retain members. The holiness of which Scripture consistently speaks, in both the Old and New Testaments, is sadly and sorely lacking among people who call themselves born-again Christians today.

The problem is that far too many evangelical churches today are telling people to "Come as you are" when what they really mean is, "Stay as you are" – stay in your sins. That is the attitude in so many churches today. We don't want you to feel uncomfortable, they say, so we won't preach against sin. We don't want you to feel that we are intolerant, so we won't preach about separation from this present evil world. Our goal is to have you come to our church and feel good,

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and to go out feeling even better about yourself.

We don't want to say or do anything that might make you feel uncomfortable, that might place you under conviction, because you have been confronted from the Word of God about the actual state of your life. And so, the philosophy of the postmodern evangelical church is that if that kind of backpedaling is what it takes to keep people coming, if people will only come if our pastor stays off of the touchy subjects of sin, and sanctification, and holiness, and separation, then that is what we will do.

And so, most 21st-century evangelical churches are affirming people in their sins, affirming them in their friendship with the world, rather than confronting them, from holy Scripture, from the Word of Christ, with their need for repentance and faith in Christ. Most of the evangelical church today is not proclaiming the Bible's message that Yes, it is true that those who are truly born from above are not yet perfect people – but it is also true that those who are genuinely born from above are going to exhibit a change of life and behavior as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the influence of the Word of God, and an understanding of the holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Revelation chapter 3, verse 16 the Lord Jesus Christ says that He is disgusted with the lukewarm church that refuses to preach such a message. He says, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth." The authentic Jesus rejects such a counterfeit church.

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Dear friend, if you are still living in your sins, if your life is not changed, if you are not concerned about spiritual separation, it is a strong indicator, dear friend, that you are not truly a Christian, that you need to go back and understand the Gospel, that you need to get right with God, that you need to understand what Hebrews chapter 12 verse 14 says when it commands us to "pursue holiness."

Another passage that expresses the heart of God's will for every believer in Christ is Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. Please turn there with me if you are able, Romans chapter 12, beginning at verse one:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Apostle Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is telling you that how you think, and what you do, and what you say needs to agree with who you are. If you are truly a Christian, it is a lie for you to take on an outward worldly appearance that does not agree with the inward nature that is yours because of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

Do not think, and talk, and act like the unsaved world. If you are truly a believer, doing that is a charade. It is a masquerade. It is a deception. Stop the charade, Paul says. Your thinking, your speaking, your actions, must reflect your

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new life in Christ, and the eternal values of the Word of Christ and the person of Christ, that characterize that new life.

Instead of being "conformed to this world" you are to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." The word that is here translated "transformed" means that what you are on the outside before your fellow believers, and before the unbelieving world, must be an accurate representation of what you are on the inside, because of Jesus Christ.

And this brings us to a vital question: To what are to we be transformed? The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8, verse 29 that God has predestined believers "to be conformed to the image of His Son." Colossians chapter 3 verse 10 tells us that we "have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

And this brings us to yet another vital question: How are we to be transformed? Romans 12:2 tells us that we are to be transformed "by the renewing of [our] minds." That word "renewing" literally means the renovation of our thinking. As the Word of Christ does its work within us by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are undergoing a transformation. By that transformation, the true nature of Christ in us is to become more and more evident to our fellow believers, and to the watching unbelieving world. Yes this is a process. It does not happen all at once. But it does happen, if you are truly a believer in Christ.

If God's Word is not renovating your thinking, you cannot honestly say that you

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are seeking to fully please Christ. If you are truly a believer in Christ, spiritual separation will be more and more of a concern in your heart and in your life, as you think and meditate upon God's will as it is revealed in His Word, and you put that knowledge into action in your thinking, in your speaking, in your living.

And so dear friend, I want to close by asking you a question today: Is the Word of Christ truly renovating your thinking? Are you truly interested in spiritual separation? Is that an imperative for you? And what does it mean, when First John chapter 2 verse 15 tells us, "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"? The Lord willing, we are going to take up that aspect of the doctrine of Biblical separation as we continue in 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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TeachingtheWord Ministries
Box 2533, Westminster, Maryland 21158 USA
In North America, toll-free 888-804-9655