

The Doctrine of *SEPARATION*

By Bill Biggart

A challenging message given to a group of
Christian men in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1959.

By separation, I mean refraining from religious yoking together with unbelievers or with believers who are walking according to the course of this world.

The heart and center of the doctrine of separation is summarized in II Corinthians, Chapter 6. The context of this chapter begins with the very first verse. Paul says, “We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.” The “We” here is described in the first chapter of the epistle as being all those who are bound together by the Spirit of God in the church of God and called saints. It excludes all unbelievers and hypocrites and includes all those believers who are “workers together” with Paul.

Now, beginning at verse 14 it says, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, ‘I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty’” (II Cor. 6:14-18).

There are numerous and abundant Scriptures in the Old Testament that picture the state of separation. Abraham is an outstanding example. “Now the Lord has said unto Abram, ‘Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee’” (Gen. 12:1). The nation of Israel is an even more outstanding example. Israel was separated by the hand of God from the environment of Egypt, which in nearly all of our Bible studies and interpretations has exemplified the religious world. No nation on the face of the earth was ever more religious than was Egypt. They had a god for everything, They had every variety of gods, and if you didn’t like this one you had your choice. A phrase has come much in vogue today amongst denominational people—you hear it on the radio frequently—“go to the church of your choice.” So it was in Egypt. They had a variety of gods up and down the Nile valley that could supply the desire for the fancies of any person in the world. Israelites had been born and raised in that environment. God, of necessity, separated Israel by a three day journey into the wilderness before He would accept worship from His people.

It was that point of separation that Pharaoh objected to, and that Moses, upon the instruction of God, insisted upon. Israel must needs go three days journey into the

wilderness to worship their God. From Mount Sinai onward, God specifically isolated Israel from all of the other nations of the earth by His commandments. Whether in their wanderings in the wilderness or in the Gentile possessions of the promised land, God would allow no co-mingling of Israel with any other nation. Whether it was to observe and copy the methods of the surrounding nations in the worshipping of their gods, or in allowing any co-mingling of marriages by the sons of Israel taking daughters of the Gentile nations around them, or vice versa—allowing the sons of the Gentiles to take the daughters of Israel to wife, it was strictly and positively forbidden.

The purpose I believe was two-fold. First, of course, was spiritual separation that God desired to maintain, because He was making of Israel a kingdom of Priests, a holy nation, a separated people. And secondly, He desired physical perfection and purity so that the stock of Israel would not be tainted by Gentile blood.

Now the history of Israel was a breakdown in both of these principles. In the course of time they lifted their eyes and beheld the idols of the surrounding nations. They beheld their methods of worship and copied them. And before the history of the kings of Israel came to an ignominious defeat leading to captivity, Israel “had built idols under every green tree.” They sanctified high places upon all the hills—even upon the walls and corners of the walls of Jerusalem. They built idols within the very sanctuary of God, that is, the temple in the heart of Jerusalem. Their priests had abandoned the service of God, had encouraged and led the people of Israel to bind themselves to the heathen idols and had promoted spiritual and physical whoredom among the Israelites.

In the restoration after the captivity, under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah, a polluted condition was discovered in the small remnant of Israelites who by the decree of Cyrus returned to Jerusalem. Ezra for one, having read the word of God and the book of Moses particularly, demanded separation for Israel. All the elders of Israel together sat in sackcloth and ashes bemoaning and wailing because of the sins of the nation of Israel—even to the point of calling for the heathen or Gentile wives and their offspring and those unspiritual women to be cast out of the congregation of Israel.

Under the Law the penalty for those kinds of infringements was death. The Law was a task-master. It was a legalistic demand of a righteous holy God seeking to perfect a holy people knowing that the only remedy for ultimate apostasy was death.

We today are not a physical people in the eyes of God. We are “a heavenly people,” “a spiritual house built up as living stones and are the habitation for God” (Eph. 2:6 & 19-22). The words of II Cor. 6:16, “You are the temple of God” means that no physical building today can be referred to accurately as the house of God. These are a horrible counterfeit. Rather, the entire church purchased by the blood of Christ, composed of baptized, believing, regenerate Christians constitutes the body of Christ and is the temple of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are admonished here to “be not unequally yoked together for any religious accomplishment, because there is no fellowship of light with darkness. There can be no communion between Christ and Satan. When that condition exists the spiritual person, at least, is admonished to “come out from among them and be separate, and touch not (not even to touch) the unclean thing.”

Now the practical application of this as has been taught by every preacher among us, and I have taught it myself in this assembly and others—the primary application today

is to avoid any, all and every denominational admixture of some saved and some unsaved. We believe, and admit, and have acknowledged repeatedly and have leaned over backward to convince anyone that there is probably in every denomination quite a number of God's saved regenerated people, purchased by the blood of Christ. I have known and do know quite a number of people who fit that category. They love the Lord to the extent that they believe in His death, burial and resurrection, and the vicarious atonement for their salvation. Numbers of them have been deceived by their so-called spiritual leaders to believe that they are walking in obedience and in accordance to the commandments of God. I am quite sure that their remaining within denominationalism with their wholehearted support of it is ignorance in some cases—ignorance of these truths in II Corinthians 6, and many, many others in the church epistles. In some case it may be deliberate blindness of their own eyes because they have counted the cost of separation from an unholy admixture, or they are indifferent and the authority of the Word of God in their lives is not as strong as it should be.

Unequally yoked together with them are undoubtedly unbelievers and hypocrites confessing Christ by mouth but never having had their heart cleansed and regenerated by the blood of Christ. It is the Devil's business to secure as many powerful positions in any religious effort by hypocrites as he possibly can. I am quite sure that the Word of God reveals that Satan is on the job in every instance. This goes even so far as to the pulpits of most denominations, in fact, more so the preachers in their place than anywhere else. We read specifically that the ministers of Satan are "ministers of light" (II Cor. 11:13-15). They are not pool hall proprietors and dance hall operators or beer parlor owners or promoters, but Satan's ministers are primarily "ministers of righteousness" and "angels of light." Let us never forget that. They are cultured and educated hypocrites proclaiming in the words of Scripture and doctrines some of the truth of God with a carefully calculated mixture of lies and deception.

Our God admonishes us to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11). "In a great house where there are vessels of honor and dishonor" the man of God will "separate himself from the vessels of dishonor" so that he will be a vessel unto honor "sanctified unto the master's use" (II Tim. 3:20,21). In this day and age of apostasy, which is parallel to the days of apostasy in Israel, I believe that the condition of the unequal yoke is far advanced. I said before, that I doubt seriously whether there is a single seminary graduate student who is guiltless, but was rather a deliberate deceiver because those men set out in their early careers to deliberately learn the Bible, the Word of God, and they have no excuse for maintaining their position as a supporter and promoter for denominational doings—none whatsoever. I am sure the Spirit of God is impatient with any preacher who maintains his denominational position because that preacher is not ignorant of this chapter in II Corinthians, of the life and history of Abraham, of the separation God commanded of Israel, of the fact that God has always separated His people and has always separated His spokesman from the surrounding people, and given us the superb example of Christ Himself, Who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners"—maintaining His position as a Nazarite separated even from His own household. The presence of Christ on earth and His ministry separated the original 12 and the 70 and His close followers. The Lord warned those followers that He "came not to send peace on earth but a sword" and because of Him "to divide even mother from the daughter, a father from his son, the mother-in-law and the

daughter-in-law, and that a man's enemies would be thus of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36).

Now should we think it strange that those things do happen within our midst? In my own personal experience I have two parents who are confessed acknowledged Christians, and I believe they are saved, but they have maintained a Baptist denominational position almost all of their life. For about 16 years I witnessed to them on Scriptural grounds, and was bitterly opposed by my own father and mother. My Christian associates were castigated, rejected and insulted, and on many occasions I was not welcome in my own father's home. I was specifically told to keep my mouth shut concerning the Bible and Christ and any doctrine connected with it. Because of that order from my own father, and with respect to the fact that he was my own father, I refused for years to visit his home. The condition was such that I could not honor Christ and obey the commandment of my own fleshly father.

We have believed, and most of us, I believe, have walked practically in denouncing our former denominational connections. I know of the personal testimony of many of you men. In my own case, I renounced the Baptist organization some 27 or 28 years ago, with my wife, and have never had the slightest qualm of regret or made the slightest movement or effort of ever going back. It has never even crossed my mind. I have rejoiced in the freedom wherewith Christ has made me free from the guilt of being unequally yoked with unbelievers and I have rejoiced in the position of being "outside the religious camp." The religious camp is typified in Hebrews 13:12-24, by the city of Jerusalem where was contained all that remained of the temple of God. The position of being "outside the camp" was typified by the cross and sepulcher that held our Lord when He gave Himself for our sins and was buried and was raised again for our justification. It was a lonesome, separated place. Even His disciples turned their backs. We are admonished to "go unto Him outside the camp," as He walked. If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ sufficiently to separate himself in the Lord's command from any member of his household, whether it be family, friends or loved ones, the Bible says "he is not worthy of Jesus Christ."

My only concern is this, that the position of walking in attendance of any kind of religious service that is related to or promoted by, or conducted by any denominational organization is contrary to that concept of separation, and I for one will not be lending my support by being physically present and ignoring all of the things that we have preached and stood for, for so many years and in many cases have suffered for.