

SEPARATION— FROM WHOM OR WHAT ?

By E. Stevens

The Basis of Separation is the Word of God

Professing Christianity has given little heed to the all-important truth given in II Timothy 3:16,17, namely, that the inspired Scriptures contain instruction and correction for being “*completely furnished* unto ALL GOOD WORKS.” Many things are being said and done (in Christendom) which have absolutely no support from God’s progressively revealed Word. Consequently, they are NOT good works and will bring “loss” as to reward (though not of salvation) to all who are occupied therein when they stand before the judgment seat of Christ (see I Cor. 3:10-15). It must be remembered that “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God,” and “whatsoever is not of faith is SIN” (Rom. 10:17 & 14:23). Many glibly talk as though this refers to the so-called “faith of our fathers.” God forbid such “confidence in the flesh” (Philip. 3:3). No, ours is the “one faith” of Ephesians 4:5, as found in the writings of Paul, the “minister of THE CHURCH” and “of THE GENTILES” (see Col. 1:24-25; Gal. 2:7 & Rom. 15:16).

One Object of Separation is from Man-made Religion

Where in the Scriptures can we find support or teaching for organizing and incorporating various divided religious bodies under all sorts of names concocted by man? If it is not authorized in the Scriptures it is NOT a GOOD WORK and God demands SEPARATION from it. All believers are told to “endeavor to KEEP (Gr.—guard or maintain) the oneness of the Spirit” as it was finally and fully revealed through Paul, although ALL Scripture is given as being “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness.” “There is ONE BODY (Church), one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one Faith, one baptism (spiritual—see I Cor. 12:13), one God and Father” (Eph. 4:4-6). Also “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do ALL in THE NAME of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). “Give unto the Lord the glory due HIS NAME—worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (or separation—I Chron. 16:29). How it must grieve our Lord who prayed so earnestly that His own may be kept in ONENESS, in His name, as He looks down upon the many denominations and sects attempting to worship and serve Him under a conglomeration of carnal names. The word “denominate” means “to NAME APART.”

Should the ONE BODY be Named Apart?

When men make union unto themselves in groups that require joining and name them some sort of “church,” it is naming apart from the divinely united ONE BODY and is therefore a SECT. Webster correctly defines sects as “ecclesiastical factions” (see Acts 20:30). It is not naming apart as a faction when merely designating LOCATIONS of meetings of believers. Speaking on this name question is not “straining at a gnat” as many tell us. There are even so-called “Reformed” churches. Yes, organizations built by sinful man certainly need reforming but never the ONE CHURCH that Christ built (since

Pentecost) “unto a holy temple in the Lord—for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22). Christ has organized His church as an ORGANISM, He being the Head. “For as we have many members in (our) one (fleshly) body, and all members have not the same office, SO we (believers) being many are ONE BODY in Christ and EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER” (Rom. 12:4,5 & Col. 1:18).

Proper Separation can be Done

Man in his carnal reasoning naturally follows in the way of the erring religious majority, instead of searching out and obeying God’s instructions for “good works” as found in His Word. Is not the present awful apostasy mute evidence of man’s fallacy in thinking to do “more good” for God and man, through ways and means not found in the Scriptures? For these reasons this study on “Separation” has been written. Separation is one of the “good works that God has before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). It brings much reward, both in this life and in that which is to come (I Tim. 4:8). Do not be deceived by those who say the things written herein can not be done and are not being done anywhere. The writer, for one, has ample witness and experience that it can be and is being done and that with much accompanied blessing from Him Who, in this day of His marvelous grace, asks nothing of us which is impossible. We can say with Paul, “I can do ALL things THROUGH CHRIST which strengtheneth me” (Philip. 4:17). We verily believe there have always been small numbers who have obeyed God in these things. They are scoffed at and scorned by the popular religious world about them just as it also happened to Paul by “all they of Asia” (see II Tim. 1:15), after he had written to them in his last epistles “how men ought to behave (or conduct) themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of THE TRUTH” (I Tim. 3:15, R.V.). No doubt this refers to the behavior of the “new man” in walk and worship—apart from Judaism and its ordinances.

“Where Two or Three are Gathered Together”

The reader may ask: If we thus separate ourselves, how or where shall we worship God? We reply that if no assembling is being done in your locality only in the name of the Lord Jesus, on the ground of the “one body,” in undivided fellowship (which, by the way, does not necessitate something one can “join”), you can at least worship in your own home in Bible study and prayer. The Church meets “where two or three are gathered together in His name” (Matt. 18:2). Read also I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15 & Rom. 16:5 “—greet THE church (a believing family, and others perhaps with them) that is in their (or his) HOUSE.” It is useless for you to “go to Church” in sinful sectarianism if Isaiah 1:12-16 applies to modern popular worship, and we think it does: “When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required THIS at YOUR hands to tread My courts (today—in denominational division)? Bring no more VAIN oblations; incense is an abomination to Me; the new moons and SABBATHS, the CALLING OF ASSEMBLIES, I can not, away with (it). It is INIQUITY, even the SOLEMN MEETING—I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide Mine eyes from you, yea, when ye make MANY PRAYERS, I will not hear—Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doing from Mine eyes; cease to do EVIL.”

May God help you to see and obey the following classified study in separation. (These classifications may have variables. However this is a suggested classification for Bible study purposes. Note by J.L.)

CLASS ONE

Separation between professing Christians—although united positionally in “one body” (see I Cor. 12:27).

1. I Cor. 5:11-13, “—not to KEEP COMPANY, if any man that is called a BROTHER be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

2. II Thess. 3:6-15, “—withdraw yourselves (verse 14—“have no company with”) from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the teaching which he received of us.” Note that verses 7 and 11 show that one who is disorderly in this particular case is one who will not work for a living. The word disorderly also means unruly.

3. Titus 3:10, “A sectarian man (professing brother), after the first and second admonition avoid” (Young’s Lit. Trans.); i.e., one who because of his choosy spirit will not be taught. By such admonitions an endeavor is made to “keep the unity begun by the Spirit” (see Eph. 4:1-6).

The above three references help to explain a seeming paradox. On the one hand we are told in I Corinthians 1:10 NOT to be divided but be united in the same mind, yet on the other hand, the affirmation is made in I Corinthians 11:19 that there MUST be disunion or sects. In other words there must be no fellowship with PROFESSING Christians who persistently make a “choice: contrary to the light given them from God’s Word in matters relating to “good works” or spiritual discernment, as admonished in II Tim. 2:15. “Study (give diligence) to show thyself APPROVED unto God, a workman irreproachable, rightly DIVIDING (or PARTITIONING) the Word of truth.” (Note: By “RIGHTLY dividing the Word of truth” is meant that one must recognize WHO is speaking in the Word, TO WHOM is he speaking, ABOUT WHOM is he speaking, on WHAT AUTHORITY is he speaking (his own or God’s), and in or concerning WHICH DISPENSATION is he speaking. Departure from this rule results in hopeless confusion and division.)

Should we Associate in Sectarianism?

Are we then, according to Titus 3:10, to have no fellowship with Christians who will not separate from sectarianism, though we “are all one in Christ” (Gal. 3:28)? Some think that this passage in Titus refers to unsaved cultists who “strive about the law, foolish questions and genealogies (v. 9). Please take notice that the word “admonition” in the N. T. in every case is used in connection with saved people. Notice also the verse which follows” “Knowing that he that is such is SUBVERTED (turned aside from the truth) and SINNETH, being condemned of himself.” It will be found that God’s Word has no discipline for the unsaved, or pointedly refers to no particular sin in them except the sin of unbelief in Christ (see John 16:9). Now turn to II Thess. 3:14-15—“have NO

COMPANY with him (who obeys not the Word) that he may be ashamed. Yet count him NOT as an ENEMY, but admonish him as a BROTHER.” Such sectarian Christians are said to be “babes” and “carnal” (fleshly) in I Cor. 3:1-4, walking as UNBELIEVERS in “envy, strife and divisions.” These “babes” have “need of milk” and are unable to assimilate the “meat” of God’s Word. Reader, do you come under this indictment, along with the vast number in Christendom?

Can We Associate if We Don’t Join Anything?

May we associate with sectarian services though we do not “join”? Now honestly, is that walking in the light? And shall we lend support to sinful division by our presence there, “causing also our weaker brother to err”? Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned” (Prov. 6:27)? Many a Christian walking while having the light on these things has experienced God’s chastisement and will “suffer loss” in eternity. “Can two walk together except they be agreed” (Amos 3:3)? “What fellowship hath righteousness (rightness) with unrighteousness—COME OUT from among them and be ye separate and touch NOT the unclean thing” (II Cor. 6:14-18—see also No. 6 below, under Class Two). If we are to COME OUT from AMONG unbelievers who are “yoked” with believers in an organized sect, we will have to come out from the believers there too, will we not?

Why Not Walk With God’s Approval?

Paul, in I Cor. 11:18-19, says, “When ye meet as a church (Weymouth), I hear that there be divisions among you (lit., standings apart) and of a certain part, I believe it (Emph. Diag.) FOR there MUST be also heresies (dis-union) among you, that they which are APPROVED may be made manifest (i.e., separated).” These “approved” ones then, will not be found to “walk as unbelievers” but as “spiritual” “adults,” not NAMED APART and through applying II Tim. 2:15 find that they CAN be “of one mind and discernment” throughout the Bible. Else why should our Lord pray as He did in John 17? Why not enjoy this true happy fellowship? The way to arrive there is as found in Heb. 5:12: “But solid food belongeth to those who through constant practice, have their spiritual faculties EXERCISED to distinguish GOOD from EVIL.” How few Christians “exercise their spiritual faculties” enough in God’s Word to see how God hates division and sectarianism. So many are willfully “subverted” here and say they “can’t see it.” Listen: “If any man WILL do His will, he SHALL KNOW of the teaching” (John 7:17). If you will part with mere traditional teaching, fleshly ties, soulish worship in pipe-organed cathedrals, with their salaried, Romanish frocked professional clergymen, you will be richly repaid in the blessedness of God’s nearness and special favor, and the TRUE fellowship found only among surrendered, separated children of God. TRUE fellowship (Gr.—co-participation) is not possible in being like minded in so-called “Fundamental” truths, but in unitedly accepting and obeying “the whole counsel of God.” “If we WALK in the light as He is in the light, we HAVE FELLOWSHIP one with another” (I John 1:7).

CLASS TWO

Separation between believers and unbelievers. The first four of the following texts deal with false teachers. In each case the context seems to indicate that they may not be saved. However, they can in many instances be made to APPLY to saved teachers

and preachers, because of their unscriptural walk and teaching. Many fail to preach salvation by grace.

1. Romans 16:17-18, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which CAUSE divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and AVOID them. For they that are such SERVE NOT our LORD JESUS CHRIST but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches DECEIVE the hearts of the innocent.” Deceiving and serving not the Lord Jesus are certainly characteristics of unsaved men, but Christians by their divisiveness are also not serving Christ (Cf. Col. 3:24 & I Thess. 1:9).

2. II TIM. 2:16-18, “But SHUN profane (heathenish) and vain babblings (empty babblers) for they will increase unto more UNGODLINESS, and their words will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already and overthrow the faith of some.” The words “heathenish” (which is the Greek for “profane”) and “ungodly” and also “empty” reveal that this passage is referring to unsaved “babblers” with whom were classed Hymenaeus and Philetus who as such could not of course “rightly divide” the Word (I Cor. 2:14). Notice how important it is to rightly divide, for if such teachers did overthrow the faith of some as to the resurrection through ignoring this rule, can not saved teachers do the same? In I Tim. 1:20 this Hymenaeus is referred to as a blasphemer.

3. I Tim. 6:3-5, “If any man TEACH otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, KNOWING NOTHING, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of CORRUPT minds and DESTITUTE of the TRUTH, supposing that godliness is a way of gain (R.V.): from such WITHDRAW thyself.” Again the words in capitals may aptly describe unsaved men.

4. II John 10, “If any man come unto you and bring NOT this teaching, receive him NOT into your house, neither bid him Godspeed(Gr. Cheerful farewell),” obviously referring to DECEIVERS and ANTI-CHRISTS in verse 7 “who confess not that Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh” (R.V.). An UNSAVED condition is evident.

5. Eph. 5:11, “Have NO FELLOWSHIP with the unfruitful works of DARKNESS, but rather reprove them.” Verse 8 is enough to indicate these are unsaved.

6. II Cor. 6:14-18 & 7:1, “Be ye NOT unequally yoked together with UNBELIEVERS: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness—or what part hath he that believeth with an INFIDEL? Wherefore COME OUT from among THEM and be ye SEPARATE, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean (Gr. Be not connected with them); and I will receive you (Gr. to take into one’s favor), and I will be a Father unto you—saith the Lord ALMIGHTY. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from EVERY pollution (Young’s lit. trans.) of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (separation) in the fear of God.” Many do not, or refuse to see that this passage does not refer only to separation from unbelievers in the world. It strongly condemns such procedure as “joining” a Church. The Scriptures in fact, condemn joining anything devised and controlled by man. Why? Because unbelievers are bound to be admitted and the command is: “Be ye NOT unequally (joined) yoked

together with unbelievers.” This takes in the man-organized, so-called “churches.” No one dares to say they contain no unbelievers. God admits none such into THE Church which is Christ’s body and it is HE who adds “DAILY to THE Church such as are being saved” (Acts 2:47 & I Cor. 12:13). No one can “join” the church which is Christ’s body—God adds them to it. Believers are told to—“forsake not the ASSEMBLING of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25). Also, the admonition is given in I Cor. 1:10 to be “perfectly joined together in one MIND” (NOT in an organization that is temporal). The entire context, then teaches separation as shown in the words, “Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate and touch no unclean thing” (R.V.), which means, have no connection or ties with the unsaved or with “things” that are wedges dividing God’s people in various “yoked” religious corporations (Cf. also Isa. 52:1 & 11).

The words “let us cleanse ourselves from EVERY pollution of flesh and spirit,” in II Cor. 7:1 truly deals with separation in general, or “perfecting,” i.e., completing separation in Godly fear. This includes such “pollution” as sectarianism which, in Gal. 5:20, is placed alongside of such sins as adultery and murder. The word “heresy” is “sects” in the Gr.—seditious divisions. Note: Titus 1: 10-14 is another passage describing false UNSAVED teachers.

CLASS THREE

Separation from religious, though UNSAVED people.

1. II Tim. 3:1-9 (Quoting only verses 5 and 8) “Having a form (Gr. Appearance) of godliness, but rejecting the power thereof: from such TURN AWAY. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, REPROBATE concerning THE faith.” How well does this chapter describe modern “Christian” nations. Also it fits the description of many so-called “churches” which have the appearance or formula of piety but reject the true power or miracle force of regeneration. It is the regenerated life that catches the attention and yearning of a sin-sick world. God wants His born again children to be set apart in “one body” “that the world might believe.”

2. II Tim. 2:20-21, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man therefore PURGE (Gr.—prune out) himself FROM these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified (set apart) and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” The question is: what does this “great house” represent? A careful study of the entire context appears to give an answer. From verse 16 to 21 the apostle Paul had in mind to distinguish and separate from mere professors or “empty babblers.” In verse 19 he says, “The Lord knoweth them that ARE His and the inference is that not all who “nameth the name of Christ” are truly saved and depart from iniquity. Such are the “vessels of dishonor” (or infamy). Furthermore none are “prepared for every good work” in the ultimate sense except regenerated, Spirit indwelt BELIEVERS. Thus it might be understood that the “great house” represents not the Church which is Christ’s body, but only PROFESSING Christendom which is “known by their fruits” to be full of unsaved who walk NOT in the light (see I John 1:7 & Cf. Matt. 7:20). (However, if this “household” is to be understood as a similar metaphor like the “building of God” in verse 19, then it is the Church of Jesus Christ, and the separation is from carnal brethren who

are walking in the flesh and building only “wood, hay and straw.” I cannot believe that Jesus Christ is the “Master” over Christendom. Note by J.L.)

3. Rev. 18:4, “COME OUT of her My people (out of religious Babylon), that ye be not partaker of her sins and that ye receive not her plagues.” While this passage has to do with the tribulation period, after the rapture of the Church, it applies just as well to believers today, for “Babylon” is today seated in the Roman Catholic Church. Figuratively, Babylon represents religious confusion from which there must also, of course, be separation.

4. Heb. 13:13, “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” Just what does “the camp” here represent? Does it mean mere professing Christianity or religious Judaism? Undoubtedly the latter, although it can be applied to the former. This epistle is written to the “Hebrews” or Jews and throughout contrasts true Christianity with the now dead Judaism. Our Lord was not accepted by the Jews and was rejected from their religious “camp.” The call in the text is to accept salvation in Christ and to embrace true Christianity, and walk outside of defunct or man-made traditional religion.

“I declare unto you the GOSPEL...by which also ye are SAVED...how that CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS...that HE WAS BURIED, and that HE ROSE AGAIN the third day according to the Scriptures...SEEN of Cephas, then of the twelve...SEEN of above five hundred brethren at once;...He was SEEN of James; then of all the apostles...HE was SEEN of me” (I Cor. 15:1-8). “Though WE, or an angel from heaven, PREACH any OTHER GOSPEL...let him BE ACCURSED” (Gal. 1:8).

In conclusion, let the reader be reminded that no one can experience FULLY God’s favor and promises (see II Cor. 6:17-18 & 7:1) or receive a full reward unless these separation truths are accepted and conscientiously applied to his WALK before the world.

THE END

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