

our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." There is no such thing as so-called "first and second degree separation," just Bible separation, plain and simple.

There are, for example, many brethren in the National Association of Evangelicals who say and do many commendable things. But no matter how much "good" may appear to be accomplished, the fact does not change that by their very association with this middle-of-the-road organization they are repudiating Biblical separation. Refusing to obey the call to be separate is **sin**—whether it involves failure to separate from a false teacher or a disobedient brother. Compromised "evangelical" organizations like the NAE, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Campus Crusade For Christ, the Promise Keepers, etc., may present an impressive outward display of numbers and far-reaching influence, but if they do not hold to sound doctrine and warn of false teachers and unbiblical practices, then God's Word is slighted. It cannot be pleasing to God when there is not, first of all, an agreement on—and then practice of—the Truth. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3); of course not, especially when God's Truth is the standard to be agreed upon! All who support and thereby join in the fellowship with compromising ministries are partakers with that error. Loss of reward awaits all who thus identify themselves with those who do not hold to the "doctrine of Christ"—all of it, from Genesis through Revelation. 2 John 7-11.

Romans 16:17 commands us to "**mark them** [point them out] *which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*" Sound doctrine is the issue, not personalities or petty grievances, and the clear command is to have no fellowship with those who have departed from "*the doctrine which ye have learned.*" The fundamentalist (who, by definition, is one who practices Biblical separation) is not the one who causes divisions between believers. Divisions are caused by the brother who does not practice sound doctrine (the doctrine of separation is no exception)

and the believer is required to separate from him. The fundamentalist is not trying to be unloving, schismatic or exclusive. He simply seeks to be obedient to the Lord and His Word above all else.

### The Purpose of Biblical Separation

There are at least four reasons why separation from disobedient brethren is required by God. First, this type of discipline is necessary in the local church fellowship in order to maintain church purity. 1 Corinthians, Chapter 5 presents a case in point. That church was charged "*not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous...with such an one no not to eat,*" this having reference to the Lord's table (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-34). Whether this individual was a sinning believer or an unsaved pretender, the command is the same—to separate from him. Unless such church discipline was enforced, unconfessed and unforsaken sin in the Christian fellowship would harmfully influence and corrupt others (1 Cor. 5:5-7). God has ordained separation to stem the leavening, spreading influence of sin which always comes to pass within compromising fellowships.

Second, separation from a disobedient brother is for his spiritual well-being. Unless the standard of God's Word is raised before the erring brother, he may continue in his sin without a needful rebuke. 2 Thessalonians 3:6 commands, "*withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*" The context reveals that laziness is not the only basis for determining disobedience. Any believer who is unfaithful to "*the tradition*" [ALL the Scripture that was given to the Church] was also considered to be disobedient (cf. 2 Thess. 2:15). Disobedience to the Word of God is the determining factor. Separation will have the effect of making that brother or sister "*ashamed*" (2 Thess. 3:14). That one is not an enemy, nor should he be treated as such. He is an erring brother (v. 15), and the desired result of separation is his repentance and restitution to full fellowship with the brethren. This should be the attitude of every fundamentalist—to lovingly raise a Biblical standard by way of separation so that the erring saint will realize his disobedience, repent and return to right fellowship.

The third reason for practicing Biblical separation is the desire for a "*full reward*" (2 Jn. 8) at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer is "*not crowned [rewarded] except he strive lawfully [according to the parameters of the Word]*" (2 Tim. 2:5). It will be possible for a disobedient Christian to lose reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ because of compromised fellowship, either directly or by identification (2 Jn. 10, 11 cf. 1 Cor. 3:13-15; Rev. 3:11).

Make no mistake about it, when a believer is identified with any religious activity which is not true to God's Word, he will receive the disapproval of God the Father. Our God is a jealous God. He wants our undivided loyalty! He is not pleased when His children are identified, even in the slightest, with compromise or error. Such double-mindedness prevents our fellowship with Him (1 Cor. 10:16-22). Therefore, the support of a mass evangelistic campaign to reach lost souls may seem most noble. But, if disobedient, new evangelical brethren are in the endeavor, the supposed results can never justify the compromised fellowship. God will never suspend the requirement for separation in order to accomplish any worthwhile cause—even evangelism. That simply is not the way God works. He always leads according to His Word, the Bible.

Finally, separation from disobedient brethren is necessary in order to maintain a strong, consistent testimony in the midst of theological turmoil and confusion. Compromised fellowship clouds the issues, dulls the spiritual discernment and silences Scriptural reproof. "*Be not deceived, evil communications [wrong fellowships] corrupt good manners [right conduct]*" (1 Cor. 15:33). Only a separated Bible believer is able, in obedience to God's clear command, to sound a faithful warning concerning the deception that Satan is sowing in the Church today (Acts 20:28-31). Always remember that our God is HOLY, and He calls us to be holy. In order to be obedient to His command, we must endeavor, by the grace of God, to be separated wholly unto Him, regardless of the cost or the scorn of man.

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## What Does the Bible Say about SEPARATION?

"Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark them** which cause divisions and offences **contrary to the doctrine** which ye have learned; and **avoid them**" (Romans 16:17).

**T**HE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF SEPARATION is based on one of God's essential attributes—His holiness. He never looks upon sin with the least degree of tolerance, and this necessarily extends to His will concerning the conduct of His children. As believers, we are called unto fellowship with God who "*...is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*" (1 Jn. 1:5, 6). Therefore, there is an absolute necessity for separation from whatever is "darkness;" that is, whatever is in direct opposition to His very nature. The perfect will of God for the saint is always the same: "*...be ye HOLY in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye HOLY; for I am HOLY*" (1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

The notion that it is not important to God whether or not His children distance themselves from what His Word declares to be evil is terribly foolish and also very dangerous. God has given His Word so that we can know what fellowships are permissible, as well as which ones are not. Separation from error and the errant is for the believer's spiritual well-being and usefulness in service.

Most who name the Name of Christ agree that the Bible teaches the principle of separation, but

comparatively few seem concerned about the need for its personal application. This is especially true when our fellowships and associations are examined. All too often, the things we feel are most loving, expedient or non-divisive determine what we consider to be God's will in any given situation. But this is a grievous error if the result of such reasoning is contrary to the plain teaching of the Word of God. We would do well to carefully consider what the Bible teaches about "separation," and then direct our walk accordingly.

The believer's separation from evil and every false way is always God's order. We were called to be separated unto Christ and declared positionally sanctified "in Him" the moment we believed and were saved. In our Christian lives we are admonished to walk in a sanctified, separated manner which is worthy of our "...high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And when our Lord comes back again and catches away His Bride, we will be partakers of that great, final separation. Yes, indeed, separation is a precious Biblical truth—past, present and future.

### The Practice of Biblical Separation

Although the doctrine of separation is a dominant theme throughout the Scriptures, the difficulty comes, as mentioned before, in its application. The prohibition of participation in, and even identification with, blatant godlessness and unbelief is readily accepted as a Biblical imperative. Yet, at the same time, many Christians find it more of a problem to understand why we are also commanded by God to have no fellowship with anyone or anything disobedient to the Word of God, even if this means we must separate from errant fellow believers and compromised Christian organizations and ministries. God's directive for the believer in respect to evil is the same whether the leaven is found outside (Lk. 12:1) or within (1 Cor. 5:6-8) the Church.

### Separation from Worldliness

The first aspect of this doctrine is separation from the "wickedness" that dominates and saturates the world in which we live. We must "keep [ourselves] from idols" (see 1 Jn. 5:19-21), i.e., the allurements and snares that the "god of this world" sets

before us on every hand. We are in the world, but we are not to be a part of it. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. ... And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (study 1 Jn. 2:15-17). The influence of worldliness through fashion, music, literature, the media in all its forms, philosophies, attitudes, etc., destroys the believer's sensitivity to what is truly acceptable to God and what is not. "Christian" rock, "Christian" psychology, worldly strategies of evangelism and ministry—these and many more examples could be given of how far many have strayed from truly Bible-based moorings. Dealing with these issues is not "legalism," but rather it is seeking to apply Biblical principles of godliness to our everyday Christian walk and witness. Separation from the worldliness that feeds the old nature and sears the conscience is vital.

### Separation from False Teachers

The next form of separation that must be taken seriously is the matter of entering into fellowship with the ministries of individuals and organizations which have rejected God's infallible and final Revelation. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 plainly states that the believer must not be "unequally yoked together [fellowship, association or identification] with unbelievers..." but is to "...come out from among them, and be ye separate." A fundamentalist must never join with any man or organization where those represented are not clear in their testimony of the new birth, or their strict adherence to the truth of the Word of God. Any common religious or spiritual endeavor (worship, evangelism, prayer, education, relief, etc.) with those who have rejected Bible truth is in direct conflict with this Biblical commandment of separation if we participate with them. Such activities, when undertaken jointly with liberal, apostate individuals or groups are strictly forbidden.

This portion of the Word also reveals how God views the rejection of Bible truth—it is wickedness, and it is His will for His own to separate from all such evil. The believer's fellowship and communion with his heavenly Father is disrupted whenever separation from wickedness is ignored, whether that disobedience stems from *filthiness of the flesh* (obviously carnal, worldly sins) or *filthiness of the spirit*

(spiritual infidelity by accommodating those who reject Bible truth). God says in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 that He will "be a Father" unto those who separate from apostasy—unbelief is the sin being dealt with here, and that necessarily includes any professed "Christian" who denies Bible truth. The text then goes on to reinforce the necessity of separating from error: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

Our responsibility, however, does not stop there. Ephesians 5:11 commands us to "...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." We must not only separate from all groups riddled with unbelief, such as the National and World Councils of Churches, but we must also vehemently sound a warning to all believers who might be drawn subtly into complicity with the ecumenical apostasy which also includes Roman Catholicism. The same is true of the delusion and proliferation of error in the Charismatic Movement. These false religious leaders may present an amiable and pious exterior, but our duty is still to expose and oppose their unbiblical practices which deceive the unwary. See 1 Timothy 6:3-5 and 2 Timothy 3:5.

### Separation from Disobedient Brethren

A heretic who denies Bible truth is to be rejected, not embraced. Titus 3:10. A Bible believer must not find himself in common cause with such individuals, whether it is by ecclesiastical affiliation, or by any form of joint ministry or worship. The clear call is for everyone who names the name of Christ to separate himself from every dishonorable vessel, that is, those who have turned away from the truth of the infallible Word. Only then will the believer be a vessel "meet [worthy] for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work." Only when a believer has "depart[ed] from iniquity" and has separated from those "who concerning the truth have erred" can he truly have fellowship "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." A believer cannot be in fellowship with the apostasy and with the Lord at the same time. The following text, 2 Timothy 2:19-22, speaks of the iniquity of accommodating those who have erred "concerning the truth" instead of separat-

ing from them. If we fail to do so, the leaven of false doctrine will spread through compromised fellowships and finally the faith of some will be overthrown or will be made shipwreck:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.** But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word 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** [this is but one example of how unsound doctrine nullifies godly fellowship]; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, **The Lord knoweth them that are his, And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity** [error certainly is iniquity]. *But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these* [those who have erred concerning the truth], **he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them** [fellowship with those who love and obey the truth] **that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."**

Withdrawal from counterfeit, apostate Christianity, however, is not the only application of this doctrine. Separation from disobedient brethren is also a Biblical imperative. It is precisely at this point that many believers turn away from the plain teaching of God's Word and substitute their own faulty reasoning. Today, there is an abundance of disobedient brethren who are so designated by the Word of God because of their refusal to separate from false teachers and apostate affiliations as previously mentioned. For them, the desire for visible unity, respectability, popularity or success; or, the avoidance of appearing to be schismatic or "too negative" takes precedence over simple obedience to the Bible. They may even seek to justify their disobedience on the basis of love or opportunities to witness. But it is still disobedience, and God says we are not to walk in fellowship with disobedient brethren. We are to separate from them (see 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of