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THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF THE SEPARATED LIFE.

Lando Heber

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The principle of the separated life is deeply imbedded in the teachings of the Bible. It is one of the foundation principles of that which marks the Bible as God's revelation and makes Christianity unique in this world.

In our study of the separated life we shall present:

The Roots of the Separated Life.
The Nature of the Separated Life.
The Implications of the Separated Life.

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I. The Roots of the Separated Life.

The separated life is not merely something imposed upon us in order to separate us. It is an outgrowth of:

The Nature of the World.
The Nature of God.
The Nature of the Christian Church.
The Nature of the Christian Life.

1. The Nature of the World.

The world, that is the unregenerated mass of mankind with its culture, systems, institutions and religion is basically naturalistic, humanistic, sinful and separated from God. The Bible is specific and emphatic in its pronouncements. Compare - John 1:10; 3:17; 14:14,25; Gal. 1:2; 6:14; Col. 2:20; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; 4:5; 5:4,5,19. Compare also 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:18-3:20. It is imperative that the Christian separates himself from a world basically separated from God.

2. The Nature of God.

The Bible from its first pages to the last portrays and emphasizes the holiness of God, informing us by countless incidents and by plain statements that He is the Holy One, the One who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Whatever else holiness may imply, it certainly means "separateness" (see our study on "The Scriptural Doctrine of Sanctification"). He who is the Holy One calls upon us: "Be ye holy; for I am holy". (1 Peter 1:16) The Christian's separated life roots in the separateness of God. (1 John 1:7)

3. The Nature of the Christian Church.

The Christian Church is the "ekklesia" of God. It is well known that the word "ekklesia" is a compound word, meaning - "called out". Thus the Church is constituted by a group of people who have been divinely called out of the world, transformed by the Holy Spirit, and united to Christ.

Whatever else the Church may be, however else we may define it, one fact stands unshakably. The Church is a called out, a separated body, separated from the world unto Christ. -

As the body of Christ, there is a life-relationship with Christ.
As the bride of Christ, there is a love-relationship with Christ.
As the household of God, there is a family-relationship with Christ.
As the habitation of God, there is a possession-relationship with Christ.
As the royal priesthood of God, there is a ministry-relationship with Christ.

4. The Nature of the Christian Life.

The Christian Life originates in a great crisis experience. It is a transition in principle from death unto life; from darkness to light; from a self-life to a Christ-life. It is the entrance into the Kingdom of God; the implanting of the individual into Christ. It is the partaking of the divine nature; the impartation

of eternal life (or the life of the Eternal One). It is being born again or from above, resurrected from the dead.

Paul summarizes it when he says: Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new, 2 Cor. 5:17.

Thus the Christian life implies a new quality of life, a new direction of life, a new purpose of life, new motivations of life, new interests and new relationships of life. A Christian is a new, separated individual. Old things have passed away.

II. The Nature of the Separated Life.

We realize that in the misunderstanding of the nature of the separated life lies the danger of confusing artificial, legal and scriptural separation. We hasten therefore in stating that the nature of the separated life is:

Life-motivated.
Word-directed.
Spirit-energized.
Christ-patterned.

1. It is Life-motivated.

Our Lord informs us that every good tree bringeth forth good fruit. Thus it is in the Christian Life. All Christian separation originates within. Only as an inward renewal of the heart is experienced, outward renewal of conduct and relationships can be expected; and only as an inward separation from the world has taken place, can outward separation be expected. The loosening of the affections of the heart from the world is the basis of all separation. All separation which does not spring from the inner resources of the separated heart is artificial or legalistic and is rather isolation or segregation than separation. Thus true separation is life-motivated and not socially fabricated.

2. It is Word-directed.

The Bible is full of beautiful examples and numerous precepts for the Christian life. It remains, however, a fact that we do not have in the Bible a fixed pattern of behavior, informing us in detail of the things we are to separate ourselves from. The Bible does not present to us a catalogue of specifics, though it is not lacking in being specific, but rather gives to us basic principles to guide us in our Christian life. As a good tree will bring forth good fruit only as it is properly nourished, so the Christian life will bring forth the "fruit of separation" only as it is properly nourished and carefully instructed in the Word of God.

It is not a simple matter to apply the principles of the Bible to the various circumstances, relationships and cultures. Only wisdom from above is sufficient to enable us to remain biblically balanced.

3. It is Spirit-energized.

Our Lord has given us the blessed promise that when He (the Spirit) comes, He will guide us into all truth as well as energize us in the Christian life. He is the Spirit of power, Acts 1:8; 2 Tim. 1:7. He is thus sufficient to enable us. However, he is also the "Holy Spirit." As such He leads us into a life of holiness and energizes us to live a life of separation. (1 Pet. 1:2) Romans Chapter eight is the Pauline classic in this doctrine.

Separation is not a matter of human legislation or determination lived in the power of the human will. It is a Spirit-energized life. It, therefore, leads not into bondage but into the life of Christian liberty, the glorious liberty of the children of God. (Rom. 8:21)

4. It is Christ-patterned.

Though Christ is first and foremost our Saviour; He is also the perfect pattern for our life, (See 1 Pet. 2:21; Heb. 12:2; 1 John 2:6; Heb. 13:12,13.) He beckons us to come without the gate, without the camp, living the life of separation. Thus the life of separation is the reproduction of the Christ-life in the life of the

believer. It is the patterning of our lives after the life of Christ. (Phil. 2:5-11; 3:7-14)

Note: The above analysis of the nature of the separated life precludes the idea of "Christian isolationism". Though the Christian is not of the world, he is in the world. He is "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" among whom he is to shine as a light. He is the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Christ prays "not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Yea, they are in the world "that the world might believe that thou hast sent me."

Thus the biblical paradox confronts the Christian, calling us to a life of separation, but not necessarily of isolation. Only the wisdom of God is sufficient to guide us aright in such a life.

III. The Implications of the Separated Life.

The implications of the separated life will be felt in all areas of life and will affect the Christian's relationship to culture as a whole as well as to the various practices, systems and institutions of society.

We point to the following:

1. Relationship to Amusements and certain Practices.

It becomes of paramount significance to maintain a standard of distinction between the church members and the unsaved regarding amusements.

We clearly and outrightly ban the commercial theatre, dancing, smoking, drinking, card-parties and other night parties of non-christian character. We may need to follow through on some other **such** similar entertainments as drama, opera, State-Fair shows, circus, and ice-show.

It becomes the Christian's solemn responsibility to separate himself from:

- 1) amusements which harm the physical body;
- 2) amusements which tend to arouse improper and lustful desires;
- 3) entertainments which glamorize human ingenuity and nourish pride and vainglory;
- 4) entertainments associated with places of evil repute and evil appearance; (1 Thess. 5:22)
- 5) amusements which lead to places and associations of evil influence; (Ps.1)
- 6) amusement places and associations which may harm or endanger the welfare of a weaker brother or sister; (Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:13)
- 7) amusement places and associations which in any way could weaken our testimony or cast a shadow upon the Christian Church and the gospel and person of Christ.

The Christian is called upon to:

Flee these things, 1 Tim. 6:11.

Abstain from all appearance of evil, 1 Thess. 5:22.

Neither give place to the devil, Eph. 4:27.

Keep thyself pure, 1 Tim. 5:22;

2. Membership in secret societies.

Although it is a foregone conclusion with us that Christians shall not be members of secret orders, we observe that this is becoming an increasingly difficult problem in our congregations. Also in connection with the membership in such societies, we may well study the Christian's duty in relation to other organizations, such as labor unions, pressure groups in politics, and even professional societies, when they leave their distinctly professional phases and allow the organization to become a pleasure group. It should be suggested that a close examination of the

statements of objectives and aims be made in every case, and as for secret orders, their creeds rule out any membership, and their policy is unbiblical, for the gospel is not secret, nor should the life of the Christian be under cover.

3. Business Practices and Associations.

Fortunately the federal governments of the United States and of Canada have strict legislation covering any evil business practices, and it remains for the believers to follow the spirit and the letter of the law of the land. It is all too easy in our contemporary circumstances to become involved in shady practices, and therefore the church may need to speak a word also in the area of business relations.

4. Relationship to Law and Government.

Though the Christian should be the most law-abiding, obedient and loyal citizen the principle of separation also pertains to our relation with the government. In this connection we can reiterate the principle that a Christian is not to go to law, to the court, to demand his rights. Also in this area we touch upon military service and conscription. Here again the stand is clear and probably needs to be emphasized and taught, more than it needs to be reconsidered.

Through the saving experience the Christian has entered into a life of saving service, activities, and relationships. He is called to a life of construction, of loving, helping unselfish service and can have no part in a program of destruction. Following the Prince of Peace, he follows peace with all men and exercises love toward all.

Conclusion

We conclude our study with the following summary:

1. Separation should always be considered a Biblical principle, and the Scriptures become in all situations the final authority that govern our choices.
2. We need to develop a personal persuasion and conviction relative to these matters, and sheer conformity for the sake of parents or preachers does not go far enough. We should work for inner fortitude for every believer.
3. Group consensus plays a very strong role in the judgment of worldliness. We need to respect the will of the brotherhood in its total expression. For this reason it becomes imperative that the whole brotherhood speak and express itself on many more issues. The voice of the group must be rooted in the Word.
4. The purpose of our separation should be a redemptive living. We are the light of the world, the salt of the earth. Thus we have a mission of illumination and preservation. Therefore we are to be very much in the world, be influential, and effective in the interaction with our fellows, in order that they may see the good works, and glorify the Father which is in heaven.