

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 1 of 12

Today as we continue our study of the vital doctrine of Biblical separation, let me call your attention once again to three passages of Scripture with which we are dealing at the present time. I hope that if you are able to do so, as always, that you will open your own copy of God's Word and follow along during today's study.

First of all, let me call to your attention the theme passage for this series of messages, which is found in Colossians chapter 3, verses 16 and 17. The Apostle Paul's epistle to the Colossians, chapter 3 beginning at verse 16:

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.

This passage of Scripture emphasizes for us the vital imperative of submitting to the Word of God – literally, in the original language, letting the Word of Christ be fully at home, fully welcome, within us. That is the essence of Biblical separation. Biblical separation first of all involves submission to the Word of God.

Secondly, this passage also emphasizes the preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the issue of Biblical separation. We are to be more and more conformed to His image, so that whatever we do, in word or deed, it will be worthy of the name of the

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 2 of 12

Lord Jesus Christ, and it will exhibit our thankfulness through Jesus to God the Father for the great salvation that has reconciled us to our Father in Heaven.

God Requires a Radical Change in Attitude

The second passage I want to call to your attention once again is found in the epistle of First John, in chapter 2 beginning at verse 15. First John chapter 2, beginning at verse 15:

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. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

This passage of Scripture is one of many that tell us that it is absolutely necessary for our attitude toward the world to change radically when we become Christians. We are not to love the world or the things that are in the world. To love the world is the opposite of love for God. To pursue the lusts of this world is the opposite of doing those things which are worthy of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This must never be the position of the Bible-believing Christian.

But as we have seen, this passage in First John chapter 2 has raised a question. The question has to do with the fact that while we are told here in First John not to love the world, in John chapter 3, in the most well-known portion of all of the Word of

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 3 of 12

God, we are told by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself that God loved the world. And some people want to suppose that this means that there is a contradiction or a logical paradox in the Word of God, and therefore in the mind of God. But as we have seen, nothing could be further from the case. God is not double minded. He does not wish us to be double minded. He calls us to single-mindedness in pursuing holiness and in holding Christ preeminent.

God's Love for the World

Now with these things in mind, let me also read again for you the key verses having to do with this issue in John chapter 3. John chapter 3, beginning at verse 16. Jesus Himself is speaking:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Now if you have been following this series of messages, you will recall that in our last broadcast we said that in order to understand the meaning of the Word of God accurately, one of the things that we must frequently do is to understand the

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 4 of 12

definitions of the words that are used in the original language, in this case the Greek of the New Testament. And in these two passages, in First John chapter 2 and also in the Gospel of John chapter 3, two very critical words are used. One is the word that is translated "world" in our Bibles, and the other is the word that is translated "love."

In our last message, we began to see that the scope of our Lord's use of the word "world" in John chapter 3 – which in the original language of the New Testament is the Greek word *kosmos* – the scope of the word as our Lord uses it takes into account the entire universe, the entire created order, as well as mankind made in the image of God as the pinnacle of God's created order.

I mentioned that we find this confirmed to us in many other passages of Scripture, and in our last message we focused our attention on the related statements that we find in the eighth chapter of the book of Romans that closely connect the salvation of sinful men and the redemption of the entire created order from the curse of sin. We also find the same thing stated for us in Ephesians chapter 2, in Colossians chapter 1, Second Peter chapter 3, and Revelation chapter 21.

The salvation that God ordained from before the foundation of the world is truly a cosmic salvation. And this salvation is the great hope of the believer, that not only is God redeeming a people for Himself, but He is redeeming the entire universe, the entire created order, from the curse of sin. He will establish the New Heavens and the New Earth, the renovated universe, as the perfect dwelling place of the redeemed people of God for all eternity. This is the great hope of the believer, and it is the great

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 5 of 12

imperative for Biblical separation.

Now as we continue studying the words that are used in these two passages, that some men in the postmodern church want to say contradict one another, but these passages do not in any way contradict each other – God did so love the world, and God has told us not to love the world, and the two things are not in contradiction with each other – as we consider these things further, there is more that we need to see about the use of the word that is translated "world" in the Gospel of John chapter 3 and in First John chapter 2.

The Nature of *Agape* Love

But in order to better understand that, we need to begin to understand the meaning of the word that is translated "love" or "loved" in these two passages. The word that is used in both cases is the Greek word *agape*. There are several words for "love" in the Greek of the New Testament, but *agape* is a very special and unique word for love.

What is the definition of *agape* love? First of all, we need to understand the basis of it. *Agape* love is a love that springs from a sense of the preciousness of the object that is loved. This is something that is inherent in the meaning of the word *agape* – it is a love that springs from a sense of the preciousness of the object that is loved. John 3:16 tells us that "God so loved the world" – *agape* love, a love emanating from the preciousness of the object of that love in the eyes of God

Secondly, *agape* love is a self-sacrificial love. The person who exercises the kind

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 6 of 12

of love that first of all emanates from an appreciation of the preciousness of the object of that love, also manifests that love in a heart of self-sacrifice and acts of self-sacrifice on behalf of the object of that love.

In John chapter 3 the Lord Jesus tells Nicodemus that God loved the world with that kind of love. It was a love that recognized the preciousness of the object of that love. It was a love that was willing to exhibit itself in self-sacrifice for the object of that love.

God's Love For His Creation and for Man

The entire created order is precious to God. God's own actions throughout history, as recorded in Scripture, demonstrate that.

When our first parents fell into sin, through the temptation of Satan, God could simply have wiped the slate entirely clean. He could have started over. He could have utterly destroyed both mankind and the universe which had now been plunged into sin and had come under the curse of sin. But He did not. He did not let Satan have the victory. He did not leave man helpless in sin. Immediately, God initiated His all-wise plan to redeem man and the created order from the curse.

Likewise, when, by the time of the days of Noah, as we read in Genesis 6:5, "the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," once again the Lord could have wiped the slate clean, He could have utterly destroyed both mankind and the

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 7 of 12

universe. He could have started over with an entirely new created order and an entirely new race of human beings made after His own image. But God did not do that. God renovated the earth. God brought a flood that wiped out all of mankind except for eight souls in the Ark, and God then permitted the earth to dry and to flourish once again, and He permitted Noah and his sons and their wives to leave the Ark, and to resettle and repopulate the earth.

This is a picture of what God is going to do once again, as we are told in Second Peter chapter 3, when He will renovate the entire universe at the end of this age. He will purge this present earth by fire, and He will establish New Heavens and a New Earth in which righteousness will dwell forever.

For the Creator God of the universe to not once, not twice, but three times withhold His hand from total annihilation of man and the universe, but rather to perpetuate His created order and to restore His created order to even greater glory than the original – this demonstrates how precious this created order is in the eyes of God.

And why is the universe, this created order, so precious in His sight? It is so precious because He established it as the dwelling place of man made in His own image, man who was given the mandate to rule and to reign over the earth. In Isaiah chapter 45, verse 18 we read this:

For thus says the Lord, who created the Heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who has established it, who did not create it in vain, who formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is no other.

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 8 of 12

The Extent of God's Love

Man because of his sin and rebellion against God has utterly failed in the original mandate to rule the earth. We see the evidence in the catastrophes all around us. But God is now redeeming a people for Himself so that they may rule and reign forever in the glorious New Heavens and New Earth, freed from the curse of sin – freed not only from their sins, plural, but also from their sin, singular – freed at last from the sin nature, the propensity, the capability of sinning.

"God so loved the world." The phrase in the original language could actually be translated, "For *in this manner* God loved the world" or "*to this extent* God loved the world" – that God the Father was willing to send His perfect and only begotten Son into this creation under the curse, and God the Son was willing to come, and to take on a body of flesh, was willing for the Divine nature and the human nature to dwell together unmixed in one body, to take on the form of a servant, and to be obedient, as Philippians chapter 2 tells us, unto death, even the death of the cross, the cruelest death imaginable, in order not only to redeem the people that He loved with a self-sacrificial love because of their preciousness to Him as those made in His own image, but also to redeem the entire created order as their dwelling place in which they would rule and reign in glory and in unspeakable peace and rest and blessing for all of eternity.

That, dear friends, is God's *agape* love for His creatures and for His created order. A self-sacrificial love, a love that God exercised by His free grace because

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 9 of 12

even when we were unclean sinners we were precious in the sight of God. Even after His entire created order had been plunged into the curse of sin, it remained precious in His sight.

The Love That Separates

Now dear friends, how does all of this apply to the doctrine of Biblical separation? It applies very directly and very vitally. Let me point you to several verses of Scripture that speak of this. You may not have time to turn to each of them, but you may want to write down the references if you are able. Or, as we will tell you at the close of this broadcast, you can obtain a transcript of this message from us that will contain every word. Let me first of all call your attention to First John chapter 3, verse 16:

By this we know [or perceive] the love of God, because He [in the person of Jesus Christ] laid down His life for us; and so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

John chapter 15, verses 12 and 13 – Jesus said,

This is My commandment, that you love one another. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Ephesians chapter 5, beginning at verse one:

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 10 of 12

Christ also has loved us and has given Himself for us, as an offering and a sacrifice to God...

First John chapter 4, beginning at verse 10:

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

And, Second Corinthians chapter 5, beginning at verse 14:

For the love of Christ constrains [or compels] us, because we judge thus: that if One [Jesus] died for all, then all died; and He died for all that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Biblical separation involves Christians responding in self-sacrificial, grateful love toward God for what He has done. *Agape* love recognizes the fact that God is therefore precious to us, because we are precious to Him. That is the basis of our love for Him. God loved us, step one. Therefore, step two, we are to express our love toward God by living in the way that we are instructed in Colossians chapter 3, verses 16 and 17.

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..." Dear friend, is the Word of God, the Word of Christ, precious to you? Are you carefully and faithfully reading and studying the Word of God so that you may understand the mind and

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 11 of 12

heart of God for you, and the mind and heart that God desires for you to have, both toward your loving God, and also toward this present evil world and the perfect eternal world to come?

Are you, in view of the *agape* love of God for you, no longer living for yourself but living for Him? You are precious in God's eyes. Is He precious in your eyes? Do you recognize that because the Lord Jesus Christ made the supreme self-sacrifice on the cross, the ultimate expression of *agape* love, in order to redeem you from your sins, that you no longer belong to yourself? Do you recognize, as we are told several times already in the book of Colossians, and as we read a few moments ago in Second Corinthians chapter 5, that you are dead to this present world because Christ died for you?

Does that manifest itself, dear friend, in a life of more and more separation from this present evil world, and more and more separation unto your holy and supremely loving God? Do you endeavor to do and say and think all things in the name of the Lord Jesus? Are you concerned that everything that you do and say and think will be worthy of the great name of the One who deemed you so precious, even in the depths of your sin, that He was willing to give His life for yours, to bear your sins in His own body on the cross, and to pay in full the penalty for them on your behalf?

Are you willing, more and more, to self-sacrificially yield up your hold on the things of this world? Are you willing to yield up your sinful prerogatives in order to

"The Love That Separates"

Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17, John 3:16-19

Series: *Biblical Separation* Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 11/2/2014

Page 12 of 12

please the One who laid aside the prerogatives of the glories of Heaven, in order to come into this sin-cursed world to redeem you?

These things, dear friends, are of the essence of the doctrine of Biblical separation. And as we continue in our next message, as we return once again in particular to God's command to us in First John chapter 2 not to love the world or the things that are in the world, we are going to see even more how vital it is, how essential it is, in view of the *agape* love of God, to pursue separation – to pursue holiness in the sight of God.

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.

For more information, please visit our website, www.teachingtheword.org.

The prayers of our listeners and supporters are vital to all we do. We thank you for bringing this ministry before the throne of grace.

**May the Lord richly bless your personal study
of His inspired, infallible, inerrant Word.**

TeachingtheWord Ministries

Box 2533, Westminster, Maryland 21158 USA

In North America, toll-free 888-804-9655