

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "For This Is The Will of God" (Colossians 3:16-17, 1 John 2:15-17)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/11/2015

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As we continue our study of the Biblical doctrine of separation, I want to remind you of a very vital point about this doctrine. The Biblical doctrine of separation is not an isolated teaching. It is not something that we find in only a few passages in the Word of God. It is a pervasive teaching from Genesis all the way to Revelation.

At the present time we are focusing our attention on two passages in particular that deal with Biblical separation, and I want to remind you of them once again. But I also want to remind you that these two passages are not to be considered in isolation. They communicate to us the will of God concerning this matter that we find throughout His written Word.

Let me remind you first of all of the authority on which the doctrine of Biblical separation is based. If you are able to do so, please turn with me to the great statement that we find in Colossians chapter 3, in verses 16 and 17. 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.

If you have been following this series of messages, you will know that I have pointed out a number of times that this passage declares to us the separating

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authority of the Word of God. The Word of Christ must be the sole authority, the separating authority, of every Christian.

And because that is true, Christ Himself is our authority. All of our thinking and speaking and living must be worthy of being thought and said and done in the name of the One who is our standard of holiness and separation, Christ Himself.

And in the epistle of First John chapter 2 beginning at verse 15 we have seen the separating imperative of Scripture. Once again, please turn there with me if you are able as you are listening, 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.

### **Scripture: Nothing Stands In Isolation**

As we have pursued the study of the Biblical doctrine of separation together, we have looked at many different passages in Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments. And this very fact underscores a vital point that we must never forget: Everything in Scripture is related to everything else in Scripture. Nothing stands in isolation.

The great doctrines of the faith never rest on a single word or phrase or verse or

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chapter. The great doctrines are to be found throughout the Bible, from beginning to end. We find many of the great doctrines in seed form in the Old Testament, and we find them more fully revealed in later parts of the Old Testament and especially in the New Testament.

Much of what we find in the earlier portions of the Bible takes on a different and fuller significance in the light of the progress of the unfolding of God's plan of redemption in the New Testament.

God's Word is one composite whole. And that is because it has one Divine Author, from the very first word of Genesis to the very last word of Revelation. God the Holy Spirit used chosen men to write His Word, but He gave them every single word of it.

And we have the promise of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that not one jot or tittle – not even the smallest stroke of a single letter – will fail. All of it, every last bit of it, has been and will be fulfilled, from the very first word of Genesis to the very last word of Revelation. All has been and will be fulfilled, because the Bible sets before us the perfect will of God, His perfect plan for the ages.

### **Separation: A Pervasive Doctrine**

And so it is with the Biblical doctrine of separation. The doctrine of separation is a pervasive doctrine throughout the Word of God. And the doctrine of separation is related to all other Bible doctrine. Separation has to do with the Biblical doctrine of

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God. It has to do with His holiness. Separation has to do with the Biblical doctrine of man. It has to do with man's fallen condition. The doctrine of separation relates to the Biblical doctrine of the law of God, His holy standard.

The Biblical doctrine of separation relates to the doctrine of Christ. It relates to the fact that Christ is redeeming a people from among those who fell, and that He is separating them positionally from this present evil world by saving them, and He is separating them personally from this present evil world by the work of sanctifying them.

The doctrine of separation also relates to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of the Spirit in every believer, the work of the Spirit in sanctification, the power of the Spirit for separated living.

The Biblical doctrine of separation also relates very directly to the doctrine of the last things, and the Lord willing we are going to see that as we progress in this study.

### **Separation: A Demonstrated Doctrine**

The Biblical doctrine of separation is set out before us in the lives of the Old and New Testament saints. Sometimes it is set before us in the examples of their failure to separate themselves from this present evil and dying world and to separate themselves unto their holy and living God.

In other cases, the Biblical doctrine of separation is set before us in examples of

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thinking and living and speaking that demonstrate Biblical separation in action. And one of the very interesting things that we find in Scripture is the fact that we often have both the negative examples and the positive examples set before us in the life of the same individual.

We certainly see this in the life of David. We see David as the great Psalmist of Israel. We see him as the greatest, spiritually speaking, of the kings of Israel. We see him often in the Psalms speaking of the fact that he has separated himself from those who would forsake the holiness of God to pursue compromise. We see the Lord calling David a man after His own heart.

We see all of those positive elements, those separated elements, in the life of David. But we also see the occasions on which David abandoned the Biblical doctrine of separation. And because he abandoned this vital doctrine on one particular occasion, he fell into the sin of adultery, and then he committed murder in order to hide that sin.

Dear friends, we often do what David did on that occasion. We choose the path of compromise because we think it is to our advantage. David believed the lie of the Devil and thought, in this particular case, that moral compromise would be to his advantage. And that one act of compromise led to another and another and ended in deep sin.

Dear friends, compromise is the opposite of Biblical separation, and compromise in any form is sin. So much of the church today, and so many Christians

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individually today, do not recognize that essential fact. So many churches today, and so many Christians individually today, are engulfed in sins of compromise.

But dear friends, the life of David also shows us that for the true believer the promise of God is sure. God did not permit David to remain in his sins of compromise. God pursued David. God brought David back. David repented in response to the word of the Lord through the prophet Nathan. He fell on his face before God in repentance.

Today many professing churches, and many professing Christians, are entering into and remaining in compromise simply because God's hand is not upon them. It is a sign, as we have seen, not merely of backsliding but of the fact that these people and these churches were not of the Lord in the first place.

We also find in the life of David that his sins of compromise had lasting effects, both during his own lifetime and in subsequent generations. And truly, that is the heartbreak of compromise that so many churches and so many professing Christians need to see. Today's compromises will have their effects on tomorrow, and the next day, and the next month, and the next year, and even the next decade and the next generation.

And seemingly private compromises, compromises that we think are only known to ourselves, are open and naked before God, as Hebrews chapter 4 tells us. Compromise has evil consequences. But separation has godly consequences.

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But dear friends, let us take note of a great fact that differentiated David from his son Solomon. Unlike Solomon, David, even in a condition of such grievous backsliding and compromise, did not personally ever go after other gods. He remained in a singular relationship with the one true and living God even in his backsliding.

The passage that we are considering together in First John chapter 2 regarding the imperative of separation tells us that "he who does the will of God abides forever." That truly can be said of David. And as we shall see, that can truly be said of every separated saint of God.

### **The Only Way To Live a Separated Life**

And that last phrase of First John chapter 2 verse 17 brings us to the next point in our study of the doctrine of separation, and it is this: Christians can only live as aliens in this present evil world by the power of the Word of God and the indwelling spirit of God. That is the only way in which we can truly do the will of God. That is the only way that we can and will, as First John 2:17 tells us, "abide forever".

Notice once again the contrast that we have in verse 17:

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

This present world system under the sway of Satan, this present world that is dominated by lust and pride, is passing away. Literally, in the original language, as

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we have seen, God is causing it to pass away. The continual vain show of lust and pride that we see passing before us, day after day, year after year, decade after decade, generation after generation, which seems so powerful and so permanent, is in fact in the great plan of God being made to pass away.

But then we have the great contrast. Just as the destruction of this present evil world, and the ushering in of New Heavens and New Earth in which righteousness will dwell, are the unstoppable will of God, so also the preservation and perseverance of the separated saint is the unstoppable will of God. "He who does the will of God abides forever."

### **Separation: "This Is The Will Of God"**

"He who does the will of God" – what does that mean? In the original language the phrase "he who does" speaks of someone who does something and keeps on doing it – doing it continually, and doing it to the end. And there is, in the original language, a declarative element in the doing – declaring before the watching world the revealed, written will of God by the doing of it.

And what is meant here by "the will of God"? We find this particular phrase twenty-four times in the New Testament. Many of those passages bear directly upon the doctrine of separation. Let me call your attention to several of them.

In his Gospel account, Luke speaks of the fact that the Pharisees and the experts in the law during Jesus time on earth "rejected the will of God for themselves"



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(7:30) because they refused to take part in the baptism that was being administered by John the Baptist, which was a baptism of separation – a baptism of repentance from sin and preparation of the heart for the imminent revelation of the Messiah.

Galatians chapter 1 verse 2 tells us that Jesus

gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, *according to the will of our God and Father*, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Romans chapter 12 verse 2 commands us:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove [that is, that you may demonstrate to be genuine] *what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*.

In Ephesians chapter 6 beginning at verse 5, the Apostle Paul gives instructions to both servants and masters, to employees and to employers, concerning the life of the separated saint in the workplace. He writes this, Ephesians 6, beginning at verse 5:

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye service, as men-pleasers [in other words, not only doing a good job when someone is looking, but also when no one is looking]... as bondservants of Christ, *doing the will of God from the heart*, with

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goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.

And you, masters [employers], do the same things to them [to your employees] giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in Heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

Peter speaks of the same principle in his first epistle, in chapter 2 beginning in verse 15. He says this:

*For this is the will of God*, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish man – as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

In the next chapter of his epistle, Peter says this, First Peter chapter 3 beginning in verse 15:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, *if it is the will of God*, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

And in the next chapter of first Peter, chapter 4 beginning at verse 1, we read this:

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Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, *but for the will of God*. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles [that is, the will of the unsaved] – when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

In regard to these, they [the unsaved] think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. [But, Peter says] they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. (1 Peter 4:1-5)

And in Hebrews chapter 10, the writer reminds believers, beginning at verse 34, that

you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in Heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence [that is, your confidence in Christ], which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that *after you have done the will of God*, you may receive the promise: For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.

Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back [God says], My soul has no pleasure in him. But we [we separated saints of God] are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

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And the Apostle Paul says this, in First Thessalonians chapter 4 beginning at verse 3:

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we forewarned you and testified.

For God did not call us to uncleanness, but to holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

### **God's Will For Every Believer**

Separation from the thinking and the words and the ways of this present evil world is the will of God for every believer. Not just a few. Not just a certain class of believers. No – it is God's will for all believers. It is not optional. It is essential. And First John 2:17 tells us that it is "he who does the will of God [who] abides forever."

Dear friend, are these things true of you? Are you living a life of separation before God? Are these things true of you, whether you are alone or you are in the company of other people? Are these things true of you in your home, in your

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workplace, in your neighborhood, in the church?

God says that the one who does these things – the one who does His will by living a life that is separated from this present evil world and separated unto God's holiness – that person is the one who will abide forever. That is God's great promise to the separated saint.

Now in this discussion, we still have yet to fully address this very vital question: In view of these truths, exactly what does it mean to abide forever? Today we have been laying some very necessary groundwork for the answer to that question. And the Lord willing, in our next message, we will present the answer to this question as we find it in the Word 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.

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Box 2533, Westminster, Maryland 21158 USA  
In North America, toll-free 888-804-9655