

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: Are We To Become "Worldly Saints"? (Psalms 5 and 31)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 3/1/2015

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As we continue our study of the Biblical doctrine of separation, let me remind you once again of the imperatives that we find in the 3rd chapter of the book of Colossians, in verses 16 and 17. Please turn with me in your own Bible if you are able as you are listening, to Colossians chapter 3, beginning at verse 16. There we find these words from God the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul:

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.

Now, those of you who have been listening to these messages for some time will know that I have begun almost every message in this series by calling your attention to these verses. I am not doing this simply to be repetitive. I am calling our attention continually back to this passage because it is one of the places in the Word of God that give us the foundation for the doctrine of Biblical separation.

The Word of Christ, the Word of God, mandates separation from this present evil world and separation unto our holy God on the part of every believer in Christ. And the person of Christ, and the very name of Christ, that holy name, mandates that anyone who names the name of Christ must conduct himself in this present evil world in a manner befitting that great name which is above every name.

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## **Separation Requires Realism**

In the last few messages in this series, we have begun to examine the fact that Biblical separation requires a Biblical attitude. You must have a Biblical attitude. You must understand the necessity of separation. You can only have a Biblical attitude concerning the necessity of separation, you can only understand how to live the separated life in this present evil world, by understanding what the Word of God says on the subject, and by submitting to the work of the Spirit of God, and by submitting to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, to bear the fruit of those things in your life.

I said in a previous message that the central truth of the Biblical doctrine of separation is this: If you are a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are the temple of the living God in this present age. The presence of the written Word of God at your disposal, and the presence of the living God himself, the Spirit of Christ Himself, living within you and illuminating His Word for you, must make a separating difference in your life.

We have seen that separation involves a fourfold attitude. We saw first of all that the separated Christian must cultivate a realistic attitude toward this present evil world. Biblical separation is the only realistic attitude for the believer in Christ. You must recognize, on the authority of Scripture, that this world, despite its outward attractions, despite its seeming friendliness at times, is in fact under the sway of Satan and opposed to Christianity, to the Christian individually, and

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to the church as the Body of Christ.

In the sovereign and all-wise plan of God, this present evil world is by God's permission under the control of Satan. God is permitting Satan to have his day, but that day will come to an end. The day of reckoning will come. But at the present time, this world under the sway of Satan hates Christ and hates Christianity, and wants to pollute the Christian and the church in every way possible. And so we must have a realistic attitude toward this present evil world.

### **Separation Admits No Compromise**

Secondly, we have seen that the separated Christian must cultivate an uncompromising attitude toward this present evil world. In our last message in this series, we saw this portrayed first of all in a negative manner as we saw the ungodly example of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament.

We saw the nation of Israel continually entering into corrupt bargains with the unbelievers around them. We saw them constantly entering into compromise. And we saw the terrible results of that compromise. And we also saw that we have the same kinds of compromise within the visible church today.

We also saw that the true believer in Christ must understand the nature of compromise. You can never keep compromise at a distance. You can never contain compromise. The Bible tells us that compromise is like leaven, which spreads and affects and consumes all that it touches.

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And we saw that Scripture declares to us clearly in many places that Biblical separation requires an attitude of no compromise. Ephesians chapter 5 tells us to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" and James chapter 4 tells us that "friendship with the world is enmity with God," it is spiritual adultery.

### **Separation Requires A Soldier's Attitude**

This brings us to a third aspect of the attitude that the Christian must have. If you are to be a truly separated Christian, if you are truly to be separated from this present evil world and separated unto your holy God, you must cultivate a soldier's attitude toward this present evil world.

A soldier's attitude. In fact, the Word of God is a call to arms for the Christian. It is a call to battle. It is a call to warfare. This is a major theme of Scripture, and I want to begin to set that before you today, specifically as it relates to the Biblical doctrine of separation.

### **"Christian Hedonism"?**

Now there are leading men in the visible church today who are effectively denying this. Let me briefly mention just two. Dr. John Piper has become famous in large part because he has advocated a doctrinal novelty called "Christian hedonism."

Now John Piper is a man to be avoided, and not only because of this particular

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philosophy. Dr. Piper has endorsed and associated himself with a number of false teachers over the years, and he has taught multiple falsehoods himself, including falsehoods about the Gospel, false teachings about how an individual is made right with God. But he became noteworthy a number of years ago because he proposed this false doctrine of so-called "Christian hedonism."

The essence of this false doctrine is that God is most glorified when man subjectively decides that he – man – is most satisfied with God. And so the entire foundation of "Christian hedonism" is based on man's psychological outlook, and not the objective standard of Scripture. It diminishes God, and elevates man.

Well, I don't want to burden you with any more details about this. Suffice it to say that this doctrine of "Christian hedonism" is contrary to the Biblical teaching concerning the Christian in relation to God and to this world.

### **"Worldly Saints"?**

A second prominent figure in the church today who is denying the Biblical view that we are setting forth in these messages is Dr. Michael Wittmer, who teaches at a seminary in Michigan. He has written a book titled *Becoming Worldly Saints*. That is the title of his book – *Becoming Worldly Saints*.

Now Dr. Wittmer's idea is not far removed from the so-called Christian hedonism of John Piper. Once again, the emphasis is on what man finds acceptable. Dr. Wittmer says in effect that God wants Christians to settle down

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in this present evil world and enjoy it. He also says that it is man's duty to serve the creation.

That is exactly the opposite of what Scripture actually says. God has commanded us not to serve this creation but to subdue the earth, and to have dominion over it. But Dr. Wittmer's message is, Don't get too carried away with your Christianity. Don't get overly serious about it. Take time to be worldly. Focus on the enjoyment of this present evil world, and not on the world to come.

Now dear friends, let me answer these men and others who agree with them by repeating what I said a few moments ago: God calls Christians to a life of spiritual separation from this present evil world. And if you are to be truly separated from this present evil world and separated unto your holy God, you must have a realistic attitude about the spiritual dangers of this present evil world. You must have an uncompromising attitude toward the sinfulness of this present evil world.

And you must cultivate a soldier's attitude toward this present evil world. This world under the sway of Satan will seek to oppose and to pollute the genuine Christian and the true Church of Jesus Christ in every way that it can. You cannot settle down comfortably in this present world.

### **Separation: A Call to Arms for the Christian**

The Christian life is a warfare. You must have a soldier's attitude. It is

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completely accurate to say that the Word of God is a call to arms for the Christian, a call to battle, a call to warfare – not merely against flesh and blood, Ephesians chapter six tells us, but against unseen spiritual enemies that are far more powerful than any man. That is a major theme of Scripture, and I want to set that before you today, specifically as it relates to the Biblical doctrine of separation.

And dear friend, let me say to you that if you do not recognize these things, and if you indeed deny these things, your view of Christianity and of the Christian life is seriously defective. On the authority of Scripture I say to you that you need to come to grips with these things. They are vital for you.

### **Psychology Has Replaced Theology**

Let me tell you one of the main reasons for the lack of separated living among professing Christians today. It is because psychology has replaced theology in so much of the church. Psychology has replaced theology.

What do I mean by that? Let me explain. With few and precious exceptions, the message of the church today is one of so-called psychological healing rather than repentance from sin. The message is one of justifying the sinfulness of little, fallen man rather than justification of repentant sinners before the judgment bar of the holy God of the universe by faith in the blood of Christ alone.

The focus in much of the church today is on this present evil world, rather than

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on the perfect world to come. The focus is on the mind of fallen man, and not on the mind of the exalted Christ. The focus is on the will of man, and not on the will of God. The focus is on the headship of man, and not the headship of Christ. The focus is on the fickle and sinful pleasures of man, rather than on the glory of the unchangeable and holy God.

Far too many pastors are calling their people, spiritually speaking, to a life on the psychiatrist's couch, when in fact God calls us to life in the barracks of the soldiers of the Cross. Today's church is the church of the "me" generation. It is all about "me" – when it should be all about Christ and His glory.

### **Military Language in Scripture**

Biblical separation is a matter of sound, objective theology, not fallen man's psychology. Separation requires a soldier's attitude. Scripture is filled, from beginning to end, with military language describing the Christian life. I want to show you this from the pages of the Word of God. We could look to many places in the Word for these things, but I want to point to three things specifically.

First of all, I want to begin by pointing out the soldier's attitude that we find in the life of King David of Israel. And I believe that that is probably as much as we will be able to cover in the remaining time we had together today. But beyond that, I also want to take you to the words of our Lord Jesus Himself about these matters. Jesus Himself used military language to speak of the spiritual warfare in which the separated Christian is to be involved.

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And furthermore, I want to take us to the epistles of the Apostle Paul, in which he speaks frequently in military terms, in the terms of the soldier, of the separated life that every Christian is called upon to live.

And so we begin with King David. Now David was a military man, a military leader in Israel. He led the nation in fighting against surrounding nations that were its enemies, in particular the Philistines. And so we find many places, in the historical books of the Old Testament that speak of David, in which military language is used. And we find David in the Psalms frequently speaking of those battles, and of his dependence upon the Lord for victory.

But David also uses military language to speak of the spiritual warfare in which the believer is involved while we are in this present evil world. We could go to dozens of passages in the Psalms in which David speaks in these terms, but let me highlight just a few of them in particular.

Turn with me, if you are able to do so as you are listening, to the 5th Psalm. Psalm 5. Beginning in verse one, the psalmist David says this:

Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for to You I will pray. My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up.

For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall

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evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; in fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face.

For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue.

Pronounce them guilty, O God! Let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You.

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield.

Dear friends, in this Psalm of David we see all three of the elements of the Biblical attitude of the separated Christian that I have mentioned thus far. Here we see a realistic attitude about this present evil world:

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[Notice again verse four – ] For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man...

[Notice again verse nine – ] For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue.

We also see an uncompromising attitude toward this world's sinfulness. Notice again verse ten:

Pronounce them guilty, O God! Let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You.

And we also see the soldier's attitude of the separated Christian. Notice the military language in this Psalm:

[Verse 7 – ] But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; in fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness [notice] because of my enemies; make Your way straight before my face.

[Verse 11 – ] But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let

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them ever shout for joy, because [notice] You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor [notice] You will surround him as with a shield.

### **"My Enemies...Especially My Neighbors"**

Turn with me also, if you are able to do so, to Psalm 31. Let me point out the instances in this Psalm in which David speaks in similar terms. Notice that in the second verse of Psalm 31, David speaks of the Lord as "a fortress of defense to save me" from spiritual enemies in this world. In verse eleven of Psalm 31, David says "I am a reproach [that is, I am despised] among all my enemies, but [notice] *especially among my neighbors*, and am repulsive to my acquaintances."

Dear friends, I have had many unsaved neighbors and acquaintances over the years who were very nice people. No doubt you have also. Often they are very nice people, very kind people, even very moral people. But at the same time, these unsaved neighbors and acquaintances are on a completely different side when it came to spiritual matters. Scripture describes the unsaved as the enemies of God. David speaks of his unsaved neighbors as being numbered among his spiritual enemies.

In the spiritual warfare of this present evil world, our unsaved neighbors, as nice as they may be, are on the side of our spiritual enemy. We must never forget that. And they exhibit that in many different ways. Apart from a work of the Holy

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Spirit, they are resistant to the things of God – often even hostile. They don't want to hear about the Bible. They don't want to hear about the Gospel. They don't want to go your way spiritually.

But very often they want you to go along with them in their worldly ways. And that is often the way Satan engages the Christian in spiritual warfare – by enticing and entrapping the Christian through the influence of people who seem to be very nice and very moral in this world's terms, but they are enemies of God and they will drag you down spiritually if you are not on your guard. Satan wants you to be a so-called "worldly saint." But God calls you to be a *separated saint*.

And so we need to have a soldier's attitude toward this present world and the unredeemed people around us. We need to recognize that they are often the unwitting agents of our spiritual enemy. Their interests lie in the things of this present evil world and not in the holiness of the glory of God.

That does not mean that we should be unkind to them. That does not mean that we should not obey God's command to love our neighbor as ourselves. But it does mean that we must recognize that we must maintain a spiritual separation from those who are on the other side.

Now there is much more to be said about the soldier's attitude of the separated Christian, and we have reached the end of our time for this broadcast. But I hope you will take these things to heart. And the Lord willing, we shall continue to see

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what the Scriptures say about the soldier's attitude that the separated Christian is to have while living in this present evil world.

#### **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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