

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD AND UNTO GOD

A professor for most of his life in a fundamental Baptist Bible college, once told me that separation was not a Bible doctrine because it was not included in the list of the twelve major doctrines of Systematic Theology. This individual taught Systematic Theology. Perhaps this tells us why there is so much ignorance and misinformation regarding the doctrines of biblical separation, holiness, and sanctification through faith.

In the Old Testament, God commands that all sanctified and consecrated persons and things to be “separate.” The word “separate” is translated from the Hebrew word *nazar* (naw-zar’). “*Nazar*” simply means to *hold aloof*. The general idea of the word is to *keep someone or something separate from moral or physical impurity*. “*Nazar*” is used of persons or things that are *set apart* for the worship of God or service to God. That person or thing that is “*nazar*” is said to be *holy*. In other words, the person or thing is to be only used in service or worship of God. When God says something or someone is holy, that holy person or thing has been dedicated and devoted to God’s service and worship. A person or thing that is separate is then *holy, sanctified, set apart, dedicated, and consecrated* to God. God then commands the separated person to do nothing contrary to his position of *holiness, sanctification, separation, dedication, and consecration* to God. Failure renders that individual or thing *unclean* before God and *defiled*. Notice the two defining questions to the priests in Haggai 2:10-13.

“¹⁰ In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying, ¹² If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. ¹³ Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. ¹⁴ Then answered Haggai, and said, So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so *is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean. ¹⁵ And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: ¹⁶ Since those *days* were, when *one* came to an heap of twenty *measures*, there were *but* ten: when *one* came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty *vessels* out of the press, there were *but* twenty. ¹⁷ I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye *turned* not to me, saith the LORD. ¹⁸ Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth *month*, *even*

from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider *it*.¹⁹ Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless *you*" (Haggai 2:10-19).

In the Greek New Testament, God uses two different Greek words to define the *boundaries* of holiness. When a person ignores or changes these boundaries, this defines where that person has *crossed over* into *defilement* and *uncleanness* before God. God uses the words ***aphorizo*** (af-or-id'-zo – see Matthew 13:49, 25:32; Acts 13:2, 19:19; Romans 1:1; II Corinthians 6:17) and ***chorizo*** (kho-rid'-zo – see Romans 8:35, 39; Hebrews 7:26). The word *aphorizo* (af-or-id'-zo) means to set off a boundary or to divide, separate one person or thing from another. In most cases *aphorizo* (af-or-id'-zo) is use *to direct the separation of a person or thing from that which is corrupt or defiled*. The word *chorizo* (kho-rid'-zo) means *to place room between persons or things*. *Chorizo* (kho-rid'-zo) means to *depart* - usually from persons, practices, or things that defile. Believers are responsible for maintaining their separation from persons, practices, or things that will defile them before God.

The fact that God is holy is a spiritual reality. Because God is holy, He cannot use a person who lives in sin. Such a person is *defiled/unclean* because he fails to be separate from worldliness and sin. Although preachers seldom communicate this very well, their *concern* is that Christians live in holiness so that God can use their lives to His glory. In preparing ourselves for God to use us, sanctity must be the central priority of our lives.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and *be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Peter 3:15).

So often, we read this verse of Scripture and think that *knowing* Scripture is what God means when He tells us to “be ready.” Read the verse again. What is the precluding statement that qualifies the believer always to be ready to be a witness for Christ? It says, “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” A right relationship with God in holiness is the priority qualification for God to use us Without sanctity, you will never be *ready* no matter if you have the whole Bible memorized chapter and verse. *Being ready means being right* (say that with me: *Being ready means being right*). **Let me ask you, can you be right if you allow any sin any place in your life?**

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*” (Psalm 66:18).

The Hebrew word translated “regard” (*ra'ah*, pronounced raw-aw') means to give any place to sin, to the degree we ought not to even consider it. We cannot even think about sin, let alone do it, if we want God to use us or bless us. Scripture is redundant with this truth.

“For what *is* the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him” (Job 27:8-9)?

“The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright *is* his delight” (Proverbs 15:8).

“The LORD *is* far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous” (Proverbs 15:29).

“Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth” (John 9:31).

Why is living in holiness so important?

Living in holiness is the central qualification of *abiding* in Christ and living in *fellowship* with God. Therefore, we must define the boundaries of separation in three areas of life. We will defile ourselves if we cross these boundaries to any degree.

1. What defines worldliness?
2. What defines doctrinal heresy?
3. What defines practical sanctification?

What is worldliness? We cannot define worldliness apart from a biblical example of the use of the word “world” in Scripture.

“¹⁵ Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I John 2:15-17).

The word “world” is translated from the Greek word *kosmos* (kos'-mos). The word *kosmos* is used to describe an *orderly arrangement*. However, in most

cases, God uses this word in Scripture in a negative way to describe the satanic order or corruptions of living that tempt humanity away from God and into sin. God uses the word “world” negatively and defines it primarily by three forms of lust (I John 2:16). God commands believers not to love the world. God reminds believers that He has condemned the corrupted “world” to destruction along with all of its corruptions. Therefore, to love the world is to love what the world tempts us to do, its influences, cultural aberrations, and its abnormalities. We might refer to all of this as the *will of the world*. To continue as part of the world is to continue as part of God’s condemnation on it. The sanctifying choice is to do the will of God - thereby manifesting we are part of His ordered existence. We defile ourselves by failure in this.

The word “heresy” is from the Greek word *hairesis* (hah’-ee-res-is). In the abstract sense of the word, it means to choose a party or sect that is out of union with orthodoxy. Heresy is a false belief or beliefs that lead to a false separation. This false separation is the outcome of false beliefs that lead to false practices.

“¹ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” (II Peter 2:1-2).

There are many degrees and levels of false doctrine. Some appear to be quite innocent, but when we thoroughly investigate them, we discover that they lead people astray in numerous ways and to varying degrees. When deciding when we must separate from people teaching false doctrine, we must decide the possible damage that we might cause by any kind of endorsement or identification with those holding to false doctrine. Heterodoxy (false doctrine) always leads to heteropraxy (false practice). This is true because a Christian determines his “walk” by the truth he knows and believes. Therefore, “heresy” is ANY false doctrine that defiles our walk outside of harmony with the truth of God’s Word.

“¹ The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; ² For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. ³ Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. ⁴ I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. ⁵ And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we

love one another. ⁶ And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it” (II John 1-6).

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed” (Amos 3:3)?

Most people understand Amos 3:3 to refer to two people traveling together. The question implies that they cannot go together if they have not agreed upon a common destination. Although this is true, God is addressing the text to individuals who want His blessings. Therefore, the destination is *God’s blessings*. Can an individual get to the destination of *God’s blessings* apart from walking with God? The question is rhetorical because the answer is obviously – No! Therefore, we ask ourselves the question; at what point or what degree of false doctrine does God *depart* (separate) from a person believing false doctrine? Then, that must be the *point of departure* (separation) for the obedient believer if he wants to continue walking with God.

Although “heresy” divides Christianity into sects, there is only one true Christianity (“one faith,” Ephesians 4:4-5). God commands the “one faith” to preserve doctrinal unity by preserving doctrinal purity. Heresies are formed when those holding false doctrine separate from the “one faith.” However, those holding faithfully to right doctrine are not wrong when they separate from themselves those holding false doctrine. In fact, God commands this separation within the local church and between local churches. This is what God addresses in the last half of II Peter chapter two.

¹⁷ These {*false teachers and deceivers*} are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. ¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. ¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. ²⁰ For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. ²¹ For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. ²² But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (II Peter 2:17-22).

Then we must carefully define practical sanctification. In Colossians 2:16-21, the Apostle Paul presents three false ideas regarding spirituality or practical sanctification.

“¹⁶ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: ¹⁷ Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ. ¹⁸ Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. ²⁰ Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, ²¹ (Touch not; taste not; handle not; ²² Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh” (Colossians 2:16-23).

1. Colossians 2:14-16 – Legalistic Sanctification

Legalism found its beginnings in the mixture of apostate Judaism and Gnosticism. The warning of verse 16 is against being pressured (“judge you”) into the false religious practices that are listed. These things were part of the Old Covenant and were only intended to provide types. God fulfilled these types in the New Covenant in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The types were only shadows (v 17) of that which Christ and His finished work is the reality. The believer’s completeness (Colossians 2:10) lies in what Christ has already accomplished.

“¹ O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? ² This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? ⁴ Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. ⁵ He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith” (Galatians 3:1-5)?

Spiritual maturity (“perfect,” v. 3) does not come through religious rituals, ceremonies, or obeying religious rules/laws. If a person’s participation in religious

rituals or ceremonies could make him right with God, what was the purpose of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection?

The second false pathway to sanctification and to the pathway of God's blessings is Mysticism. What is mysticism? Mysticism is praying to *angels* or communicating with *spirits* as mediators and intercessors between God and men. This nonsense came from the influence of the pagan mystery religions. It often involved miraculous visions and spirits speaking through people (this was the common pagan practice of "tongues"). The false teacher of Mysticism involved those he had "beguiled" into seeking various experiences through contact with *spiritual messengers* ("angels") that were capable of communicating with God (*the gods in pagan religions*).

If Satan can get a person to be dependent upon anyone other than Jesus Christ, he has succeeded in creating another mediator and intercessor that replaces Jesus Christ in that person's life. One of Satan's greatest deceptions to accomplish this is to get the professing believer to focus on his own religious experiences and to begin seeking after miracles in his life. That person thinks he is involved in worshipping God. Actually, he is "voluntarily" submitting himself to spiritual beings ("angels") and is worshipping those spiritual beings by seeking religious experiences and miracles through them.

The third false pathway to practical sanctification that Paul deals with in Colossians 2:16-23 is what is known as Asceticism. What is asceticism? Asceticism is the religion of false worship through human regulations. It is spiritual legalism in the most extreme form. Asceticism puts extreme unbiblical and extra-biblical restraints and expectations upon people. Only those practicing extreme forms of self-denial could truly consider themselves *spiritual* (there are many degrees of Asceticism). Asceticism is the outgrowth of Dualism and is based upon the false belief that *all material matter is evil*. The *spiritual* should have no contact with the *material*. Therefore, the more a person was able to restrain himself from participation in the physical (*especially things that brought pleasure such as marriage, food, sleep, comfort, etc.*) the closer he would be to God. Monasticism developed from this false philosophy. Asceticism is summed up by the words "Touch not; taste not; handle not" (Colossians 2:21).

The believer's completeness in Christ gives him perfect and immediate access to God. The believer is positionally "complete" in Christ (Colossians 2:10). We cannot add anything to what Christ has already done.

1. Legalism adds religious "works" to what Christ has done. Thereby, Legalism denies what Christ has done and what He is doing in our lives.
2. Mysticism denies that Christ is the sole intermediary between God and man. Then Mysticism establishes such beings as angels, dead saints, and the virgin

Mary as intercessors between God and man.

3. Asceticism denies the believer's spiritual union in Christ. Since Asceticism's philosophical foundation believes there can be no contact between the spiritual and material, it also denies the baptism and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ” (Colossians 2:8).

All three of these false doctrines deny the believer's completeness in Christ. To accept any one of these philosophies is to be *spoiled* as a Christian. Therefore, the believer is to separate from those holding any all form or degree of false doctrine that denies that we are “complete” in Christ or who teach that practical sanctification can be accomplish in any way other than yielding by faith to the indwelling Spirit of God and living by faith in the spiritual empowering of God.