

Series: *Biblical Separation*

Title: "Separation In Your Own Family" (Matthew 10:32-40)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 4/12/2015

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In our study of the Biblical doctrine of separation, at the present time we are focusing upon the attitude that Scripture calls upon Christians to have. Now this is a very important matter. In order to live a life of separation from this present evil world and separation unto our holy God, you must have a Biblical attitude. Let me remind you of the things we have seen from the Scriptures about that attitude thus far.

The Separated Christian: An Uncompromising Realist

We can sum up what we have seen thus far in this statement: The separated Christian is a realist about this present world who therefore does not compromise. Let me say that again. The separated Christian is a realist about this present world who therefore does not compromise. What do we mean by that?

Well first of all, we have seen that the believer in Christ must have a realistic attitude about our present condition. We must understand that this present evil world is not our ultimate home. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, when you became a Christian you became a citizen of the world to come. You are no longer under the sway of Satan, as the unbelieving still are. We must be realistic in recognizing these distinctions. We must face the facts concerning our relationship to this present world.

And secondly, we have seen, that we as Christians must have an uncompromising attitude toward this present evil world. We must not enter into

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spiritual compromise of any kind. Scripture declares in the book of James chapter 4 verse 4 that "friendship with the world is enmity with God." The Holy Spirit through the pen of James calls it spiritual adultery, and that is what it is.

A Soldier's Attitude

Now in addition to these two aspects of the separated Christian's Biblical attitude, in our most recent message we began to examine a third element. Scripture declares to us that the Christian living in this present evil world, living realistically, living without compromise, must cultivate a soldier's attitude toward this world. We are engaged in spiritual warfare. As Ephesians chapter 6 tells us, we do not wrestle against mere flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness.

In our last message I first of all pointed this out to you in the life of King David, especially in the Psalms. Now David was a military leader in an earthly sense. He was a commander of armies. But he was also a soldier of the Lord in a spiritual sense. David recognized that there is an even greater and more vital spiritual warfare taking place in this present world.

David in the Psalms uses military language, the language of a soldier, to describe the spiritual conflict in which the believer is engaged while we strive to live a life that is separated from this present evil world, and separated unto our holy God.

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Spiritual Enemies At Close Quarters

In our last message, we saw a truly amazing statement from the pen of David in the 11th verse of Psalm 31. David says this: "I am a reproach among all my enemies, but [listen carefully – but] especially among my neighbors, and am repulsive to my acquaintances." And indeed, the issue of Biblical separation can be that close at hand.

Our own neighbors, our own acquaintances, who are outside of Christ – even though they may be very nice people, very kind people, even very moral people – are on a completely different side when it comes to spiritual matters. We saw that Scripture more than once describes the unsaved as the enemies of God.

And so David rightly speaks of his unsaved neighbors, his unsaved acquaintances, some of those closest to him, as being numbered among his spiritual enemies.

But the issue can come even closer. The issue of Biblical separation can confront us even in our own households, in our own families. A Christian's relationship with unbelievers within his own family is one of the most challenging aspects of Biblical separation. Christians often face the challenge of maintaining spiritual separation while living in the closest conceivable contact with those who are, in fact, the enemies of Christ.

Let me give just one very striking example. I know of a man who was gloriously converted to Christ out of the Jehovah's Witnesses movement. In fact, he was one

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of the more senior people in their hierarchy. He was one of their most active and fanatical advocates. He went from door to door himself. He trained others directly by the hundreds, and indirectly by the thousands, to do the same – going from door to door spreading the terrible falsehoods of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

But this man was gloriously converted to Christ. He became a witness for the true Christ of the Bible, instead of a witness for this cult. But – during the years since this man's conversion, his wife has remained in the Jehovah's Witnesses. She has remained an unbeliever. She has remained committed to this cult. And so, there is the deepest possible spiritual division in that situation between husband and wife. But yet this man still deeply loves his wife.

The question is, what does Scripture say about such a thing? How is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to live in those kinds of conditions? Well the Word of God deals very plainly and very directly with those questions. The Word of God gives us answers. And we begin to find those answers in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel record.

Jesus addresses these issues several times in the course of His earthly ministry, but I want to call your attention to one particular passage that bears very directly on the imperative of Biblical separation for the Christian within your own household, within your own family. And it is noteworthy that as our Lord deals with this issue He does so in military terms, the terms of a soldier. He speaks in terms of a soldier's attitude toward these questions.

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Jesus On Separation

Please turn with me in your Bible, if you are able to do so as you are listening, to Matthew chapter 10 beginning at verse 32. The Gospel of Matthew chapter 10, beginning at verse 32. Now this passage is rarely taught in connection with the Biblical doctrine of separation, but in fact it bears very directly upon this doctrine. Listen to the words of our Lord, Matthew chapter 10, beginning at verse 32:

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in Heaven.

And then note the military language that follows – verse 34:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to "set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law"; and "a man's enemies will be those of his own household."

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. (Matthew 10:32-40)

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Now let us examine what we have just read, and see exactly what our Lord is saying.

Separation: Integral To A Christian's Confession

First of all, notice that Jesus declares that separation is at the very heart of a Christian's confession. Notice again verses 32 and 33:

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in Heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in Heaven.

The word that is translated "confess" in this passage is the Greek word that means "to say the same thing as someone else." In other words, it means "to be in complete agreement with someone else."

Here Jesus is saying, You must be in complete agreement with Me. It is imperative, He says, that you do not deny Me before others. And the word that is translated "deny" has to do with acting with disregard for the heart and the interests of someone else.

This is of the essence of Biblical separation: The heart and the interests of Christ must come first. To be separated from this present evil world and to be separated unto our holy God is to agree with Christ before men and not to deny Christ. To be separated from this present evil world is to separate yourself from the world's denial of Christ.

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Not Peace, But A Sword

We see secondly that Jesus speaks of the issue of separation in military terms. Notice once again verses 34:

Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.

Notice the great contrast of which Jesus speaks. The word that is translated "peace" in this context speaks of freedom from a state of conflict, and freedom from the effects of conflict. The word that is translated "sword" here denotes a military weapon that was used in close combat.

I did not come to bring absence from conflict for the believer living in this present world – that is what Jesus is saying. But I did come bringing a sword for the conflict. What is that sword? It is noteworthy that on two occasions in the New Testament we find the Word of God itself described using exactly the same Greek word – a sword used in the closest kind of conflict.

We find the first of those in the great passage that speaks of putting on the whole armor of God, in Ephesians chapter 6. The Apostle Paul says, in verse 17, that it is essential for the believer to "take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." And in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12, the writer speaks of "the Word of God [which is] living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner

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of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

The same word that is used in both of these passages to describe the Word of God is the same word that our Lord Jesus uses here in Matthew chapter 10, when He says, "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."

And notice again what Jesus says in verses 35 and 36:

For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household.

I have come, Jesus says, to set even family members against each other. I have come to set those who confess Me against those who deny Me, even those who are in the closest of human relationships. Literally, in the original language, the words speak of "cleaving apart" people one from another. It speaks of the effect of the use of the sword, the dividing asunder that occurs as the result of the use of a sword. The person of Christ does that. The Word of Christ does that. That is the essence of spiritual conflict.

And notice also that in verse 36 the Lord Jesus describes even the unbelievers in our own households as our spiritual enemies. We have already seen that David spoke in the same way of the unbelievers who were closest to him. The Greek word that is used here for "enemy" speaks of someone who is hostile. The word is used in many places in the New Testament to speak of those who are opposed to God, opposed to Christ, opposed to the Cross. And therefore, Jesus rightly said that in

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such a circumstance "a man's enemies shall be those of his own household."

A Conflict That Christians Did Not Start

This is military language. Dear friends, Jesus is telling us that the only way to escape spiritual conflict is to deny Him. When you received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, you became part of the spiritual war.

Now you and I did not start this conflict. The fact is that Satan long ago declared war on God. And when God created man in His own image, Satan declared war on man, and deceived man into falling into sin, deceived man into plunging this entire created order into sin, placing it under the curse of God. That is what we read in Genesis chapter 3 verse 15. And so this conflict has continued on earth from the very day that man first fell into sin.

Colossians chapter 1 verse 20 tells us that the only way in which there can be peace once again is through the blood of the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the only way that men can be reconciled to God and to one another. It is the only way in which the ultimate peace of the New Heavens and New Earth could possibly come about.

A Conflict We Dare Not Try to Escape

And so the only way that you as a believer can escape spiritual conflict in this present evil world is to deny the Lord Jesus Christ, and to compromise your witness for Him. Dear friend, that would be grievous sin. That would place you in conflict

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with Christ himself. That would place you in a position of the wrong kind of separation – separation from the heart and mind of Christ, rather than separation from the heart and mind of this present evil world.

The fact is that as a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ you are going to be misunderstood and perhaps even persecuted – even by those who are closest to you, even those of your own household who do not believe. But dear friend, you must not allow even this circumstance to compromise your witness. That is what Jesus is telling us.

The great 19th century preacher J. C. Ryle put it this way. He noted that the object of Christ's first coming to earth was not to set up a kingdom in which all people would be of one mind. Christ came the first time to proclaim the Gospel, which would lead to conflicts and divisions. And so J C. Ryle said this:

We have no right to be surprised if we see this continually fulfilled: We are not to think it strange if the Gospel... causes estrangement between the nearest relations. It is sure to do so in many cases, because of the deep corruption of man's heart. So long as one man believes, and another remains unbelieving, so long as one is resolved to keep his sins, and another is desirous to give them up, the result of the preaching of the Gospel must needs be division. For this the Gospel is not to blame, but the heart of man.

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Let The Cross Be The Offense

And dear friend, your identification with the Lord Jesus Christ will in itself bring that division. Your loyal obedience to the Word of God will bring that sword even into your own household. Your position of spiritual separation will not go unnoticed. It may bring quiet resistance, or it may bring strong opposition. But you must never forget that in the presence of those separating differences, you must always conduct yourself in a way that is worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Scripture is also very clear on another point: Living a life of separation before unbelievers within your own household does not mean that you should be deliberately difficult to live with. Yes, the Bible speaks of the "offense of the Cross" in Galatians chapter 5 verse 11. But that does not mean that we, by our behavior, should add our own offense.

Let the Cross of Christ be the offense. The Cross is enough. The Cross will offend because it confronts unbelievers with their sin. But if you are deliberately and callously offensive in your behavior toward unbelievers, in your own household or anywhere else, that behavior is an offense to the Christ of the Cross.

Love for your family – *agape* love, self-sacrificial love – must manifest itself first of all in love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only as you are truly loyal to Him, as you are willing to act self-sacrificially for His sake – it is only then that you can truly exercise self-sacrificial love toward the unbelievers in your own household.

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Separation: An Issue of Love

In this series of messages we have seen many times that the Word of God is clear in stating that spiritual separation is an issue of love. Notice again verses 37 through 39 of Matthew chapter 10. Jesus says this:

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

2nd Timothy chapter 2 verse 3 tells us that Biblical separation means being willing to "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The question is, are you willing to endure such hardship? Are you willing to endure opposition, even within your own family, in view of the fact that the Lord Jesus endured the greatest opposition of all?

Dear friend, if you are in a situation in which other members of your household are not believers – perhaps a father, perhaps a mother, perhaps an in-law, perhaps a brother or sister, or perhaps even your own husband or wife – if you are in this kind of a situation, the Word of God tells you that there is hope. There is hope in living a spiritually separated life before the unbelieving members of your household.

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There is hope for your unbelieving loved ones. And it is significant that we find this hope set before us in the Word of God in another passage that is usually not taught in connection with the doctrine of separation, but which is in fact a very important one for a proper understanding of this great doctrine. And so, the Lord willing we are going to take up that message of hope for the Biblically separated believer living in such intimate contact with unbelievers in a household, in our next message.

About the Broadcast

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