

Discerning New Evangelicalism

Lesson Four

Personal and Ecclesiastical Separation

There are some who say that the doctrine of separation cannot be found in the Bible. When I hear them say that, I wonder what Bible they are reading. If the doctrine of sanctification is in the Bible, the doctrine of separation must be there because separation is the basis of the believer's sanctification. Sanctification is defined by being separate from worldliness and sin and being set apart unto servicing God through ministry and prayer.

The Greek word for Church in the Bible is the word ECCLESIA. It means the called out ones. The Gospel of John records these words of Christ, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19; see also 17:6&14).

ECCLESIA refers to individuals who, in the general call of God to salvation, were called out from the "world" unto God's service. When an individual accepts the "call" to salvation by trusting in the gospel and receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he immediately becomes a "saint."

The word "saint" is from the Greek word HAGIOS. It means something that is sacred, physically pure and morally blameless. In the simplest sense it refers to a person that God has set apart unto Himself for service; someone God has sanctified for His use.

Therefore, at the very heart of the ECCLESIA as a local assembly and at the heart of the individual believer's sainthood is the Bible's teaching of a separated lifestyle. Failure to maintain separation from the world and unto God is an offense against our calling in Christ and against our position as a Saint before God.

Paul records the Word of God about this in Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Compare Titus 2: 11-15.)

Satan's purpose in this world is to destroy. In his attempt to destroy the ECCLESIA of Christ, he will focus on luring Christians back into his world system (see Mark 4:15-19). In doing so, he will attempt to defile the saints before God and render them unusable for God until they are cleansed.

Satan's work involves continuing to cultivate a love of and for this world and what it offers in the lives of believers. The Epistle of I John 2:15-16 warns us, "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. 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." (Compare James 4:4 & Gal. 1:4.)

From the time of the fall of man there has been a steady and progressive resistance to God's instruction regarding separation. Those who remained true to God's instruction remained true to God. Those who did not eventually became absorbed by the world system.

Just as in the early Church, Satan's central focus was to pervert the Gospel of grace with the disempowering corruption of "works," it has been his goal to render useless to God those individuals who genuinely do get saved, by misrepresenting God's expectations of them. Sadly, the tools he has found the most effective are uniformed Christians who lack self-discipline, discipleship, dedication, spiritual discernment and a solid theological foundation for life. These individuals are easily misled and deceived into fellowship with infidels and apostates under the guise of false love and unity.

There are some doctrinal errors that may not require personal or ecclesiastical separation. However, there certainly are a number of doctrinal errors that are serious enough to lead people astray in their personal lives and ministries. Before anything can be blessed of God, it must be done in His power (grace) and according to His mandates.

Recognizing Heretics by Their Beliefs and Practices (heresies demanding separation)

- 1.** The denial of absolutism; i.e., the Bible's absolute authority over life and practice
- 2.** The denial of the verbal\plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- 3.** The denial of the inerrancy of Scripture
- 4.** Adherence to an ecclesiastical government that denies the autonomy and independence of the local church
- 5.** Adherence to the *universal body* of Christ as the functioning entity of the church for this dispensation
- 6.** The wearing of a *turned around* collar. This manifests a belief in a clergy\laity system and denies the individual priesthood of the believer
- 7.** The belief in any sacramental system or liturgy where the "grace of God" is conferred to the participators through an ordained minister
- 8.** A denial of the deity of Jesus Christ
- 9.** A denial of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ
- 10.** A denial that Jesus lived a sinless life
- 11.** The propagation of the social gospel
- 12.** The propagation of a gospel of subjective faith for salvation
- 13.** The propagation of the teaching that individuals must determine their own standard for what is right or wrong
- 14.** The propagation of the teaching that individuals require another mediator, other than Christ, to intercede on their behalf before God
- 15.** The propagation of the teaching that individuals require anyone, other than the Holy Spirit, to aid them in the understanding of the Scriptures
- 16.** The propagation of the teaching that some hierarchical clergy system, or church denomination, is Lord over the conscience of individuals
- 17.** The denial of God's command for personal and ecclesiastical separation from this world's system
- 18.** The denial of the Word of God's absolute standards of holiness and sanctification
- 19.** The acceptance of infant baptism, baptism by sprinkling or pouring, or baptismal regeneration
- 20.** The teaching that the Lord's Supper, also called the Eucharist, Holy Communion, or communion by some, is in any way a continuation of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins

Ecclesiastical and Personal Separation

The Word of God deals with two categories of separation, corporate and individual. The former is dependent on the latter. Corporate separation involves the co-operation among local churches and is commonly called ECCLESIASTICAL SEPARATION in that it deals with the maintenance of the separation of the ECCLESIA (local church) of God.

In the Old Testament, covenantal “blessings” were conditioned upon the separation of Israel as a nation and individuals within the nation. When personal separation fell, national separation fell with it (see Joshua 7:1; & 11-13). After all, the nation as a whole could not remain separate when any part of that whole refused to be separate from sin. This is the central reason why church discipline is eminently important. Innocent people are affected when the corporate body refuses to deal with its parts righteously. When a sinner, who refuses to repent of sin, is given priority over the righteousness of God the church is guilty of loving the sinner more than they love God (see Numbers 25:1-3).

Separation of the individual “saint” is called PERSONAL SEPARATION. It is the responsibility of each individual to maintain personal separation and purity before God. When individuals fail to maintain high standards of moral excellence, it becomes necessary for the ECCLESIA to intercede. This is what Christ taught in Matthew 18:15-19 (see also I Cor. 5:1-13 & 6:1-8).

Paul told Timothy (II Timothy 4:2), “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (see also Eph. 5:6-17). The internal purity of the church is important to God. If rebuke, reproof, and exhortation does not result in the individual coming to repent, and once again establishing a separated lifestyle, church discipline must take place. If the local church fails to discipline individuals who refuse to be personally separated from the world, then that local assembly will begin the gradual drift into apostasy. This will happen because people naturally gravitate to the lowest standard allowed.

Apostasy is the willful disobedience to the known truths of God’s Word as a governing force of absolutes without recognition of that disobedience as sin, but rather, the acceptance of the contradiction as normal and acceptable. The nature of apostasy is always that of religious defection by degrees. Therefore, the doctrine of separation involves a twofold responsibility.

1. The local church (Ecclesiastical Separation) must maintain a distinctively separated position from the corruptive influences of the world that becomes apparent contrary to the principles and standards of the Word of God. There will be new challenges on the horizon of each new and succeeding generation. This will involve new ecclesiastical methodologies and associations.
2. Individual believers (Personal Separation) must maintain separated lifestyles that will not involve them in participation, by action or appearance (I Thessalonians 5:22), with the corrupting influences of this world system.

The doctrine of a separated lifestyle is called the doctrine of sanctification. It is the responsibility of each individual saint to live in such a manner as to avoid any compromise of their position before God by being separate from sin and the influences of this world.

The HOLINESS of God is a central teaching throughout the Word of God. God’s holiness DEMANDS certain actions. It never allows or condones the compromise of His standards of righteousness to any degree. Separation from the corruptive influences of this world system and separation unto God in service and sanctity is the Bible’s mandate for both the local church and the individual believer.

Apostasy exists at many levels and degrees, but it always begins with a failure in personal separation in one area and gradually escalates by other individuals gravitating to the lowered standard when the local church allows it to go unchecked and uncorrected. Historically apostasy, as a result of failure in separation, has been constantly pervasive and steadily progressive.

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1. Discuss the relationship of the doctrine of sanctification to the doctrine of separation. _____

2. Discuss the definition of the Greek word ECCLESIA as that definition relates to separation from the world. Can a church be a church by the definition of ECCLESIA if it is not separated from the world? _____

3. Discuss how Satan seeks to destroy the Church and annul the power of God in Christian's lives by the failure in separation. _____

4. How is ignorance of truth a major tool of satanic deception? _____

5. List the twenty doctrinal heresies given that require personal and ecclesiastical separation.

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| A. _____ | B. _____ |
| C. _____ | D. _____ |
| E. _____ | F. _____ |
| G. _____ | H. _____ |
| I. _____ | J. _____ |
| K. _____ | L. _____ |
| M. _____ | N. _____ |
| O. _____ | P. _____ |
| Q. _____ | R. _____ |
| S. _____ | T. _____ |

6. Define Ecclesiastical (Corporate) Separation. _____

7. What is personal separation and how does it impact ecclesiastical separation? _____

8. Define Apostasy. _____

9. List and detail the two-fold responsibility in the doctrine of separation.

A. _____

B. _____