

The Beauty of Separation



The blessings and benefits
of being set apart unto Christ.

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The Bible speaks of "the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2) when referring to how the HOLY ONE ought to be worshiped. The basic meaning of the word "holiness" is "the state of being SET APART, SEPARATE, SEPARATED." The High and Lifted up Lord is set apart from all that is earthly and created. The Holy One is set apart from all that is sinful and defiled and impure. His holiness and His separateness go hand in hand. Separation finds its basis in the very nature and character of Jehovah, and it is a thing of beauty and wonder and awe.

One of the most beautiful things about the Biblical doctrine of separation is that it is not something that we need to do, but that it is something which God has already done! It is not something that we need to pray about or strive after, but it is something already accomplished by the grace of God. God has already positioned the believer in His beloved Son where we are fully accepted by God, basking in the sunshine of His favor (Eph. 1:6). From the moment we put our trust in Christ, God has set us apart UNTO HIMSELF forever: "to them that are sanctified (set apart, separated) in Christ Jesus, called to be saints (holy ones, set apart ones, separated ones), with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:2; cf. 6:11). God has placed us in His Son (Gal. 3:27), and no place more holy could ever be found.

We stand perfect and complete in Christ the Holy One. We are saints of the Most High God! It is the beauty of our glorious position in the God's dear Son (Col. 1:13).

What then must we do? Separation is not something that we must *gain*, but it is something that we must *claim*. Every believer is separated, but not every believer consistently exercises and enjoys a separated life as God intended for our good. One's practice must be consistent with one's position. Our daily condition must match our eternal position. Saints ought to be saintly and we must "walk worthy of the vocation (calling) to which (we) are called" (Eph. 4:1). Our high, heavenly, holy calling must be matched by a holy walk. By faith we are to claim and experience what God has already done in fact. We need to remember who we are in Christ, and live accordingly. The term "saint" is often avoided among professing believers because the very word itself speaks of holiness and demands separation. The Holy God has put a DIFFERENCE between those who are saved and those who are unsaved, and this difference must be kept very clear and very well defined (Lev.11:44,45,47). Nothing must be allowed to mar or blur this distinction. Those who are truly God's children need to walk accordingly, that the Word of God be not blasphemed. What a joy and privilege to be called "saints" (1 Cor. 1:2)!

One reason we miss the beauty of separation is because our emphasis is often upon "separation from" rather than "separation unto." Both must be emphasized according to the Biblical balance: SEPARATION FROM--"Come out FROM among them and be ye SEPARATE, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor. 6:17).

SEPARATION UNTO--"And ye shall be HOLY (set apart, separated) UNTO ME; for I, the LORD, am HOLY, and have separated you from other people, THAT YE SHOULD BE MINE" (Lev. 20:26). Separation is something beautiful and wonderful because its purpose is to get us to God! Those who are joyously separated unto Christ must trust the Lord God for His grace and strength to be separate from all that is not in harmony with the Saviour's Person, Word and Work.

The focus of many is only upon SEPARATION FROM, and when this alone is emphasized the beauty of enjoying God's holiness fades. We try to separate from this group and from that person and from this false doctrine and from that Bible school and from this radio ministry and from that publication (and thank God for every person who is seeking to expose error and be discerning and separate from that which is wrong). The problem is simply this: In our zeal to fight what is false and to flee what is filled with error, WE NEVER GET TO GOD. We FLEE, but we fail FOLLOW AFTER (1 Tim. 6:11). We get away from this and from that, but we do not get to where we need to be, namely "in the secret place of the Most High" abiding "under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psalm 91:1). It is only in this secret place that a person will know and enjoy the beauty of separation.

Let us illustrate this principle. If I am truly separated unto the GOD OF TRUTH, having chosen the God of truth and the way of truth (Psalm 119:30), then SEPARATION FROM becomes normal and natural. My heart cries out, "therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104 and compare verses 128,163). The closer I get to God the farther away I get from that which is contrary to His character.

If I am truly separated unto the CHRIST OF CALVARY, then I am going to abhor and detest any religious system which makes the cross of Christ of none effect. I am going to glory and boast in the cross and therefore I am going to be totally opposed to any religious substitutes which seek to eliminate the necessity of the cross or usurp its place of preeminence (Gal. 2:21; 3:1; 6:14; 1 Cor. 2:2).

In his most excellent doctrinal epistle, the Apostle Paul begins by setting forth the beauty of separation: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, **SEPARATED unto the gospel of God**" (Romans 1:1). Notice that his emphasis is upon "separation unto." He was totally dedicated and devoted to God's good news which centers itself in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Paul's life was completely wrapped up in the gospel of God. It was his wonderful separation unto the gospel which made him zealously opposed to every and any kind of false gospel (Gal. 1:8-9). God's good news centering in Christ must not be perverted (Gal. 1:7)!

Often we fail to see the beauty of separation. We fail to see it as something positive and something very precious. Instead separation is often viewed in a negative light. In a day of religious confusion and compromise, it is not a very popular doctrine. It runs counter to the ecumenical spirit of today. Separatists are criticized for being divisive and hurtful to the body of Christ. Such critics need to know that the body of Christ cannot exist apart from separation. A person must be separated to be in the body of Christ. No one can become a member of Christ's body apart from sanctification. None but saints can be members! And the practical purity and unity of the body of believers depends on the saints living saintly! Separation is essential for the health and testimony of the assembly!

Indeed, it is the lack of separation that is hurtful to the body of Christ. Men appreciate the surgeon who separates the deadly cancer from the body, but in the spiritual realm they can't understand why false doctrine must be dealt with severely and speedily (compare 2 Tim. 2:17). Men would never knowingly tolerate poison being sold from the counters of the drug store, and yet these same men are not bothered by the poisonous doctrines that are being fed out to multitudes by those who know not God and who abide not in the doctrine of Christ (1 Tim. 4:2; 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Finally, the wonder of true separation is seen in its results. The actual practice of Biblical separation viewed in and from the world is certainly not popular and not easy. In God's view, however, it is most necessary, and in Christ it is found to be our delightful duty. Uncompromising loyalty to the Lord will lead to positive results both in time and in eternity. With keen discernment, Dr. G. Campbell Morgan once made this statement about the beauty of true separation:

There is a toleration which is treachery. There is a peace which issues in paralysis. There are hours when the church must say NO to those who should ask communion with her, in the doing of her work, upon the basis of compromise. Such standing aloof may produce ostracism and persecution; but it will maintain power and influence. If the Church of God in the cities of today were aloof from the maxims of the age, separated from the materialistic philosophies of the schools, bearing her witness alone to the all-sufficiency of Christ, and the

perfection of His salvation, even though persecuted and ostracized and bruised, it would be to her that men would look in the hour of their heartbreak and sorrow and national need. The reason why men do not look to the church today is that she has destroyed her own influence by compromise.

May we vigorously seek to maintain a pure testimony for Christ in these dark and difficult days, and may "the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us" (Psalm 90:17)!

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