

The Separated Life

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November 30, 1958

In 2 Corinthians, the man of God is deeply concerned over the church at Corinth. We talk romantically about the early church. The early church had its faults and its flaws. And it broke the heart of some of the early church leaders, including Paul, who wept over his churches frequently.

In the sixth chapter, Second Corinthians, verse 11. Oh, ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you. Our heart is enlarged. You are not straightened in us. But you're straightened in your own bowels. That is, you're not hindered by us. You're hindered in your own heart. Now, for a recompense in the same, I speak as unto my children, be ye also enlarged. Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? What part has He that believeth with an infidel? What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises dearly Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Now Paul, here commands all the Christians, or lays upon the Christians the duty of the separated life. Without this, religion is powerless. Without this, prayers have practically no meaning at all. The church attendance may be entirely vain. And without this, even right belief is inadequate. Wesley said, right opinion is but a very slender part of religion. He didn't say that right opinion, that is, right doctrinal beliefs were not an important part of religion, but he said, it was a very slender part, they made up a very slender part. And without separation, there can be at last, and finally, nothing but weakness. There can be no power in religion.

There are those who do not care much to hear about the separated life. And I can understand why. But you know, if you read your Bible very carefully, if you have time to read it, and you read it very carefully, you will note that separation was critically necessary at various times and they stand, these times, as a sort of landmark for us. For instance, there was the ark of Noah, the time of the great flood. There was only one way to be delivered from the Flood, and that was to be separated unto the ark. God separated Noah and his wife and his family, and they entered into the ark, and were in the world but not of it. Present, but not part of the world, and they were saved by their separation.

Go on to the day of Abraham and Sodom and Lot. Sodom was destroyed by the fire of God, and Lot's family, all but one, was saved, and they were saved by separation. Escape to the mountains was the sharp imperative command. Escape to the mountains. And if they had not done this, they would have perished along with the rest. No amount of praying would have helped them. They could have had prayer meetings all over this populated earth before Noah's Flood. They could have had all kinds of conferences and conventions and meetings. They could have edited magazines and run Bible schools. They could have been religious, added up their numbers and said there are more people going to church than ever. And they could have had all sorts of dramatic news about religion, but Noah's Ark was the only place where there was safety. And it was out of the ark and lost. In the ark and saved. Separation was imperative. It was not simply something that we better do. It was something that became necessary to do.

So, with Sodom when God said I will reign fire upon Sodom. There lay Sodom, and they could have, as we often do, they could have had little prayer meetings all around over Sodom. And the man Lot could have said to his wife, now let's have family prayer here this morning by the gate. But if they'd have stayed in Sodom, they'd have caught the fire. It was escape to the mountain and get out. And so, it is in the New Testament teaching. It is, take the cross, follow me, be separated, free yourself, and it's this and by this alone that there is salvation.

Now he said, be not unequally yoked together. This is all familiar truth, but I want to patiently once more lay it before you, particularly for the sake of the younger Christians; the new generation of believers, be not unequally yoked together.

Now, a yoke you know, is a strong beam that fastens two necks or more together and make them one. It unites two so that they are one. Now if the two are equal, there is harmony. If there is a difference between the two there is disharmony. And the greater the difference of course, the greater the disharmony. If these two are yoked together want to go the same direction will, but if they want to go different directions, there can be only trouble. Two people united, yoked together, can only have trouble if they're going to go different ways.

Then there's the acknowledging of the same master. If you're yoked to the same Lord, then of course, you have no trouble because you're going the same way and all is well. But if the one obeys the Master and the other chooses another master, why, there can be only difficulty all down the way. If one is bad and hinders the good one, and the good one can't make the bad one obey. And so there is trouble all down the line.

Now, with the unbelievers there is what we would call moral incompatibility--a great gulf fixed--righteousness and unrighteousness says the Holy Ghost. What is the fellowship? Fellowship as I have explained you know, is a state of equality. Fellow is an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning an

equal and ship means a sharing. So fellowship is a sharing equally in something by equals. But if one is righteous and the other is unrighteous, how can there be any equal sharing of the same thing? There is no equality in anything. Therefore, righteousness and unrighteousness stand against each other forever.

Then we have light and darkness. The Bible has a lot to say about light which always it makes out to be truth and goodness; and darkness which it makes out to be error and evil. And he said what communion here? We have almost the same word. It's strange how language moves about, shifts itself like clouds across the face of the sky. But the word fellowship and the word communion are almost the same word. "Co" we have cooperate, and such word meaning joined. And we have here the state of being joined together in intimate fellowship. And how can you join light with darkness? If the darkness is there, the light is not and if the light is there, the darkness cannot be. One drives the other one out.

And then there is Christ and Belial, Belial the evil God. How can Christ have any concord? And we have the same, almost the same word again. The translators are ringing the changes on good words here, but we have concord, a oneness, a getting together, a harmony. How can Christ be harmonious with Belial? How can it be that the devil and the Lord Jesus Christ should ever have any concord? It cannot be. And how can the one who believes have any concord with the unbeliever? How can they take part together? The believer wants to live for the world above and the unbeliever wants to live for the world below. So they have two different worlds in which they're interested. One wants to lay up his treasures on high and the other wants to lay up his treasures below.

So again, they have two different worlds and two different storehouses. One wants to talk to the invisible and live in the light of eternity, and the other wants to commune with the visible and live for time. How can therefore be any communion or fellowship? One wants to live right and seek to do good all the days of his life, and the other one is careless about it, if not downright wicked. He's at least careless about being good. So how can the believer and the unbeliever ever hope to be together?

The unbeliever who says, I have doubts about there even being a God. How can he have warm, heart fellowship with a man who says, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth? The unbeliever who says, I doubt that Jesus Christ was anything else. But just a good man. I don't know much about him, but I just think he was a good man. How can that man have warm heart fellowship with a man who says, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord, who was begotten of the Holy Ghost, conceived by the Virgin Mary? How can these agree? And how can the temple of God have fellowship with idols? What agreement, it says here again, and still, it's the same word, fellowship, communion, concord, agreement? How can there be? The temple of God

that is dedicated to the one true God and the temple of idols dedicated to the base, low fetishes of the world? How can there be any fellowship?

Well, now let's make a practical application of this. A practical application would be, say, in marriage. Maybe I'm talking to somebody this morning that is thinking at least about, you're a Christian, you're a real Christian and you're thinking about marriage with someone who's not a Christian. My advice would be a blunt, unqualified, no, don't do it. It could only be advice. I am not a pope and I can't threaten you with purgatory. I can only tell you that if you marry on another level with someone who is given over to unbelief and to the world, you're going to have trouble as long as you live. Honeymoons don't last forever. And after the first blush and excitement of being married is over with, you've settled back to trying to live some kind of a life under the same roof and get along with a man or with a woman who doesn't believe in God.

You say he's not saved, but he tells me that he's interested. I've heard that story and I've listened and looked at faces all twisted with weeping. And I've seen tears streaming down cheeks. He told me that he would get right and that he wanted to go to church. But as soon as we were married, he refused to have anything to do with it. He won't let our children go to Sunday school. That's the old story and it's rarely any other kind of story. You say, but I think I can win him. I've heard that one too. I think I can win him. Now my brother and sister, it would be a thousand times better for you to not be a Christian.

Old Dr. Morrison, that great old Methodist orator of a generation ago told about when he was a young fellow, he was converted and he was thinking about marrying a certain woman, but she would not give her heart to God. So, he said, I quit her and let her die an old maid, bless God. Well, that was dear old Dr. Morrison, the old-fashioned slam, bang, Methodist preacher who could soar on wings as he preached but could also get pretty salty as the aforesaid quotation was explained.

But now in business, Sir, we have it again. How many have come to me and said about this business. Do you think it'd be all right? This man knows his business, and I'm a Christian, he isn't. My earnest, earnest advice is no, don't enter into business with a man unless he's a Christian, if you're a Christian. Don't enter into business with him. That is, don't link yourself so that there's a yoke on you, because he'll want to open on Sunday, and you will want to shut up on Sunday. And he will want to juggle the books and you will want to be honest. And so it goes.

Then there are clubs and lodges. You know, I've never been an anti-lodge man, very much, but I don't believe in secret societies for Christians. I think Christians ought to keep out of secret societies. And I say that even though that might hurt some of your feelings very badly. As a young man I said it and a man got up and out of my church and he was so mad, he wouldn't even let me talk with him afterward. I couldn't get to him to talk with him. He was so mad. He evidently was putting his lodge above the above the church, above the ministry, above a serious word of advice

by a preacher. Well, nothing anybody can do, I suppose. People want to do it. They want to do it. But my earnest advice to all young Christians who will hear is keep out of it. Keep out of it.

You remember our friend Charles Bloomer here, who's now living down in Arizona or New Mexico, whichever it is Nevada, one of them states down there. He was 30 years an organist in the Masonic Order, somewhere meeting here. Then he got converted, the Lord had to get him down on his back on the floor in a currency exchange with two bandits with guns in their hands standing over him, and he was lying down there looking up while they're trying to open the safe. And as he laid down there, they threatened him to kill him. He said, O God, if you could get me out of this deal, I'll give my heart to Thee. So, God got him out of that, and they left without harming him. And he promptly got down on his knees and gave his heart to God.

So, he went back down to where he'd been for 30 years, an organist. He asked for permission to get up and talk. They said, sure, Charlie. So, Charlie got up and talked, and his talk was something like this. Dear friends and former brothers, I have an announcement to make. It is that I have become converted. I am now a Christian born again and I will not be back. I love all of you. You're my friends. I have nothing against you. I'm not mad at anybody and everything is fine. But I'm a Christian now, and as a Christian, I'm through. Well, they let him go. And they told me, some people told me that afterwards, there were those who would go to his wife and say in a kind of low voice, is Charlie any better mentally than they used to be? They thought something had snapped inside of his head, but it hadn't. The chains had snapped inside of his heart. And Charlie's never been back. He's down. He's down now in Nevada, and if you get Charlie started writing letters to you, he doesn't write letters, he writes treatises. He could publish them, long, happy, bouncing, joy as letters. I don't know any Christian anywhere happier than Charlie. But that cost him a little price there. He gave it up.

Well, then, there's amusements. I have said a lot about that and I'm not going to say any more now. But I want to call attention to this, that there are situations under certain conditions where a degree of mingling has got to exist, and the Bible takes note of it. First Corinthians five explains this. Paul said, I told you not to company with fornicators. But he said, now don't misunderstand me, I didn't mean that you weren't even to work with or live beside or have any fellowship at all, socially, anyway, with people like that. Because he said, if you left all the evil people in the world, you'd have to withdraw from the world. The monks incidentally later on did that very thing. In order to escape the world, they withdrew from it and lived in caves and monasteries. Paul said he didn't mean that. What he meant was, don't have fellowship, Christian fellowship with them, or try to have. Don't make them your warm, close friends. But you have to live with them.

And there's First Corinthians seven that concerns, not mixed marriages, but marriages that got mixed after they were contracted this way. A sinful pagan couple, heard the gospel and the wife believed it and was converted and blossomed out into a real Christian life, but the pagan husband

refused to believe. And so they were in trouble. Paul wrote and in First Corinthians seven he explained it. He said, now if you're married to an unsaved husband. He didn't say, if you marry an unsaved man, but he said, If you are married to a man who is not a Christian. You've just become a Christian. Why, don't leave him because possibly your life before him will help to win him.

Now, of course, you will have your difficulties there. You will have the lack of concord, the lack of fellowship, the lack of communion. You will have to keep your conversation to light bills and babies and whether their refrigerator is working and whether you put the cat out or not. And you will have to keep your conversation to things mundane and earthly. You'll never have any high conversation cause that unsaved man won't listen. He won't listen. But says Paul, don't leave him. Some of them were for radicals, some of those women, when they got converted, they were so happy in God.

They said, well, that old pagan husband of mine, I can't stand him anymore. Look, down on his knees to an idol. Paul said, don't leave him. Don't leave him. You have no right to leave him. If he's a pagan, and you're a Christian, you shouldn't marry him. But if you're stuck with him, keep him because you may win him. Besides that, you got the children to think about.

Paul was a good, salty, downright fellow with a lot of common sense. And he explained that. But now there are other instances besides the two that I mentioned. There's buying and selling on the market. When I go to buy something in a store, I don't ask whether the man is a Christian or not. Working on a job with unbelievers or having somebody work. I don't ask that when a plumber comes whether he's a Christian. He can turn that wrench just as well if he isn't. And such obligations of citizenship as we may have in the common social relations, we must carry them on and we must carry them on with unbelievers. Because unbelievers are in the world and they're the vast majority, and we are a minority group.

But Paul said, remember, don't take these as your friends. Don't make these your companions. Remember to stay with those that are like you, that believe what you believe, that go all the way you go, that's walking on your path, whose Father is your Father and whose Savior is your Savior, and have your friendships among God's people. There are some of you older people here now who've reared families and they have gone and you will never stop thanking God until your last breath and conscious thought, that your children found Christian fellowship in this church or some other church. But some of you to whom I speak now right in this church. I could name if I wanted to start naming names. I could name families who found, their children found fellowship among God's people here. And you will never stop thanking him as long as you live. It doesn't mean the church is perfect, but it means there is a fellowship of saints.

Then, I'm also talking to a few, I regret to say, who have wept bitter tears into the long night seasons because your children found fellowship out of this church and fellowship with the fringe

people, young people whose lives were not right. Maybe later they got all right and came to God, maybe they didn't. But almost always, it's the way out. It's the way young people start. They get with the wrong people. They get friendly with the wrong people and pretty soon that friendliness cements into friendship itself, and then that friendship cements and hardens up until they're bound together. And the church person doesn't lead the other one, but the other one leads the church one down. That's too bad, but it's so. So, there's only one way to handle it, young fellow. And that is, find your boon companions among God's people. But you say they're dull. Better be dull and right than to be smart and wrong.

One of the great poets, which one was it, Milton or Wadsworth that wrote a sonnet to a young lady. This young lady had been accused of being dull and dumb and lacking in personality because she insisted on being right. And he wrote a quite a long poem to her, telling her, urging her to stay by God and righteousness and morality, and be good and decent and let them call you dull. You can make up in your life in your inner life, for all of their freshness.

Well, maybe some of God's people are dull, I find some of God's people dull, I do. I don't find any of you dull, but I find other Christians sometimes dull, and I'm sure that I have bored some Christians to the point where they could weep. But better to keep company with dull saints than with smart sinners. For the dull saint will shine finally in the kingdom of God and the smart sinner will burn in the fires of hell. And the strong reason given here is that you are the temple of the living God. As such a temple of the living God is sacred. Just as you would not desecrate a church. Just as you would not have gone into the Jewish temple and desecrate the holy place. So says the Scripture, you are not to desecrate the temple of God. Always and at all times, you are to be holy.

There are never any open seasons for Christians. There's never any period when the lid blows off and you're allowed to have a wonderful time for a while, never. You can have a wonderful time in God if you know how to go about it. But there never is any serious weeks or days that you're supposed to be very spiritual and after that, they can relax it on you. No, God's people are to be good all the time, all the time. Gold is gold all the way through, wherever you find it. Sunshine is always sunshine wherever it is. And righteousness is always righteousness wherever it is.

Now, he gives exhortation here and bases his exhortation upon the trues I mentioned above. Come out from among them is his exhortation and be ye separate. And of course, you will be known as a separatist. And I don't mind at all, for I am one. I believe in it. Come out from among them and be ye separate. Now, we won't argue this point nor defend it. Those whom God has enlightened will understand and those that God has not enlightened will not see it and wouldn't believe it if they did.

So, I'm not arguing the point. I'm saying come out from among them and be ye separate. And blessed are your ears if they hear what the Spirit says unto the churches. Touch not the unclean

thing is the second exhortation. The worldly-hearted will defend themselves and argue. The Spirit-taught will obey. We won't have to say much for the Spirit-taught man, he hears the Spirit say touch not the unclean thing and he knows what he means. And he won't be drawn into a debate. He will just go and touch not the unclean thing.

The chosen of God will ask no more. He'll ask for no discussions, ask for no debates, ask for no conferences about what we should do. Just do what we're told, that's all. And God says, I will be a Father unto you. And you shall be my sons and daughters saith the Lord Almighty, sons and daughters of God. Did you ever stop to think of it, sons and daughters of God, God's sons, God's daughters? Beautiful, beautiful, isn't it? To be a son of God, to be a daughter of God. And to have God say I will be your Father and you will be my children. To have the great God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, a former of all space and time, who made all things that be, Ancient of Days without beginning in without end, stoop and say you will be my daughter, if you will listen here and be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, but come out from among them and be separated from them. And touch not the unclean thing but believe in my Son, and live a life dedicated to His glory, I'll be your Father. How wonderful.

Better then to be a son of a king. Better then be the daughter of a queen. Better then to be queen for a day. Better then to be Miss America. Better then be known around the world for some talent or gift that may be yours. For men die you know, they die of heart attacks while making pictures. They die on airplane crashes. Great leaders, political leaders, leaders in the entertainment world, the philosophic world, Great leaders, great musician died. One almost wants to stand a moment in silence, at attention, out of respect to a man in whose heart there was a harp. So they die. They die like Christians die. They die everywhere, the good and the bad die.

But oh, how wonderful to walk around on the earth in constant danger, but knowing that if you die, God has said, I will be your Father. What more do you want? What more could you ask? How could you hope to be any more, or have any more than to have God say, I will be your Father and you will be my daughter. You will be my son. This I think is wonderful, and this is what's offered, but it's not forced upon us. God doesn't argue it. He just states it. He doesn't debate it. He just places it before us. And blessed are the ears that hear and blessed is the heart that obeys. God grant that that describes you and me. Amen.