

SEPARATED UNTO GOD Nonconformity to the World

Being isolated from the world is not the same as placing our total love on God and keeping ourselves pure (unspotted from the world) for His sake.

Leviticus 20:24: "I am the Lord your God, which have **separated** you from other people."

Leviticus 20:26: "For I the Lord am holy, and have **severed you from other people**, that ye should be mine."

Exodus 11:7: " ... the Lord hath put **a difference** between the Egyptians and Israel."

2 Corinthians 6:17: "Wherefore **come out** from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

Romans 12:2: "And **be not conformed** to this world ... "

James 1:27: "Pure religion ... before God and the Father is this ... to keep himself **unspotted from the world.**"

The Purpose of Separation

- (a) To preserve the purity of the church for the great consummation with the bridegroom, Jesus Christ.
- (b) To hold forth the pure gospel of Jesus Christ; to carry out the Great Commission.
- (c) To radiate forth the true light to the world.
- (d) That the church would be a city (example) that cannot be hid (*a people living for God*).

The Conditions for Scriptural Separation

- (a) The mind and heart must be cleansed of carnal thinking and affection. (*In order to avoid copying the world's way of living, the believers must be transformed and renewed (Romans 12:21. They must see the issues of life from God's viewpoint. Otherwise they cannot discover the full will of God. Do we need to be overly concerned about what is worldly if we are careful that we understand and obey the Holy Spirit?)*)
- (b) Separation is meaningless unless we have a burden for souls. (*The cause of Christ is damaged by those who claim to be Christians but, by outward evidence, continue in the course of the world.*)
- (c) Christians may not belong to organizations such as clubs, lodges, secret societies, the armed forces, labor unions, or fraternities. The Lord requires undivided loyalty. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14).
- (d) There are two kingdoms, a heavenly kingdom and an earthly kingdom. (*We belong to one kingdom or the other.*) "Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).
- (e) Mark 12:30: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). (*So-called Christians say they love the Lord even while they partake of the world, but this cannot be done.*) "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other, ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).
- (f) For the Christian, separation unto the Lord means following God and the Holy Ghost. Separation for separation's sake is nothing more or less than self-righteousness. If we focus on separation only, it will become an empty religion to us.

The World System

The world as spoken of here is a "system" (of the spirit realm), and this system is the enemy of God. This ordered system is governed from behind the scenes by a ruler, which is Satan himself,

the great deceiver, the father of lies.

The Scripture enlightens us as to this "world," which is all around us. Unless we are alert to the unseen powers behind fads, fashion, and that which is highly esteemed by men, we may be deceived. Behind these material things, in the background, there is a power at work for the sole purpose of destroying the works of God, including your soul! Do not let this power grip you!

What makes this system so subtle is that it pleases the flesh and mind. Yet, it enslaves the mind and body and seeks to destroy the soul. Anyone who follows the system of the world is actually serving Satan. James says that to be a "friend of the world" makes one an "enemy of God." (James 4:4).

(a) Pride and lust motivates the world's system. *Because of pride, man performs feats that exalt him, acquiring power and prestige. Examples would be in sports and education. Glory that does not glorify God is vainglory. Because of lust, man creates styles and modes to satisfy his craving.*

(b) Neither pride nor lust is ever satisfied; they always want more. *(This spirit will take you farther than you ever planned to go.)*

(c) The kingdom of heaven will be taken to eternal glory.

(d) The kingdom of this world will be thrust into eternal flames. God is allowing the evil forces to work until the end of all things (Ephesians 6:12).

(e) The ways of the world are subject to continual change, including styles of dress. But whatever their form, they center on pride, selfishness, and ungodliness. The Christian, who has a renewed mind, must examine closely all the changes that come along and avoid all that is against the will of God. When Christians adopt new things and inventions for use, it must be for reasons other than just acquiring that which is new and popular at the moment. Carelessly accepting the modes of the world shows a heart centered on the evil world and not on God.

(f) The Christian's interests will be in higher things than things of the earth. He is, in effect, dead to the low things of the world. He lives to please God, not himself, his neighbors, or the popular fads and fashions of the moment.

Elements of this World System

(a) Pleasure seeking is a worldly system that is condemned in the Scriptures. "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Timothy 5:6) One of the perils of these last times is being "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4).

(b) Sports are a worldly system that has become very popular. A few of the more outstanding are the Olympics, ball games, auto races, horse races, boat races, bicycle races, skiing, skating, swimming, tennis, sporty cars, and sport clothes.

(c) Fashion is another worldly system. It is under the direct supervision of Satan, the god of this world. Many are servants to the god of fashion. Fashion takes little consideration of comfort, modesty, or cost. What is unacceptable or even unbelievable today may become fashionable tomorrow and soon acceptable. *(The natural man likes to be noticed, and the flesh desires to be approved, which is the motivating force behind the desire for fashion. It is also the source of the power behind peer pressure.)*

(d) Television, Internet, and radio programs are designed to entertain and gratify the lust that is in the flesh. Today all these things, and worse, are available in the home via the television and the World Wide Web.

The Nature of the Kingdom of this World

(a) The world is evil in nature, " .. this present evil world..." (Galatians 1:4). *(Generally speaking, the world is anything that takes our heart away from God. For example, if our occupation or activities cause us to repeatedly miss church or compromise the faith, they are being used of the world to draw us away.)*

(b) Worldliness is downward in its tendency, "...the course of this world ... " (Ephesians 2:2). That course is always away from God. (*Some ask the questions, "What is the concern about worldliness that is expressed by many brethren, where is it, and what is it?"*) Following are points of concern that have been expressed by concerned brethren. This list is not all-inclusive.

- (1) Pride in our homes
- (2) Permissiveness
- (3) Self-indulgent lifestyles
- (4) Lack of brotherly reproof
- (5) Lack of parental guidance; an unwillingness to say no
- (6) Following the fashions in clothes; expensive clothing; fashionable hair styles
- (7) Repentance that does not bring forth the necessary changes
- (8) A new style of singing, with many minor and sensual chords
- (9) Love of affluence
- (10) Misuse of computers and cell phones
- (11) Inconsistent wearing of the head covering (small coverings)

These things have the accent of the kingdom of the world. Some are a direct disobedience of the Scriptures; while others seem less serious. But the spirit behind them is evil.

(c) Worldliness is contaminating in its influence. To contaminate is to infect by contact or association. Pure religion is essential to keeping "himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

(d) Worldliness is corrupting in its association, "...having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). *The world leaves its mark on those who associate with it. For that reason, the all-wise Heavenly Father implemented the doctrine of separation. The church is in greater danger today because of (1) a change from the farm-orientated economy of God's people to a more urban setting, (2) girls and boys of our homes seeking employment at a young age, (3) brethren operating businesses, thus being exposed more to the world's ways,*

(e) The world's pleasures are unsatisfying: "For the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). Pleasures last but for a season.

(f) The world is hateful in its opposition to the Christian. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (1 John 3:13). Read in the *Martyrs Mirror* [[? insert link to anabaptistvision.org](http://anabaptistvision.org)] of the world's hate toward true Christians. Don't be deceived, human nature has not changed.

(g) Separation does not mean isolation. Isolation would defeat the very purpose of this gospel doctrine. The Bible teaches that God's people are those "called out" and changed through repentance. Then, as Jesus prayed, they must go among the people but not be of the world (John 17:1). This they do in order to carry the gospel to the lost. (*Here is an important Bible truth: one cannot carry the true gospel effectively and remain in an unscriptural church or-with his former friends to win them. The entire Bible message teaches a "coming out."*)

Victory over the World

It is true that we must associate with the world to a certain extent, but to what extent? For an illustration, let's assume that you become acutely ill with great pain, and the doctor prescribes heroin or morphine. You would instantly be aware of the danger of developing a craving for those drugs. You would obey your doctor and take them, but with great fear and carefulness. You would be mindful of the consequences if their power should overtake you.

Questions being asked are, How much money can I make, how many things can I buy, or how close can my business or association with the world be before I fall prey to the hypnotizing power of the god of this world? One thing we know for sure is that behind every worldly thing, there is a satanic power. How vital it is for every Christian to have a clear vision of the spirit of the world!

The dividing line between the Christian and the worldling is where the choice is made between walking after the Spirit or walking after the flesh.

As far as necessity and service dictate, the difference between how the separated Christian and worldly person lives is not that great. But where pride, lust, and egotism enter, you reach a line in the decision process that separates the worldling, who walks after the flesh, and the Christian, who walks after the Spirit.

Nonconformity is based on our first-love to God. The more we love the Lord the less time we wilt entertain worldly pleasures.

Keeping the Faith—The Challenge Is Ours

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

..... the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

... .. when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:8)?

(a) *To keep the faith, there must be conviction born in every brother, sister, and convert that "the just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). This is "the faith which was once delivered to the saints." All our living must correspond to faith or to **the** faith.*

(b) *To maintain the purity of the truth is one tremendous challenge of our generation. Has God brought us "to the kingdom for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14) That which prevails in the world tends to come into the church, including moral impurities. Continued exposure to corrupted standards will distort our consciences if we allow them to do so. How much have we been affected already? Immorality, infidelity, couples living together, single mothers bearing children, divorced these things seem as sinful as they did a generation ago?*

(c) *We are in a life or death struggle against Satan and the forces of darkness. We may have been chosen to man the last watch, the watch when Jesus returns. A vital challenge of our time is to maintain purity. In this, a tremendous burden rests on the home, the parents, the church, and the school.*

Separation unto God is not merely maintaining a certain distance between the church and the world. It is maintaining the Biblical standard and level of purity and faithfulness no matter how low the standard of the world sinks.

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