

SEPARATION – COME OUT OF HER MY PEOPLE.

It is or should be very clear to us that there are two forces at work in our society today and even in our hearts. One is for good, the other one is for our downfall. Two masters that we can serve today, one seeks our life, the other one seeks our destruction, and we as Christians are in between that as well as the rest of society. As we sit here in this setting we have a lot to be thankful for and let us never think that we do not have an enemy of our souls.

Our text verse is found in Revelations 18:4 I would like to turn to that, this is an echo from heaven, from God Himself, from Jesus Christ, through the angel one of the angels, and I believe it is to us today:

Revelation 18:4-5

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

In this I see the call to separation and a warning, the plagues that it talks about and he describes some of them here in the vials that were poured out. I'm not sure that I understand all the book of Revelations but there are some meaningful allegories here, some of it is figurative, quite a bit of Revelations is figurative but as we study into that I believe it has its interpretation and applications to our day-to-day life. Why is society plagued with the things that they are, sickness and poverty and violence and whatever else that is around us? Well, it is part of those plagues. Come out of her my people that you be not part takers of her sins, that you receive not her plagues. So there is a connection between sin and plagues and so we want to be separate. None of us, no human being, likes the thought of the plagues, but many think that there is not a connection. Satan likes to blind their minds to think that there is no connection between them but our Bible says that there is a direct connection. So come out of her my people that you be not part takers of their plagues.

Yes we are in congregations but if this doctrine of separation is not practical in our homes the church is not going to be able to hold anything either, so we want to make this applicable to our present setting today in our homes. The strength

of any society is not in its military force but rather it is the healthy home situations that are in it, and how they relate to issues. Someone has said that if we raise our families in the world's backyard we will not have much choice, we do not have much other option but our children will be a part of the world. So there is a call to separation.

The setting of this verse is in the destruction of Babylon and Babylon is a thought, a theme that runs throughout scripture and we will look at that a little bit later, it has to do with the secular system. Secular means a system of doctrine that rejects religious faith and worship, and that is our society today. Anything that has to do with anti-Christianity, Antichrist power, that is secular, that is what we understand to be secular and that is this Babylon that he is describing here. It can be any nation, city, community, or person that represents what is described here. Babylon is symbol of the godless society that ignores and disregards God's laws and mocks the warnings of judgment, that is what is portrayed here. The book of Revelations makes many comparisons, Apostle John I believe, wrote it in the context of his setting of the Roman Empire which at that time was at its peak, it was the highest political power. One commentator suggested that is why John used the name Babylon, but that he was actually thinking of Rome, I am not sure about that, but it has its application in every generation, whether it's Babylon, whether it's Rome, whether it's the United States or wherever it is or whatever culture it is in. It was a symbol of Antichrist and godless society.

In Revelation chapter 17 I would like to read some verses and it is one of the comparisons that I would like to look at a little bit:

Revelation 17:1-7

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet

colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.”

He goes on then to describe the mystery there, you get this picture here of this woman, decked out in all the latest in fashion of her time, she sat upon the scarlet coloured beast and had a golden cup in her hand, and you can see the picture of this, upon her head is written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH and also in verse six it says she was drunk with the blood of the Saints. There is a conflict, there is an enemy. Satan is out to destroy, he is out to bring an end to God's work, God's kingdom and God's people must suffer, there is suffering that goes along with this separation as we think of being in this world and yet being separated there is suffering that goes with it, it is very clearly mentioned here.

Revelation 18:1-10

And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. ²And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. ³For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. ⁴And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. ⁵For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. ⁶Reward her even as she rewarded you,

and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. ⁷How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. ⁸Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong *is* the Lord God who judgeth her. ⁹And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”

And we could continue on reading there, but again you can see the picture of the destruction that was poured out upon the secular system, the world system that is anti-God and corrupt to the core, and yet sits secure or complacent, ignoring the warnings that come, that came to her. It seems like that at this point the time of mercy was past, the time to be separate was urgent, a time to come out because judgment was going to be poured out and then it would be too late if we didn't do that. So that is the urgency that is portrayed here, come out of her, it is an urgent cry. Chapter 19 again it would be meaningful to read it all to get the complete picture but we will look at, verses 1 and 2, it says; “after these things” and you notice that this is a progressive thing,

Revelation 19:1-2

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”

Then he goes on and talks about how that they rejoiced and so we see the contrast again. As I said I do not understand all of Revelation but one thing is clear, and that is that we want to be in the right crowd at the right time, we do not want to be caught in the wrong crowd whenever these judgments are being poured out, and we have to do our part in that. It is a personal choice, it is

not because of who we are or where we were borne or what our background is but it is a personal choice that we must all make, to step out and away from this system. Then over in chapter 21 the angel says:

Revelation 21:9-12

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. ¹⁰And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹Having the glory of God: and her light *was* like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; ¹²And had a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:”

Revelation 21:21-27

“And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass. ²²And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. ²³And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof. ²⁴And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. ²⁵And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. ²⁶And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. ²⁷And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”

We see two different scenes here, I believe that the Apostle John, as he saw that and wrote this, it was to be an encouragement to the ones that he was writing to and to us today so that we don't have to experience the destruction and the wrath of God as He pours it out upon wickedness and sin. Rather God wants us to experience blessing, there is room enough in heaven for all of us to be a part of this second scene here where we can be separated for ever from all of evil. You see the comparisons in these verses, see the harlot and

the beast versus the lamb and the bride, you see fornication versus purity, it mentions that time and again and I believe that the spiritual application there is that what is due to God is given to flesh and self and sin instead, that is the application there.

You see the comparison between Jerusalem and Babylon, Jerusalem representing the city of God, you see the world's favour in relation to the reproach of Christ as we think of the two. We see ease and luxury versus the sufferings of Christ, also I see self indulgence versus self sacrifice. The gold and the silver and the precious stones that decked out the whore that set upon the beast, compare that to the glories of heaven, the glories of gold and silver and precious stone.

I noticed here in the scene in chapter 21, the gold and the silver and the precious stones and the jewels beautified the city and not the person, rather the inhabitants of this city were clothed in white linen, clean and white for purity, where as on the whore she was decked out in all the things that fashion could give her. Also we see the mark of the beast, the woman had this written on her forehead, and also the mark on the forehead of those who are redeemed. Also in Revelation we see the destruction, the destiny of the two, the one is a lake of fire where they are cast into versus the new heaven and the new earth that is there in the last couple of chapters.

The one will flee from Christ, call for the rocks and the mountains (Revelation 6:15) and the other will say; “Come even so Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20) It clearly says, it clearly shows to us that there is a separation that needs to take place between right and wrong, between good and evil. If we don't do that now, we don't take our responsibility now and apply the principles of God's word we are going to have to experience the second separation from God for ever. Well there is much more in that, that could be brought out, many more applications, like I said I do not fully understand it, I do not fully know exactly when this will all be, is it presently happening, is it future, we will let that be as it is, that is another subject, I do believe that today is still the day of mercy and so therefore the call is to come out from the evil, the call is still ringing out to us today and so there is time for us to change from one to the other, but as you could say we can also change from the good back to the bad too if we are not on guard. So that is the thrust of the message this afternoon that we will understand

that there are two different camps so to speak, and we want to be on the right side, we want to be on Christ's side, now and also in eternity.

This theory of a godless society ignoring and disregarding God's laws runs throughout scripture, I believe it is older than the earth. In Isaiah chapter 14, I think we see the origin of this kind of thinking:

Isaiah 14:12-15

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. ¹⁵Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”

You see the origin of this kind of thinking before even time was set in motion, Satan had this pride within his heart, he exalted himself against the Almighty God. He was cast out of heaven, and he is still working his work in the world today. We see this thought of Babylon showing up in the writings of scripture in Genesis Chapter 11, the Tower of Babel, they said let us build a the city, a tower that reaches unto heaven and make ourselves a name. And that is the same theory of: Let us exalt ourselves above God. It is in defiance of God, and we know the story of how God came down and it displeased Him, man's aspirations and unholy ambitions and He confused it. It was in God's mercy that He did that because I believe man would have destroyed himself early in history if God had allowed that to happen, so God dispersed it in His mercy. We also see it showing up again in Daniel chapter 4 when Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and Daniel interpreted it for him, that scene there, which meant that judgment would be poured out upon Nebuchadnezzar, we will turn to that, when he called in Daniel to interpret this dream that had this great tree that spread its branches, then somebody came down from heaven and cut it down, and Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation and also along with that Daniel threw out the warning that he was to humble himself.

Daniel 4:27

“Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.”

We know the story that Nebuchadnezzar did not do that.

Daniel 4:28-31

“All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. ³⁰The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? ³¹While the word *was* in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.”

We know the story how that he lost his mind until he learnt that the Most High does rule in the kingdoms of men.

So this theory is older than the earth and we in our day today also see it, the carnal ambitions of men, politically and so forth, how that they want to exalt themselves. Paul in second Timothy three describes it, says that we are living in these very times now:

2 Timothy 3:1-9

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ²For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. ⁶For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ⁷Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. ⁹But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all *men*, as theirs also was.”

We live in the end times and this describes our setting that we are in today as the church of God, as the people of God. But many people are lovers of their own selves, defiant and boastful and

corrupt, fierce, despisers of those that are good. You know, like we said, this has its application in every generation from the time of Christ until this time, in these last days and we continue to see the unfolding of the revelation of that, the fulfilment of it. Forever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. We live in a generation today where there is a lot of emphasis put on education and even religious education, but men are further from God than they ever were. Ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Second Thessalonians two talks about the mystery of iniquity, how it works in the system, the world system, it says God will only let it happen as long as until He says enough and then He will bring an end to it. The carnal mind is enmity against God and there is a conflict there. This is the society that we live in and face on every side, like we said, it is a sign of the end times. The direction of the secular world is going downward and if you understand anything about a spiral the shorter the spirals get the faster it goes and that is our society today. We only need to look at the increasing rate of abominations around us to be convinced of this. As a rule the more civilised and advanced a culture becomes the further they depart from God until they revert back to an uncivilised and barbarous state and we say; Well we are too civilised for that kind of thing to happen, but as a rule the more civilised and advanced a culture becomes the more it begins to revert back to that very thing. Crime and affluence go hand-in-hand, insecurity and fear are a product of complacency, it seems to be a paradox but it is because the further that mankind becomes self-sufficient he always forgets God and it is a downward trend outside of God. Oh we say; Well that's all out in the world how does that affect us? But I believe we are not immune to this threat, it does affect us. We are constantly affected whether we admit it or not:

Hebrews 3:12

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

We need to be on guard because it is a possibility for us to end up there too.

I had to think about various faithful people in the scripture. Noah believed God and he prepared an ark for the saving of his house, there was a

separation, a distinction there that Noah needed to make or else, if he had neglected it too long, first of all he would not have got the Ark built in time and he would have lost his family if he only had time to build an ark big enough for himself and not for his family. You catch the picture there, Noah took God's warning clear and built an ark to the saving of his house, he was not just concerned about himself. Abraham also was called out to separate himself from his present society so that God could work His work in his life. God could not have used Abraham if he would not have separated himself and left his father's house and went to a land that God showed him. Abraham lived in a tent all his life yet he was going to inherit this land, yet he lived in a tent his whole life. He was a friend of God, yet he was very much out of step with the society that he was in. God said; “I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him. How did God know Abraham? It was because he acted in obedience. This is the reason why we hear the cry to separate ourselves from this system that we describe here in the readings of those verses. Come out of her that you be not partakers of her sins and receive not of her plagues.

Satan is the Prince and power of the air and largely dominating our world powers, he has control of the political world, control of the fashion world, control of the economic world, control of the technology of our day today and we could go on and on, education and everything, but only as far as God allows him, God is in control, we want that understood this afternoon that God is in control. Nothing is out of control we can rest assured in that, no matter how bad it gets, God is still in control. His remedy is: “Come out from her and be separate” that is the remedy. God will let man destroy himself so to speak, and be victims of his own sin, His remedy is: come out of her My people.

Satan knows the nature of mankind. He has been deceiving the nations for thousands of years and he is not confined to one method, he has a method for our present setting today, he has a method for the victim of a broken home, a victim of violence, a victim of abuse, he has a method for that to keep that person within his clutches, he has a method for a drunkard, a drug addict and he also has a method for us as Mennonites and

others that grew up in Christian homes. He understand us better than we understand ourselves. He knows how to place before us the ideal circumstances to cause us to be caught off guard. We have a carnal nature that is bent towards sin and because of that Satan has an advantage on us, we feel the pull of gravity on us constantly and I believe that the nearer that we get to the end times the more intense that pull will be, and if you do not realise that pull, I believe that that is a warning sign. We know the laws of gravity, the higher you get the more pull there is, there is not much pull if I would fall of this step here, there would not be a lot of pull, I would not hurt myself real bad, but if I fall off the roof of this building it would be a lot worse and the higher we get the more pull there will be. So I would liken the pull of gravity as being sin, the carnal nature within us. Romans seven, brings that out how that individual understood that conflict, he understood that pull, he said:

Romans 7:24

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” ... and he concludes: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

There is another pull and that is the pull heavenward. The sun also has a pull. As we think of seeds coming out of the ground, why do they come out? Gravity says that they should stay down there, but there is a pull that is stronger than gravity in nature and that is the pull of the sun. God has made a clear line of distinction between good and evil, even before the beginning whenever Satan was cast out of heaven, God made a clear distinction in the Garden of Eden, God made a distinction that sin must be avoided and not experimented with. Holiness and sin will not mix. In the presence of one the other must leave. That is a principle that is taught in scripture. Holiness will leave if we allow sin in our life, sin can not be in the presence of Holiness so therefore God says; Come out from among them, separate yourself. Satan is trying to mix up good and evil, he has been doing this even unto our day today but God still clearly identifies sin and calls us to separate from it.

Turn with me to two Corinthians 6, this is a lot similar to the one in Revelation which is more to do with the final separation, this one is a call to us today:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And 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, ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. It suggests that either you are in this one camp or you are in that one, you cannot mix the two up. Satan tries to mix it up, to cloud it up in many people's minds. God clearly makes it clear to come out from among them and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. Don't even to touch it, don't touch it, much less bring it along with you, and I will receive you and be a God unto you, I will be your God and they shall be My people, I will be your Father and you shall be My sons and daughters. God has a desire that every individual be His son and daughter and so I believe that this call is not exclusively to just one background but it is to every one here, everyone in this world, God wants to receive every individual as His son and daughter. Redemption can do that for every individual no matter who they are. Like we said God clearly identifies sin, Satan wants to mix it up, he mixes a small amount of poison, it seems harmless, and he increases the concentration little by little until a person becomes addicted to it and they don't even know it, that is the process Satan likes to use. We want to have it clear that separation is not salvation, our salvation is based only on grace through faith Ephesians chapter 2, I think that this is an important principle, I am sure we understand it, but from Ephesians chapter 2 I would like to read a couple of verses so that we fully understand that this is one of Satan's tricks, that as long as we keep a certain code of rules that that is salvation, clearly that is not our salvation:

Ephesians 2:1-10

“And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; [it doesn't say that he put plain clothes on you, he says he quickened to you] ²Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved ;) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

Salvation rests only in Jesus Christ, and it is no use if we try to exercise separation if we are not experiencing salvation in Jesus Christ. Satan is very comfortable with a person that is dressed in plain clothes yet not regenerated. So the thought that we want to stress here is that separation is a heart issue, it is not an outward issue, even though we tend to think of it more in its outward aspects, but it is a heart issue.

Titus chapter 2 puts it pretty good in right perspective, brings these two together, some people want to say that, well if the heart is right it doesn't matter what the outside is like, we know that that is not right, we know that that is not scriptural. Notice the train of thought that he gives here in:

Titus 2:11-15

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, [we are saved by grace through faith] ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; [this present evil world] ¹³Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Because we value our salvation and deliverance so much, that is what motivates us that is the basis for our separation, that is what makes this matter of separation such a serious matter, because of the value that we put on our salvation. Therefore we see that it is very necessary to exercise separation. Someone has said; “Well isn't the grace of God strong enough to withstand, you know if I expose myself to all the sin around me, isn't the grace of God strong enough to withstand that?” He understands us, He remembers that we are dust, Psalm 103 says that He pities us and so He makes a way that we can withstand. We can be safe in saying that when people neglect to apply the principles of separation they will lose their salvation, I do not think that is judgemental to say that, that is scriptural. The person that neglects the principles of separation they will lose their salvation, at what stage I am not here to say, but it is a process that a person will lose their salvation.

The doctrine of separation is not a stand-alone doctrine, I believe that accompanies and undergirds every other doctrine, and non-resistance is one. When one of the scribes asked Jesus what is the greatest commandment,

Matthew 22:36-40

Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? ³⁷Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. ³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

I believe that someone said that these two commandments mean nonconformity and non-resistance, separation and non-resistance. Upon these hang all the law and the prophets and I say that they are the twin pillars of the church, of the faithful church today. They are what identifies the difference between a faithful church and one that is just a part of the world system, even though it is religious. What is the use of being non-resistant if we are not separate? There is no need to be non-resistant if we don't practice separation. What is the use of having Christian day schools if we are not practising separation,

why there is no need to. In some Liberal Mennonites settings they have lost the vision for the Christian day school because they see no need for separation. In our worship separation is also a very important part. Separation undergirds every other doctrine.

Separation is a very practical thing. Separation is not just being different. I believe separation is making practical the principles of scripture. Some people think that the more different we are, the more contrasting we are with society, that then means that we are more spiritual, that we are more right and that is not necessarily the truth, but there is a distinct line between the culture that we are in and the Christian, and the closer that we get to the end times I believe the greater that distinction will be. Walking after the spirit or walking after the flesh, these are the principles of separation, it is not just being different, but rather it is walking in the spirit instead of the flesh. It is holiness, it is modesty, it is simplicity, it is practical and practicality and so forth, the scriptural principles of separation.

Separation is not isolation. Jesus said we are in the world (John 17) His prayer, His heart cry for His little flock that He was about to leave behind was, Father I pray that you would not take them out of the world but keep them from the evil. Can you sense the heart cry of our Saviour? It almost seemed like it really tugged at His heart to be able to know that in a few short weeks He would be separated from His little flock and leave them in this cold evil world. God has His reasons for leaving His people here, it is His mercy to our society that He lets us all here as salt and light in the world, in this dark and sinful world, that is the reason that He lets us here, let's His people here. He does not take us of this planet onto another planet where we are isolated but He lets us here for the purpose of reaching out to others and it also has a positive aspect in our life too. It stimulates us and as we face the struggle that goes along with the cross bearing, I believe that stimulates spiritual growth, so there is some positive aspects about it. Instead of isolation it is insulation.

You know when it is cold outside and we are inside a building we can tell how much insulation that building has by how easy it is to keep it warm in there, I believe that is an illustration of what separation is, it is insulation between us and

evil society. It does not isolate but it insulates us, it is the hedge that God has built for His people. In John 10:28 Jesus talks about His Father's hand: "That no man shall be able to pluck them out of My father's hand." God has a hedge for us to be in, let us step inside that, inward is safe, not on the edges. We are in the world but not of the world, there is an upward pull that goes along with separation and God says come out from, separate yourselves, I believe He is calling us heavenward, it is like a pull heavenward, an invitation, a call heavenward.

I trust we are not like Lot's wife, she also received a call to separate herself from her present setting. (Genesis 19) Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, he felt that gravity pull, went to Sodom, finally found himself in Sodom and when destruction was about to be poured out upon that place the urgency didn't seem to affect him. Lot was affected more than he realised by the setting he was in, he lost his whole family. The New Testament does call him a righteous man (2 Peter 2:7) but I believe that Lot was awfully close to the edge, and outside of God's protection, and if it wouldn't have been for his Uncle Abraham I am not sure that Lot would have been spared. Not like Lot's wife, she did separate herself physically but she turned and looked back, her heart was obviously back there yet, and that can be our condition to. If we don't reckon with that, if we don't correct our heart condition, we are going to find ourselves in the same state as Lot's wife did.

Separation is a heart issue but it does affect the outside and like we said we have to deal with that and I believe it is important that we set safe boundaries, for ourselves and for our children, for our churches, so that the weak and the young can enjoy the protection. Us older ones, as leaders, need to take that as a challenge, it is not enough that we make it through or that the church remains faithful in our day, but it is important that we lay the ground work so that they will have something to build on in the future generations until the end of time. If we do not do our part today the generations after us stand in judgment and say it is because we didn't take our place back there in that issue. Yes it is an individual responsibility, no one can point fingers at anyone else, every man stands before God accountable, but we do have an accountability to the oncoming generations.

Separation touches every aspect of our life and it is applicable to every generation, every culture, every race, every geographical location. I believe that if we were in Africa this afternoon preaching a message like this, the applications might be different but the call is the same. God had His faithful ones and I believe He still has His faithful ones, in every generation and every culture, that are seriously applying this principle in everyday life.

Outward appearance. We think of separation and outward appearance. Satan is dominating the fashions of our day today, sometimes we find these fashions in modified ways sneaking into our circles, the haircuts, the trouser styles, dress prints, young children's clothing. I urge you, you owe it to your family, you owe it to the church, you owe it to your generation to be on guard. Sometimes I think that some people think well for young children, it doesn't matter so much. I am concerned that we don't think how can we dress our young ones in a way that is not acceptable and then when they get to the age of midteens we will expect them to come in line and support the church standards. Well the ground is already laid for them to have the desire for things that are beyond what is acceptable. I am afraid it is going to produce wrong results. Why do we have young people that can hardly grasp the concept of the devotional covering or dress and haircuts and hairstyles, I think it is because it has something to do with parents not having taught them like they should. Someone has said that we ought to compare what is right, pick a standard that is right and compare them with that rather than what is not acceptable. What I mean by that is that we sometimes tend to say; Well it is not as bad as this one over here or as this individual; it is not as bad as that one so you know it must be all right. Pick something that is well in line and compare with that, that is a safer method to take. The other method tends to gravitate downward and it gets worse and worse.

Technology is somewhat of a large issue today. Cellphones, computer, e-mail, Internet. You probably think that I am all anti those things, but I do have a cellphone, I don't have a computer but I think that we as churches had better be on guard. We need to have the idea that rather than grab the latest thing that comes along, whether it cellphones or whatever it is, the wait-and-see

aspect, let's just give it a little time, let's not grab it up, if it proves to be of benefit, yes there will be plenty of time to use it, instead of getting in there and getting the latest, having the latest technology and all of a sudden we find ourselves hooked into something that we shouldn't be. I don't think we know where this is going to lead us, I do not want to be a doomsday crier but I wonder if we aren't focusing on convenience too much and not aware of the dangers, it is a subtle thing. It is probably the biggest issue that is facing us today at the present, this issue of technology. So let us use the principles of separation and not convenience to make our choices and decisions on it.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:20) if your right-hand offend you cut it off, cast it from you, for it is better to enter into life with one hand missing than to enter into death with two hands. The application can be that, yes we say it is so handy, but if it is like your right-hand and it offend you cut it off, cast it from you. I wonder if this issue won't be one of the major distinctions in the future between churches that represent scriptural separation and those that don't. Just like the radio and television were in the past, that was an issue back then, the radio wasn't as near as corrupt as what it is now, I don't think that television was ever a big issue in Conservative circles, but the radio was. Those that took a weak stand on that soon had the television and where are they at today? I am afraid, I wondered if it isn't going to make a distinction between scriptural separation and those that didn't. We can't expect to grab up the latest in technology and then be able to exit when we realise that this is gone to far, sometimes we think we ought to be able to do that but I'm afraid we not all can, and if we can't as older ones I am afraid our children will not be able to either. So I think we need to take a very cautious approach, I am not anti computer or cellphone or whatever, but we must take a very cautious approach toward these issues, or we will probably never realise when it is too far.

There are many other practical issues that relate to separation. Let us make them practical in our own lives as individuals, also especially as homes, as parents, let us make them very practical, every day of the week, not just on Sundays. Yes we are in this setting, separation isn't a really big issue, as we think of relating in

this present setting, but as we relate in life to the world around us let us make it very practical, because there is coming a time when Jesus says: he will separate the sheep from the goats. (Matthew 25:33)

There is another separation coming and He will set the goats on His left hand and the sheep on His right and am sure that we want to be on the right-hand at that point, but the fact is that at that time we will not be able to decide whether we are sheep or goats, it will already have been decided at that point. Christ will decide at that point whether we are sheep or goats and we will have to take the consequences. Now is the time if we are in the camp of the goats to move over into the camp of the sheep, if we want to be in the right position at that point. Just like in Revelation when the judgments are poured out we want to be in the right crowd, we don't want to be in the wrong crowd at that time. So that puts an urgency on it, we know not when the time will come when the final destruction will be but we want to be ready for that and our children and the generations after us are building on the decisions we make today.

In closing there are some scriptures I would like to look at:

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.* ²And 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.”

That you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God, that adds another dimension too separation, not only is it just for our safety, but is for the benefit of those around us, those that are outside of God's blessing and outside of salvation, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. If we break down in separation not only do we loose out but there is a witness that is lost in our society today and that is also serious.

Hebrews 13:11-14

“For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. ¹²Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with

his own blood, suffered without the gate. ¹³Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. ¹⁴For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

For we have no continuing city here but seek one to come, let us step out with Jesus without the camp bearing His reproach, there is a reproach that goes with it, and I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us in the future.

Matthew 24:12-13

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. ¹³But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

We do not have to succumb to the pressures around us, yet it does have its effects on us, a cooling off effect, he that endures to the end the same shall be saved, let us be among that number.

Revelation 11:15-18

“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. ¹⁶And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, ¹⁷Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. ¹⁸And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”

There is coming a time when there will be a final separation.

Let us take God's warnings and God's principles apply them today so that when that time comes we also can say we give thee thanks Oh Lord God Almighty because You are pouring out judgment upon wickedness. I believe that vengeance is the Lord's and He will repay and we don't wish doom on anyone but there will be a deliverance some day from evil and Satan will be judged and the redeemed will be gathered home to be with Christ.

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