

Sinful Separation

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- I. Sinful separation took place in a world created perfect.
- II. Through His plan of salvation for all men God desired that all be restored to the relationship which existed before sin separated man from his God.
- III. Many remain completely separated from God in spite of God's plan to unite all men to Himself.
- IV. In His Word God tells us what our stand must be over against those who bear the name Christian but are living in sins which have or are separating them from the kingdom of God.

I. Sinful separation took place in a world created perfect.

“And God saw everything that He had made and behold it was very good.” When everything was good there was also no room nor cause for strife or separation, not even in the animal kingdom. Peace and tranquility and happiness were to reign supreme everywhere. Knowing this, how often we have tried to picture in our minds what this world would be like today if all of the Lord's creation had remained in the perfect state in which it was created. Certainly there would have been towns and cities and nations and governments great and small, but there would be no struggle of one with another or of nation against nation. All would work together in complete harmony because all would be walking in closest communion with their Creator, their will in full accord with His will, and in undivided agreement with each other. How often we pray that undivided agreement, especially in spiritual matters, become a reality today, and our longing hearts sigh with a sigh of deep yearning for the things that might have been, but are not now.

In His Word God has clearly revealed to us what transpired to break a perfect relationship separating man from his Creator and henceforth causing man to be by nature spiritually blind, spiritually dead, and an enemy of God. A sinful separation took place among the invisible creatures God called angels which were created holy. At some time (we are not told when nor just how it came about) a large number of these creatures under the leadership of one who is then called Satan or the devil “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.” In other words, they rebelled against God, their Creator. Thus the first sinful separation occurred and evil was injected into God's good world by these fallen creatures. Straightway the rebels plotted to win over to their side also the human race, and their plot succeeded. Adam and Eve also rebelled against God by willful disobedience to His holy will and the result was separation from their God and Creator. Sinful separation always involves rebellion against God, an ignoring of His holy will. We hear people talk lightly about Adam and Eve eating the “apple” as many people speak of the forbidden fruit. The act of Adam and Eve shows clearly that a change had taken place in their hearts—a change of allegiance. Before Satan entered the picture they had been one with their Creator. It was different now. God had dropped out of their consideration. They are now governed by thoughts of their own which have been suggested by Satan instead of God. So the disobedience of our first parents was nothing less than sinful separation, rebellion against God, forsaking Him for another master. This change that had taken place in the heart of man brought direful consequences for his soul, mind, and body. Man, who had lived in the presence of God, now attempts to hide himself from the presence of the Lord.

Sinful separation always manifests itself in a drawing away from the Lord, a departure from His word, and also a striking out on paths of one's own choosing. When Adam and Eve separated from God to strike out on paths of their own choosing, they cut themselves loose from the very root of life and the result could be nothing less than a withering away into death, for “the wages of sin is death.” God, in His Word to man had warned, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Thus the happiness which God had intended for man was destroyed through our first parents' own fault and they went out from the presence of God into the darkness of a world which they themselves had made a vale of tears. Sin like a great wall, which no man can

remove, separated man from God., and so from life, happiness, and heaven. Ever since the fall of man it is the very nature of man, who is born in the sinful likeness of his parents, to defeat God's good purposes through his own foolishness which he in his ignorance considers to be true wisdom. Sin is always disobedience to God's good will and, therefore, it is the very nature of sin to effect a separation. Sin broke man's contact and union with God. It breaks his contact and union with his fellowman. That is the history of sin in the Bible and in the human race. Cain killed his brother, Abel, and "went *out* from the presence of the Lord." Jacob deceived his brother, Esau, and had to flee and go *out* into a strange land. Gehazi lied to Elisha and went *out* from his presence a leper as white as snow. The prodigal son rebelled against his father and went *out* into a far country. Peter denied his Lord and went *out* and wept bitterly. Judas betrayed his Lord and Master and went *out* and hanged himself. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world," says the Apostle Paul. Always *out*! Sin has never had any other effect in the history of the human race. Its effect will never be otherwise.

II. Through His plan of salvation for all men God desired that all be restored to the relationship which existed before sin separated man from his God.

God, who is holy and just is also a God of grace and mercy. As the very time when God in His justice had to punish man for his disobedience, He also made the first announcement of His gracious plan of salvation in which he would change man's hopeless condition into a hopeful one. Addressing the devil concealed in the serpent, God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." This is the first Gospel or good news and good news it was indeed. From it our first parents learned that God would send a Savior. The Savior is to be the woman's seed, a human being. The fact that He is not called the seed of man points to His miraculous virgin birth. And since only God is strong enough to overcome the devil, Adam and Eve could conclude that the Savior would not only be man, but also God. The God-man is to crush the devil's head, rob him of his power and redeem mankind. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Mary's Son, did this when He fulfilled the law in man's stead, and suffered the punishment for man's sin on the cross. True, the devil bruised the Savior, but he only inflicted a temporary wound in his heel. Having died for the sins of the world, The Savior rose again to proclaim His and man's triumph over the hellish enemy. All the Old Testament prophets pointed men to the coming Christ as their Savior and declared that all who believe, or trust, in Him have forgiveness of sin. In the Book of Acts, chapter 10, verse 43, we read: "To Him gave all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." In the Old Testament men were saved by believing in the Savior who was to come. "Abraham believed the Lord and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

In the New Testament men are saved by believing in the Savior who has come. The Gospel tells us of this Savior and it is "the power of God unto salvation." It is God's will-that every creature, by nature separated from God because of sin, bear the soul-saving message that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," and Christians of all ages are to acknowledge that "He hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." Jesus commanded his disciples and all Christians to preach until the end of time when He said, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." Through the preaching of the Gospel man is to be assured of the forgiveness of every sin which separated him and his God. How beautifully and clearly Jesus describes the true believer: "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all and no man shall be able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." People who wish to bear the name Christian and desire to live in such a blessed union do well to give earnest heed to the admonition of Him who said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." The Lord of the Church would have it said of all who claim to be His own that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and in fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayer.

A perfect relationship will exist between God and that individual who remains faithful to the revealed Word accepting it in faith, as his sole guide for faith and life. Even such an individual will acknowledge that he daily sins much, but being a repentant sinner, he will have no reason to believe that his sin, committed in weakness, separates him from his God, for the beloved Apostle would have him acknowledge that “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Yes, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5:1. By the grace of God all true believers can rejoice in this that because of Christ their Savior their iniquities no longer separate them and their God.

III. Many, however, remain completely separated from God in spite of God’s plan to unite all men to Himself.

Many people throughout the world are ignorant of this plan and are still walking in spiritual darkness, completely separated from Him whose will it is that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. Many, on the other hand, who have heard of God’s plan to unite all men unto Himself remain cold and indifferent toward the Gospel which is the only power of God unto salvation. We are compelled to say with the Apostle Paul, “They have not all obeyed the Gospel;” and with heavy hearts we cry out with the Prophet Isaiah, “Lord, who hath believed our report?” We are compelled to acknowledge that the world in its wisdom still considers the preaching of the cross, foolishness. How aptly we may today apply the words of Jesus, spoken almost 2,000 years ago, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee. How oft would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings and ye would not.”

We are living in an age when people are heaping unto themselves teachers, having itching ears, and yet in spite of the many false prophets in the world, there are still to be found those who preach the word, who are instant in season, out of season; who reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, realizing at the same time that these are times, like many similar periods of history, when many will not endure sound doctrine and therefore turn their ears from the truth to believe fabulous lies which are the soul-destroying product of Satan. Our Lord Jesus, speaking of Himself as the Son of God and Savior of the whole world, said, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins,” yes, the sins which separate man and his God. Jesus very clearly informs all who will hear that He is the way, the truth, and the life and that no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. These and many other clear passages of Scripture compel us to consider that individual to be separated from God who does not confess Christ as the Son of God and his all-sufficient Savior from sin.

IV. In His Word God tells us what our standard must be over against those who bear the name Christ but are living in sins which have or are separating them from the kingdom of God.

In His word God, who first of all tells us to let that word be our sole guide in doctrine and practice, also clearly tells us what stand we must take toward those who live in sins that separate them from the Kingdom of God. The Christian pattern for faith and life must always be that of the Christians of the Apostolic age who continued steadfastly in the Apostle’s doctrine and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer. It must be the pattern of those, who under the gracious guidance of the Holy Spirit, are intent upon observing all things whatsoever Jesus has commanded. It must be that of holding forth sound doctrine. According to the word of God doctrine must come first, that is the essential thing. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine,” says the Apostle, 2 Tim. 3:16. When the Lord says, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel,” He tells us to preach the good news of salvation, the good news that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life,” and that is doctrine. When St. Paul says, “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified,” he tells us that the purpose and characteristic of his preaching is to tell the world that Jesus, the Crucified, is the Savior, that by grace we are saved, through faith, and that again is doctrine. Jesus says, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” and this again is doctrine. “Speak thou the things which become sound

doctrine,” Titus 2:1. Speaking of a bishop, that is, a pastor, St. Paul writes to Titus that a pastor should be a man, “holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” Thus 1:9-11. Every other use of Scripture for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, for comfort—must be based on doctrine. We have many texts in the Old and in the New Testament which warn us against false teachers and false doctrine and encourage us, yea, obligate us, to hold fast to sound doctrine. “Beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees,” says Jesus. Matthew 16:12. And again, “Beware of false prophets,” Matthew 7:15. Now, the word, “*beware*,” does not mean that we should *go* together, work together, and fellowship with those who have sinfully separated from the words of Scripture or who are living in sins which are causing offense. If it means anything, it means that as far as religious association is concerned, we should keep away from them.

The Apostle writes in the Epistle to the Romans: “I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple,” Romans 16:17,18. Writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle says that they should no longer be like children be “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine,” Ephesians 4:14. “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed, for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deed,” 2 John 9:11. “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world,” 1 John 4:1. “Then false teachers entered in among the Galatians, Paul did not speak approvingly of it, nor did he treat the matter indifferently but he used some very emphatic language against it, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel, which is not another; but here be some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed,” Galatians 1:6-9.

The toleration of error, whether this be done willfully or in ignorance, is very definitely a sinful separation from God and His Word of truth and is very emphatically condemned through Scripture. What course are defenders of the truth to follow in meeting up with those who support error? We realize that it is the very nature of sin to separate and so also the toleration of error and the toleration of impenitence breaks the bond of fellowship with those who contend for the truth and who insist that those who call themselves Christian bring forth fruits meet for repentance. We would be showing a lack of Christian love if we would refuse to instruct those who are guilty of sins of separation, but whose minds and hearts are open to conviction.

If, however, the guilty party persists in his error and will not bow to the clear Word of God our course is clear, “Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican,” and “Avoid him,” and again, “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth being condemned of himself,” Titus 3:10,11. It will be well with us and the Lord’s blessings will be ours only when we follow this course in dealing with sinful separation, for history clearly reveals that religious indifferentism finally leads to a total denial of the truth. It is not surprising that this should be so for it is the very nature of sin to destroy. If we tolerate error and fail to follow the Scriptural course in dealing with an impenitent brother, the human mind will soon be prone to ask the question, “Why should we believe anything at all that the Bible teaches?” True charity demands that, when a man is wrong, especially in matters referring to God, for the sake of his own salvation you should tell him so.

God is not glorified when His truth is denied, but only when it is confessed. God would have us hallow His name, as Jesus has taught us to pray in the First Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. How is God’s name hallowed? Our Catechism answers: “When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we as the children of God lead a holy life according to it. To this help us dear Father in heaven. But he that teaches and

lives otherwise than God's Word teaches, profanes the Name of God among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father."

The Bible demands of Christians that "ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Corinthians 1:10. It is a deplorable fact that this is ignored by many who would call themselves Christians and that the cry in the church of our day is not for unity, but for mere union, not for a "getting together" on the basis of the Word of God, which is the only norm of faith and the only rule of life, but for a "getting together" on the basis of a mutual understanding to discard any portion of Scripture which might offend. From this preserve us, heavenly Father!