

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Separate Yourself

Bill Brinkworth

An important teaching in the Bible is about believers being separated from sin and the ungodly activities of the world as much as possible. It is taught all throughout the Old Testament. God's people, particularly Israel, were to keep their distance from the heathen, so they would not be exposed to or tempted by the ungodly's involvement in sin.

In the New Testament, early believers were also warned to remain as far as possible from the unfruitful, ungodly works of the unrighteous. Sin spreads and is contagious, and that is one reason God wanted His people out of the grasp of any wickedness.

"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." Eph. 5:11

The Bible tells us much about living a separated godly life:

- From the beginning, God did some separating. God put a separation between the unrighteous world and Noah and His family, when He sent the flood. The ungodly perished.

In Old Testament times, God repeatedly warned His people to separate from the ungodly so they would not end up doing the sins the enemies of God were committing.

"Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD." Isa. 52:11

"Flee out of the midst of Babylon [a sinful nation], and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence." Jer. 51:6 God was going to judge the sinful nation, and He did not want His people to be included in the punishment he was going to inflict on the ungodly.

- God says not to do the sinful or "close to appearing sinful" activities they do.
"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you," II Cor. 6:17
- Our example, Christ, lived a separated life. We claim to be "Christ-like", which is what "Christian" means; so we also should live a separated life.
"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;" Heb. 7:26

A different way of living does not save anyone. "Not cursing, chewing, or hangin' around with those that do" is a good practice, but it will not make one saved. However, when one acknowledges his sin, realizes the price he will ultimately pay for sin, accepts Christ's payment for his sin, and accepts Him as Saviour, that person is saved from the penalty of sin. That person is changed on the inside, and changes on the outside should soon follow.

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." II Cor. 5:17

This “new creature” should want to live the way the Lord wants him to live. As the child’s Sunday school song reminds us, “The things I used to do, I don’t do them anymore.” The “new” saved person will produce godly fruits (actions that are pleasing to the Lord), not because he has to do them to keep his salvation, but because his new “heart” will want to do them for the Lord. A saved person should want to please his Saviour.

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;); 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” Eph. 5:8-12

The new-hearted Christian should realize that much of the way he used to live was not pleasing to the Lord. To please the Lord, he should want to separate himself from sin and its temptation.

For centuries, separation from sin and even the “... appearance of evil ...” (I Thes. 5:22) was preached from most pulpits and practiced by most people. Christians lived differently. They spoke differently. They dressed differently. They believed differently. They acted and thought differently. They were ashamed, as were their families, when they were involved in sin or even imitated the lifestyles of the unsaved.

Amongst many of today’s Christians, this thinking and lifestyle are foreign to them, and even ridiculed. One would be hard-pressed in most churches and Christian households to be able tell any difference between those “Christians” and the unsaved. Church leaders and believers spend more time excusing, justifying, and explaining their worldly thinking and lifestyles than they do remembering one of God’s most important commandments to His believers — to live holy.

“Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.” Lev. 20:7 Also: I Peter 1:16.

God has not changed one bit since He had the words penned in Lev. 20:7. No matter how those around us are living and believing, a Christian is always to live as godly a life as he can. We are on God’s winning side, and we are to live like it. We are not to live like the losing, ungodly side.

When a Christian lives the way God commands, the ungodly will separate from him. Godly living convicts the ungodly, and rather than change their way of living, they often will alienate themselves from the source of their “feeling guilty.” So many Christians that do not live a separated life never make any difference to those around them, as their lifestyle is not a godly example.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.” Luke 6:22

The majority of Christians fail in the area of separation. Most often, they will not separate themselves from the things of this world, and separate themselves unto God. They want the comfort of knowing they will go to Heaven, but their sincerity is lacking. They will not separate from the places they should not be. They act and think like the ungodly. They want to dress like and look like the world. Their desire is to fit in like everyone else.

If the fad returns to have short skirts, many Christians are quickly in the store to make sure they look just like everyone else. If the fashion of long hair returns for men, they are the first ones to drive past the barbershop and find something to tie their hair back. Too often Christians are more interested in fitting in with the world than they are with fitting in with God and letting Him make them as holy as He can.

It would be more helpful for Christians if they had the attitude, "I'm a Christian. If the Bible shows me to do something, without question I will do it. If the world thinks I am peculiar, then that is their problem. As for me, and my house, I will separate from the world and its many questionable behaviors, and I will look, act, talk, and behave like the Bible says a Christian should."

We should not strive to fit in and appear like everyone else. Remember when your Mom would say to you, "If your friends jumped off a bridge would you do it?" We did not like her admonishment, but too many are doing that spiritually; we are doing what everyone around us is doing. Too many are following the world, rather than leading the world by a Christ-like example.

The question, or place of confusion for many is, "Well, what is it I should be separated from? What are the ungodly, works of wickedness I am to keep away from?"

Reading the Bible will reveal the main source of what should be avoided — sin. There are more sins than those found in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20). One man counted over 600 sins. One will often not know what he should keep away from, if he does not read in the Bible and learn what they are.

"Well, a lot of the sins are for Old Testament times," is often the retort. The Old Testament, particularly the Law, is the schoolmaster (Gal. 3:24) that teaches us what God likes and dislikes. Since God never changes, what was sin to Him in those days, unless there is a retraction or permission given in the New Testament, is still sin today.

People feel more comfortable with a list of sins. However, because of man's devices, dealings, and different times, sins change. A list of sins from Old Testament times would not always apply today. Scales no longer have weights, so the sin about "false balances" would not be valid for most today. However, the principle behind that sin, cheating and deceiving, still can be applied today. There were no guns in 1200 BC, but fatally killing someone with one today is still a sin. Murder has always been sin, with a gun or a stone. Alcoholic beer is not mentioned in the Bible; however drunkenness is to be avoided according to God's Word. Abortion also is not mentioned in the Bible, but the principle of not killing another and taking one's life is clearly sin. Many insist the dress codes and standards of the Old Testament are only for by-gone days, but the principle that honors the differences in the sexes as God created them has not changed.

Many justify sin and lack of separation with the excuse, "Today is different." Sin is sin and always has been. The principles of what is sin need to be learned from God's Word and then applied.

Man's lifestyles and possessions are always changing. A list of what not to do will never be accurate for more than several years. It is the spirit of doing the right things that must be established, and then an attitude of discernment will hold true and guide one no matter what changes in the world. It is the "spirit" of God's law that needs to be the ruler to measure what is

right and wrong, not just being on God's list of sins ("the letter" of the law).

"Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." II Cor. 3:6

When one lives a life that is far from the edge of being "wrong" or sinful, very seldom will they have to worry about "falling into sin." I learned this from my first pastor, after I was saved. On the platform, Pastor Fedena drew an imaginary line, and walked along it. He said that many Christians do not want to live the separated life, yet they still want to have an appearance of being a Christian. They are so close to sin, that it takes very little to unbalance them spiritually. He illustrated this by stumbling off the line he was walking on and tripping down the platform's steps.

"But," he went on to illustrate, "Those that have learned the wisdom that they need to stay away from anything that would tempt them or even give an appearance of their doing sin, get far away from that 'tolerable' line." He moved far away from the imaginary line separating right and wrong. As he continued, he pointed out that, "As I get farther away the questionable 'gray' area, you will see that I am getting closer to God." That is what living far from the edge of right and wrong does; it protects us from being tempted and falling into sin.

He went back to the line of "what-one-can-get-away-with-and-still-not-be-involved-in-sin." As the preacher tried to balance on the line again, he warned, "Those that live close to the edge of where they were before they were saved, and what they know is sin, cannot lose their salvation when they get too close to their old lifestyle, but they can get involved in sin. They may lose their testimony that may take a long time, if ever, to get back. Their witness as a godly example will be ruined.

"When one refers to Christian hypocrites, it is those that got too close to the edge and fell into sin that are usually being referred to. It is much safer to get to far from the edge, and get close to God. If it is questionable, give God the benefit of the doubt, and stay away from its involvement."

That is what separation is all about: separating oneself from anything that will make one fall and hurt the cause of Christ. That is why God wants us to separate from many things of this world and, of course, from sin. God loves us and does not want His children hurt by sin or weakened by its temptation. Separate yourself from the world and unto God.

"If you're a Christian, why would you even want to act like, live like, look like, or even talk like the devil's losing side?"