THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF GRACE AGE SEPARATION

There is a doctrine that was very misunderstood back in the days of the early church and is very misunderstood in today's church. In fact, this doctrine today is almost a lost doctrine. Yet, when one carefully studies the Bible, it is very evident that this subject is both Biblical and critical to the individual life of a Grace Age <u>believer</u> and to the corporate life of a Grace Age <u>church</u>. The doctrine is the doctrine of <u>separation</u>.

Ernest Pickering appropriately said Biblical separation is the "story of a <u>struggle</u>" that will not end until Jesus Christ returns (*Biblical Separation*, p. 9). Dr. Pickering is absolutely correct; separation is a story of a relentless struggle in both the individual and the church. However, regardless of how intense the struggle or how difficult the subject, such as trying to sift through every thought **(II Cor. 10:5)**, it is one that God expects us to tackle and <u>win</u>. God expects, in fact, He demands that we enter into the arena of separation and He has empowered us to be able to come out <u>victorious</u>.

In the next several studies, we would like to take a systematic journey through this extremely vitally important doctrine. It is our prayer that God will grant us His <u>wisdom</u> so that when we get before Him, He will classify us as having been Grace Age <u>separatists</u> in the way that truly did bring glory to Him.

QUESTION #1 – What do we mean by the term "separation"?

Mr. Webster says separation is making a division between self and something. He adds that it is to form some kind of distinguishable boundary between something and something else (*The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary*, p. 908).

Although we will consider the key words of this doctrine later, the actual Biblical Greek word "separate" (αφοριζω) literally means to mark off something by <u>boundaries</u> and then to <u>separate</u> oneself by those boundaries (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 72).

One Grace Age passage where this is clearly seen is **<u>II Cor. 6:17</u>** which says, "Therefore, come out from their midst and be <u>separate</u>, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you." Obviously the boundary markers are unclean things and the believer is to separate himself from these things.

Before we give a specific definition as to what we mean by separation, it is wise for us to consider what some of the great theologians who gave serious thought to it said:

Lewis Sperry Chafer said, "Separation as a doctrine represents the human side of sanctification. Separation is from something unto something else…" (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. 7, p. 287). Dr. Chafer clearly saw the connection between the practical and progressive side of sanctification as it related to the doctrine of separation.

BIBLICAL SEPARATION (2)

Dr. Floyd Barackman said, "We initiate and express holiness by separating ourselves from that which is morally unlike God and be setting ourselves apart unto Him and His will for the manifestation and use in this world" (*Practical Christian Theology*, p. 389). That idea of "setting ourselves apart" clearly links us to the human side of sanctification.

The connection between sanctification and separation is this: sanctification, which is produced by the <u>Holy Spirit</u>, is the basis for separation which is worked out by the <u>believer</u> by decisions in accordance with the Word of God.

For the sake of this study, we define Biblical Grace Age separation in this way:

Biblical separation is the <u>decision</u>(s) of a believer in accordance with the Holy Spirit and in accordance with God's Word, in which he withdraws himself or separates himself apart from certain people, places, practices, perspectives, policies, plans and paths in order that God may classify the believer as holy so that the believer may be used to bear fruit at the highest possible level and receive the greatest possible blessings of God both in this life and the next. Now there are certain things we want to observe from this definition:

1. Biblical separation is a calculated <u>decision</u>. It is not a feeling or emotion. It is a calculated and concrete decision. It is a choice one makes.

2. Biblical separation is a separation made by a <u>believer</u>. In fact, it is only the believer who is in a position to separate from something that would actually <u>please</u> God. Apart from faith in Christ, one's works are as "filthy rags." Without faith in Christ a person could separate himself or herself from whatever but could not possibly please God. Pleasing God is an impossibility for one who <u>lacks</u> faith. **Heb. 11:6**

3. Biblical separation is in accordance with the <u>Holy Spirit</u>. True Biblical separation will be fully consistent with the Spirit's leading and fully consistent with the Word of God. If Biblical separation is linked to progressive sanctification, the Spirit must be in it. **II Thess. 2:13; I Pet. 1:2**

4. Biblical separation is in accordance with God's <u>Word</u>. Here is a very critical factor that, in my opinion, becomes the whole crux of the <u>problem</u> with separation. God expects us to separate ourselves from several things and He has clearly and carefully put these things in <u>writing</u> in His Word.

Frankly, many well-meaning believers separate themselves from the <u>wrong</u> things, while not really separating themselves from the <u>Biblical</u> things and thus their lives and even the life of the church suffers. As Mr. John Miles said, "People tend to go beyond the Scriptures" (*The Tightrope of Separation*, p. 2). Our doctrine of separation must always be based on the <u>written</u> Word of God. If an individual or a church will purpose to separate itself from what God wants, it will by promise of God be blessed by God. **II Cor. 6:17-18**

5. Biblical separation is <u>from</u> something or someone. Biblical separation means we draw distinguishable <u>boundaries</u> between ourselves and something or someone and we with-draw from any fellowship or association. **Ps. 1:1-3; Prov. 1:10, 15; Eph. 5:11**

6. Biblical separation is for a specific <u>purpose</u>. We separate ourselves so God will view us as practically moving in a holy direction **(I Pet. 1:15)**. When God classifies us in this way as an individual or church, then He opens remarkable doors of opportunity and blessing and we are able to be used by Him and bear fruit for Him at the highest possible level in this life **(Rev. 3:8)** and then gain the highest level of rewards in the next life.

Living a separated life by Biblical terms is the greatest pursuit for which any believer may strive. There are some powerful blessings of God for one who pursues the life of a true Grace Age Biblical separatist.

QUESTION #2 – What has been the main problem with this doctrine?

The main problem, when it comes to this doctrine, all through the history of the church is twofold: 1) Precisely <u>understanding</u> the Word of God; 2) Precisely <u>applying</u> the Word of God.

Matters pertaining to precise boundary and division lines become the main issue. One person or group thinks it should <u>withdraw</u> from one thing and another person or group thinks it should <u>withdraw</u> from something else. Thus, battleground boundary lines are formed.

In my understanding of these matters in Church history, all could be resolved by a <u>precise</u> understanding of what God has written and a precise application of what God has written.

We may cite a couple of Church history examples that will establish this point, one from Bible history and the other from Church history.

Example #1 - We know there was a great misunderstanding and misapplication of the separatist principle in the <u>Corinthian</u> church. The Corinthians thought they were to separate themselves from the <u>unsaved</u> world and have nothing to do with it. Paul wrote to the Corinthians and clarified the fact that he meant they were to separate themselves from a sinful <u>brother</u>, not the lost world **(I Cor. 5:11-13)**. Clearly a lack of precision in understanding God's Word and lack of proper application of it was the core of the problem. Once God's Word was precisely under-stood, proper application and separation could be made.

Example #2 - In the annals of Church history, we are able to cite many examples, which we will discuss more in depth later. Obviously the hermit monks, who isolated themselves from the world in their monasteries, carried the idea of separation to an extreme form never intended by the written Word of God.

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One of the more interesting illustrations from Church history comes from one of the greatest theologians who ever lived, Aurelius <u>Augustine</u>, the famed Bishop of Hippo (A.D. 354-430). Augustine is unquestionably one of the great names of Church history. His development of <u>theology</u> is still the foundation of contemporary theological systems.

But when it came to the doctrine of the <u>Church</u>, especially as it related to separation, he had a very unique perspective. Augustine believed that the visible, organized church was holy and separated regardless of whether or not its members were. Augustine reasoned that the church had been established by the apostles and therefore the church was holy and separated regardless of the spiritual <u>condition</u> of its members.

The separatist groups (i.e. Donatists) argued that if the <u>members</u> of the church weren't separated and living holy lives, neither was the church holy in God's estimation. Dr. Pickering said, "The Catholic Church extended then (through Augustine) and still does to this day that the church's holiness exists whether or not its members are holy. The Donatists, on the other hand, believed that every church which tolerated unworthy members in its bosom was itself polluted by the communion with them and it thus ceased to be a true Christian church…" (*Biblical Separation*, p. 17).

Now how do we determine who is right and who is wrong on this issue? **We must turn to the <u>written</u> Scriptures and base our conclusions on what God's Word actually <u>says</u>.** Is it possible that a church would always be special and separated to God regardless of what its membership was like? In order for God to deem a church as one He would actually use and bless, would its membership be responsible to live godly, holy lives?

If we turn to the written Word of God that specifically deals with this issue, we may form a Biblical conclusion to this issue. For example, Jesus Christ specifically warned the great church in Ephesus that if its membership did not get back to their first love, He would "remove your lampstand out of its place" (**Rev. 2:5**). If the members did not repent, God warns that He will shut the church down from being a shining testimony of His presence. We may conclude, then, that the behavior of the membership was a critical factor of Biblical separation. In the same context, Jesus told the church of Thyatira that He was the one who searched the minds and hearts of individual members (**Rev. 2:23**). This sits in a context of Jesus warning the church that He would start executing people who did not repent of their immorality and live holy, separated lives. It is the members that make the church holy. Perhaps no greater point can be made than from the church of Laodicea, which Jesus says He will spit out of His mouth because no member in the church was even saved (**Rev. 3:16-17**).

Augustine was <u>wrong</u> on this point. God's Word resolves it. If the people in the church are not living holy lives based on God's Word, the whole church is "leavened" in God's view (**I Cor. 5:7**). God does not view the church as holy and pure just because He established it; He requires that its leaders and membership make adjustments to be holy and separated. **It is precise understanding of God's Word that truly resolves all problems concerning the doctrine of election, even those in Church history.**

BIBLICAL SEPARATION (5)

QUESTION #3 – What are the main arguments against Biblical separation?

As we would expect, even though separation is Biblical, it is also <u>opposed</u>. In this day when the stress is "love everyone regardless" and "peace at any cost," both of which ideas are anti-Bible and anti-God, the idea of separating oneself today is, as John Miles said, the most <u>feared</u> word in the vocabulary of the Christian (John Miles, *The Tightrope of Separation*, p. 1).

This study will prove that God <u>demands</u> His people be separated from many things and from many kinds of people. To state this another way, no matter how unloving it may seem or how unpleasant or unpeaceful it may be, there are times when a Biblical separation <u>must</u> occur. Naturally, in today's society, this message will not be too <u>popular</u> and it will have its share of opponents.

As near as we may determine, there are three main arguments that attack the doctrine of separation:

<u>**Argument #1**</u> **-** Separation promotes <u>division</u>.

The basic premise behind this is that if a doctrine of separation is taught, then it fosters divisions between people and divisive attitudes toward people.

One simple response to this is that is <u>exactly</u> what the doctrine is supposed to do. If the separation is Biblically based, then it is specifically designed to draw a sharp dividing line. Promoting and fostering a division between one thing and another is precisely what separation is.

<u>**Argument #2**</u> **-** Separation exalts <u>doctrine</u>.

The basic premise behind this is that it exalts minor doctrines and makes them a test of fellow-ship.

For example, one group says they believe you may lose your salvation and some would say this is such a minor point as long as they are saved. This is not a minor point; it is a major point and we have a strong Biblical mandate that we are to separate ourselves from any person who tampers with the Gospel, specifically as it relates to the pure grace of God that is only found by faith, not works, in Jesus Christ **(Gal. 1:6-9)**.

The more <u>precise</u> people are in their doctrine, the more mature and stable they are in their faith. One who is more mature and stable is in a great position to determine whether or not the separation is, in fact, <u>Biblical</u>.

One question worth raising is who decides if the doctrine is major or minor? What are the criteria? The truth is doctrine needs to be exalted today because it is being lost. **A high exalta-tion of true Biblical doctrine will always lead one to understand true Biblical <u>separation</u>.**

Argument #3 - Separation promotes lack of communication.

The basic premise behind this argument is that separation tends to not communicate with those with whom it disagrees. In other words, it does not keep communication lines open with those from whom it separates.

In the course of this study we will examine many passages that deal with separation and we will observe that **there is no evidence that part of the criteria for separating is to see to it that you maintain good lines of communication with those from whom you are separating**. For example, we have no responsibility to tell a heretic anything.

Just a brief look at a few Bible passages verifies this point: **I Cor. 5:4-7; II Cor. 6:14-18; Gal. 1:6-9; II Thess. 3:4-15; II Tim. 3:5; Titus 3:9-10; II John 10**.

We would admit there are times when there may be or should be some communication with certain people, from whom fellowship is about to be severed. However, to assume that the individual and the church has the responsibility to keep lines of communication open and flowing with those who have done great harm is an assumption not found in Scripture. Once a Biblical separation has occurred, there does not need to be any further communication until there has been repentance. If it may be established that true repentance has occurred, then lines of communication may be opened once again.

QUESTION #4 – May we establish a legitimate Biblical mandate for separation?

If one interprets the Bible literally and takes it seriously, it will be easily seen that separation is most definitely a Biblical concept in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is a concept that transcends law and grace. Clearly God is a God of separation.

Category #1 - Biblical separation in the Old Testament.

1) **Genesis 12:1** - The nation Israel begins by a clean break of separation.

2) **Genesis 13:9, 11** - Abraham and Lot separated due to size (**13:6**) and strife (**13:7**).

3) **Genesis 30:40** - Jacob separated his herd which God has blessed from Laban's herd.

4) **Leviticus 15:31** - There was a temporal separation from something unclean, which was both both literal and physical, so God's tabernacle would not be defiled.

5) **Leviticus 20:24** - Israel had been separated from all other people by God.

6) **Leviticus 20:25-26** - God's people were to separate themselves from things God demanded so He could classify them as holy.

7) **Leviticus 22:2-3** - God warns priests to never attempt to minister if there were any uncleanness, but he needed to separate himself from service until evening **(22:7)**.

8) **Numbers 6:2, 3, 5, 6** - There were certain things from which one could temporarily separate himself in order to have a special ministry.

9) **Numbers 8:14** - God separates certain people to minister for Him **(I Tim. 1:12; I Cor. 12:28; I Pet. 4:10-11)**.

10) **Numbers 16:9** - God separates certain people for specific kinds of ministries and they should be thankful for the privilege of it.

11) **Deuteronomy 10:8** - God separates certain people from the rest for sacred service and ministry.

12) **Deuteronomy 19:2, 7** - God demands that three cities be separated from the rest as cities of refuge.

13) **Deuteronomy 29:19-21** - If a person were to continue to walk in stubborn rebellion against God, while claiming to be at peace with God, God will separate this one for divine judgment which includes blotting out his name from any Jewish land inheritance which is given under heaven and will cause many adverse things to happen.

14) **Deuteronomy 32:8** - God separated Israel from all other people and has separated their land boundaries.

15) **I Kings 8:52-53** - God has separated Israel from all the peoples of the earth as His special inheritance.

16) **I Chronicles 12:8** - There were non-Israelis who separated themselves unto David and fought with him and for him.

17) **I Chronicles 25:1** - David separated certain specific people for the Lord's ministry.

18) **II Chronicles 25:10** - Amaziah separated Israel from Judah because God would not give victory if the two stayed together and fought together **(25:7-8)**. We may observe that Israel was not one big happy family. God was with one group and not the other.

19) **Ezra 6:21** - The children of Israel who separated themselves from their impurities were restored to wonderful fellowship with God **(6:22)**. God did good things when people moved His way.

20) **Ezra 8:24** – Twelve specific priests were separated to care for the treasury. Ezra was involved in the process **(8:25-30)** and those who cared for the offering were holy as was the offering.

21) **Ezra 9:1** - God's people had failed to separate themselves from the peoples of the land and had intermarried with them and Ezra was appalled **(Ezra 9:4)**.

22) **Ezra 10:8** - Those who would not come to worship in Jerusalem in three days would be separated from the rest of the nation.

23) **Ezra 10:11** - Israel was to separate herself from Gentile people and foreign wives.

24) **Nehemiah 9:2** - Israel separated herself from all foreigners and confessed their sins, thus separating herself from them as well.

25) **Nehemiah 10:28** - Those of Israel who did separate themselves from various people are those with knowledge and understanding, who do obey God's Word **(10:29)**.

26) **Nehemiah 13:3** - Israel separated from "all foreigners" because she wants the blessings of God **(13:2)**.

27) **Nehemiah 13:26** - It was a refusal of Solomon to separate himself from foreign women that caused him to sin.

28) **Isaiah 56:3** - Even the foreigner who separates himself unto God will discover he has an inseparable relationship with God.

29) **Isaiah 59:2** - Sin causes a separation between God and man. If man does not separate himself from his sin, he is separated from God.

30) **Ezekiel 14:7** - The Israelite who separates himself from God is one who will face a very serious judgment of God **(14:8)**.

From this brief overview of some O.T. passages, we may certainly see that separation is a Biblical doctrine. Many O.T. passages support the idea that **the believer is to be separated from sinful things and sinful people in order for sacred service and in order to receive the blessings of God**.

Category #2 - Biblical separation in the New Testament.

Even though the principle of separation is clearly seen in the Old Testament, our doctrine of separation must always be based on filtering truth through the Grace Age New Testament. **When the program of God is national, things are much different than when it is individual.**

For example, in the O.T. it was perfectly legitimate for Israel to separate itself from lost heathen Gentiles. In the N.T., it is perfectly legitimate for individual believers to reach out to lost heathen Gentiles. Obviously there has been some change in the outworking of the program of God.

We will carefully examine key passages in the course of this study; but for now, we cite some basic Grace Age separation expectations:

(Separation Expectation #1) - An individual Grace Age believer is expected by God to separate himself from personal <u>sin</u>. **Col. 3:8-9; I Tim. 5:22; 6:11**

The responsibility for dealing with personal sin falls directly to each one of us. We cannot blame someone else for our sin; we must face it ourselves and separate ourselves from it.

(Separation Expectation #2) - An individual Grace Age believer is expected by God to separate himself from <u>worldliness</u>. **I John 2:15; Rev. 18:4**

The world from which we are to separate ourselves and not to love is the world system that is headed by Satan that is in opposition to God and leaves Him and His Word out. One of the first students of Dr. Chafer was John Mitchell, who said one letter of the alphabet makes all the difference between believers and it is the letter "I." "Love the world" or take the "l" out of world and "Love the Word."

(Separation Expectation #3) - An individual Grace Age believer is expected by God to separate himself from <u>sinning</u> believers. **Matt. 18:15-17; II Thess. 3:14-15**

(Separation Expectation #4) - An individual Grace Age believer is expected by God to separate himself from false <u>teaching</u> and false <u>teachers</u>. **Rom. 16:17-18; I Tim. 6:3-5; II Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 3:9-11; II John 10-11**

(Separation Expectation #5) - An individual Grace Age believer is expected by God to separate himself from <u>fleshly lusts</u>. **I Pet. 2:11**

All the water in the world cannot sink a ship unless the water gets inside. All evil sin in the world cannot sink a believer unless the sin gets inside.

(Separation Expectation #6) - An individual Grace Age believer is expected by God to separate himself from his old self. **Eph. 4:17-32; Col. 3:5**

God wants us separating ourselves from our former lusts and lifestyle. In fact, we are to consider ourselves dead to these kinds of things.

QUESTION #5 – What are the extremes we want to avoid when it comes to Biblical separation?

Separation can be <u>Biblical</u>, but it also can be <u>fanatical</u>. When it comes to separation, caution is always demanded. There are at least four extremes we need to avoid pertaining to this doctrine:

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Extreme #1 - We must avoid the extreme of <u>asceticism</u>.

There have been those in the Church Age who have believed that Biblical separation means that we should withdraw ourselves completely from the world. As Mr. Miles observed, there have been those who "became hermits, went to monasteries, caves, deserts and the wilderness. They said we must get away from man and pleasures; give up all comforts; then we will be separate to God" (John Miles, *The Tightrope of Separation*, p. 6).

We are called to live in this world, not to isolate ourselves from it. We are in different schools, jobs and families by sovereign appointment of God. It is our job to reach the world, not hide out from it. Asceticism is a very dangerous, extreme, and unbiblical form of separation.

Extreme #2 - We must avoid the extreme of <u>legalism</u>.

We may understand legalism to be that man-made system of rules and regulations which prohibits or promotes certain things which are not found in the Word of God.

There are many who believe if one will separate himself from certain man-made religious things, it will make one spiritual. Again, as Mr. Miles said, "Legalism will never answer anything. Getting rid of things may make an outward show, but it will leave the life empty, void, disillu-sioned, and it will encourage pride" (*Ibid*., p. 6).

Legalism is another extreme that needs to be avoided in forming a Biblical perspective of separation.

Extreme #3 - We must avoid the extreme of <u>compromise</u>.

Again we cite Mr. Miles on this point: "Compromise says that we must not only befriend the world and reach people, but we must unite with it, fraternize with the enemies of God, be a great deal like the world. Someone has called it infiltration. God never told the believer to infiltrate. He must be distinct from the world. But this attitude says we must try to make ourselves and Christianity attractive to the world by playing down differences and ignoring Biblical principles and methods. The result is that the world is not changed, but the believer is. This is capitulation to the world and conformance" (*Ibid*., p. 6).

Perhaps a powerful example of this in our day is those churches who believe that it is necessary to compromise pulpit ministries in an attempt to reach the world. Time after time God has said in His Word that the church is to be a place that carefully preaches and teaches God's Word and God's doctrines. Compromise says it doesn't matter whether we feed the flock as long as we infiltrate the world. Compromise is a dangerous extreme that must be avoided.

BIBLICAL SEPARATION (11)

Extreme #4 - We must avoid the extreme of <u>endorsement</u>.

Endorsement is a very careless approach to life as opposed to a very careful approach to life. Some people endorse others regardless of their doctrinal perspective. Some people will endorse things they have no God-ordained business of endorsing. When the church begins to let its guard down and does not carefully govern and guide its flock, it becomes polluted. Usually people who fall into this trap have very little understanding of the importance of true Biblical separation.

Churches must be very careful to endorse things because their sheep may be affected. Whether it be a promotion of counseling, some program, some seminar, some system of education and even theological institutions and missionaries, prayerful consideration must be given prior to any endorsement.

These are four critical extremes that must be avoided in Biblical separation.

QUESTION #6 – What is the actual basis for Biblical separation?

This is a very important question to ask and answer. **The Biblical basis for all separation, whether personal or ecclesiastical, is the <u>holiness</u> of God.** This truly is the ground for Biblical separation because God has clearly stated, "but like the <u>Holy</u> One who called you, be <u>holy</u> your-selves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be Holy for I am <u>holy</u>'" **(I Pet. 1:15-16)**.

The holiness of God means that God is absolutely and perfectly separated from evil and sin in everything He does and in everything He is. God's holiness means God is always absolutely and perfectly pure. This is what God is internally and this is what God does externally. Dr. Charles Ryrie said, "In respect to God, holiness means not only that He is separate from all that is unclean and evil but also that He is positively pure and thus distinct from all others" (*Basic Theology*, p. 38).

The basic meaning of the word "holy" is <u>set apart</u> or to be <u>separated</u>. What this means is that God is completely set apart and separated from all other existences in His purity and from any evil. It is very clear from even the word "holy" that Biblical separation begins right here at the character of God.

When it comes to God's holiness, there are four types of holiness:

Holiness Type #1 - God has <u>majestic</u> holiness.

This is a reference to the holiness of God which makes Him absolutely separate and unapproachable in His holiness. God is so majestically holy and separated that no one can even approach Him, in and of themselves. Several passages of Scripture describe this type:

1) **Exodus 15:11** – "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?"

2) **I Samuel 2:2** – "There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, nor is there any rock like our God."

3) **Job 15:14-15** – "What is man, that he should be pure, Or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones, And the heavens are not pure in His sight."

4) **Isaiah 57:15a** – "For this says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I dwell on a high and holy place."

5) **Psalm 99:9** – "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His holy hill; for holy is the LORD our God."

6) **Psalm 111:9** – "He has sent redemption to His people; He has ordained His covenant forever; Holy and awesome is His name."

7) **Revelation 15:4** – "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy…"

God's majestic holiness means God is majestically separated from everything. This certainly forms a basis for recognizing that separation is Biblical and it also forms a basis for realizing that the ultimate separatist is God and none of us will ever be at His level of holiness.

Holiness Type #2 - God has moral holiness.

This is the type of holiness that means God is completely separated and set apart from all moral sin and evil. **The moral holiness of God emphasizes his purity rather than His majesty.**

There are several texts that describe this type of holiness.

1) **Job 34:10** - "Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to do wrong."

2) **Habakkuk 1:12-13** - "Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, My Holy One?... Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor."

3) **I John 1:5 -** "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."

God is completely separated from evil. He is totally pure. No darkness exists for He is totally separated from evil. Again we see it is the holiness of God that becomes the basis for forming a doctrine of Biblical separation.

Holiness Type #3 - God has judicial holiness.

This is that part of God's holiness that demands penalty and payment for sin and that part of it that provides a legal and judicial means of salvation for the sinner.

God is so separated in His holiness that He not only cannot tolerate sin, He must judge sin. Such terms as "righteousness," "redemption," propitiation," and "justification" are all terms connected to the judicial side of God's holiness (**Rom. 3:23-26**).

It is the judicial side of God's holiness that will be the reason for His judgments–whether salvation or condemnation, whether rewards or loss of rewards.

Holiness Type #4 - God has practical holiness.

This is the part of God's holiness that may be, to a certain extent, imparted to others. When it comes to the judicial side of things, it is the positional work of the Holy Spirit that must sanctify the person (Spirit baptism) so that God's legal issues may be met. But the practical side of God's holiness is that side which permits God to command His people to be holy with the full expectation that they will become holy (**Lev. 11:44; I Pet. 1:15-16**). However, we must also note that in **I Pet. 1:15-16**, the command to be holy is a passive tense verb, which means it is actually the Holy Spirit that one must rely to produce the action of becoming holy.

It is very apparent that "separation" is rooted in the holiness of God. The words of Dr. Ernest Pickering are very valuable on this point: "God's demands upon His people are based upon His own standards. Truth and holiness are inseparable companions. If God is separate from evil, He expects His people to be so. …God's holiness demands not only holy individuals but also holy congregations. …Certainly we cannot achieve the purity that God alone possesses, nor can we even achieve perfect purity on a relative human scale; nevertheless, our goal and objective is purity" (*Biblical Separation*, p. 167).

The truth is we have all fallen short of all of the types of God's holiness.

QUESTION #7 – What are the various types of separation?

This is a somewhat difficult question to answer, but we may at least gain some working know-ledge of this issue by attempting to answer it. Generally speaking, there are two types of separation:

Separation Type #1 - There is personal separation.

Personal separation may be understood to mean things from which a person personally separates him or herself as he/she develops in the Christian life, in order that one may be classified as holy.

Now when analyzing a personal separation, we may do so under two main categories:

(Category #1) – Separation that is <u>primary</u>.

What a person decides to separate himself from which is scripturally sinful, wrong and evil may be classified as primary separation.

Every believer is personally responsible to God to separate himself from certain people and things in a primary way:

1) A believer is not to be mismated or mismatched with <u>unbelievers</u>. **II Cor. 6:14**

2) A believer is to be separated from <u>religious</u> services which are idolatrous. **II Cor. 6:15-17**

3) A believer is to separate himself from one who causes <u>dissensions</u> contrary to sound teaching.
   Rom. 16:17

4) A believer is to separate himself from professing brothers or sisters who <u>persist</u> in sin.
    I Cor. 5:13

5) A believer is to separate himself from sinful things and anything that may <u>lead</u> him into sin.
    I Cor. 6:18; I Pet. 2:11

This is a category that is primary.

(Category #2) – Separation that is <u>secondary</u>.

Secondary separation may be understood as separating oneself from others who are not consis-tently involved with those who are solid in their faith.

Let me see if I may illustrate the point. Years ago, one of the great Bible teachers, Donald Grey Barnhouse, was visiting Dallas Theological Seminary. He spoke in chapel and then was a guest lecturer in one of the classes. A question and answer time was held during which Barnhouse was asked this question: "Dr. Barnhouse, how do you justify your continued presence within the Presbyterian denomination in light of the apostasy into which it has fallen?" Later, a student wrote Dr. Barnhouse and asked him the same question. Here was his written reply: "Thank you for your letter which I read with great interest. Concerning my affiliation with the Presbyterian Church, I take the position that "come out from among them and be ye separate…" does not refer to the denomination, but rather to pagan temples. My basis for staying in is in Revelation 3:2 where we are told to strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die. The Lord told me to feed His lambs and His sheep and I am not given the right to make specifications about the fold in which the sheep are to be found. For better or worse, more than 90% of the Lord's sheep are in the denominations. I, as a Bible teacher, must stay in and feed them" (*Ibid*., pp. 199-200).

In discussing this matter with Mr. Miles years ago, who knew of Dr. Barnhouse, he reminded me that Barnhouse' church in Philadelphia was fundamental. It may have been in the Presbyterian denomination, but Barnhouse himself filled the church through his exposition of the Scriptures. Furthermore, in this case, Dr. Barnhouse misinterprets Revelation 3:2. Revelation 3:2 was written to a true church, not an apostate church; therefore, remaining in the apostate denomination is not something sanctioned by this text.

Two great men in church history who broke away from this very denomination because of its corruption were Lewis Sperry Chafer, who founded Dallas Theological Seminary and J. Gresham Machen, who founded Westminster Theological Seminary.

But here is the point of the illustration. Some people would not associate with Donald Grey Barnhouse because of his association with the Presbyterian Church. It was not Barnhouse who was sinful, it was not even his church that was sinful; but because of its connection to the Presbyterian denomination, some separated themselves from Dr. Barnhouse and would not fellowship with him. This is what is meant by secondary separation.

There is no question that it is <u>Biblically</u> possible to link ourselves to someone who gives us the classification of being sinful, rather than holy **(I Tim. 5:22)**.

<u>Separation Type #2</u> - There is <u>ecclesiastical</u> separation.

Under this type of separation, there are two main headings:

(Heading #1) - Ecclesiastical separation from <u>individuals</u>.

In ecclesiastical separation from individuals, the entire church chooses to separate itself from an individual. The Bible makes it clear that there are times when this kind of separation needs to be implemented. It is the responsibility of the <u>elders</u> to determine when such separations are necessary and it is the responsibility of the <u>congregation</u> to carry it out.

The leadership of a church has a God-ordered responsibility to <u>guard</u> their flock from savage wolves that can do the ministry great harm **(Acts 20:17, 28-29)**. When the leadership determines that it is God's will to separate from an individual, the congregation does have the responsibility to <u>obey</u> the leadership **(Heb. 13:17)**.

Under this heading of ecclesiastical separation from individuals, it is very clear that **God expects His Church to separate themselves from unrepentant, habitually sinning believers**.

There are four major passages of Scripture that specifically teach this point:

1) **Matthew 18:15-17**; 2) **Romans 16:17-18**; 3) **I Corinthians 5:11**; 4) **II Thessalonians 3:14-15**

Now when it comes to the actual logistics of such separation, there are five major considerations:

BIBLICAL SEPARATION (16)

Consideration #1 - There are times when a specific process should be <u>followed</u>.
                 Matt. 18:15-17

Consideration #2 - There are times when a specific process should be <u>avoided</u>. **I Cor. 5:4-5**

Consideration #3 - When separation is necessary, the <u>entire</u> church should separate from the individual. **II Thess. 3:6, 14**

Consideration #4 - When separation is necessary, the entire church should <u>pray</u> for the individual. **I John 5:16**

Consideration #5 - When true repentance has been determined by the Elders, it is their responsibility to move the process toward <u>restoration</u>. **II Cor. 2:6-8**

In the restoration case of II Corinthians, there are certain important observations to make:

(Observation #1) - In this case, excommunication was sufficient punishment to bring the sinning believer to <u>repentance</u>. **II Cor. 2:6a**

(Observation #2) - In this case, the punishment and the severing of fellowship was carried out by the <u>majority</u> but apparently not by <u>all</u>. **II Cor. 2:6b**

Apparently there were a <u>few</u> carnal believers in Corinth who did not follow through with Paul's command (**I Cor. 5:11**). God certainly keeps <u>records</u> of such disobedience and apparently, according to **Heb. 13:17**, will bring it to light some day at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

(Observation #3) - In this case, the proof of true repentance took between 1-2 <u>years</u>.

I Corinthians was written somewhere near A.D. 56 and II Corinthians was written somewhere near A.D. 57-58. Watching the person over time determined the fact of repentance.

(Observation #4) - In this case, the leader who <u>issued</u> the discipline (Paul - **I Cor. 5:5**), is the same leader who could <u>lift</u> the discipline. **II Cor. 2:8; Matt. 18:19-20**

(Observation #5) - When the discipline is lifted, the <u>entire</u> church should forgive and comfort the repentant believer. **II Cor. 2:7**

(Observation #6) - When true repentance has taken place, there is a <u>broken</u> and <u>sorrowful</u> spirit.
                 II Cor. 2:5, 7; Heb. 12:5-11

(Observation #7) - God permits discipline cases to come to leadership and to a church to establish the fact that a church <u>obeys</u> the written Word even in tough assignments. **II Cor. 2:9**

Dr. Ernest Pickering does a good job discussing many critical matters pertaining to a separation from an individual. He lists the following reasons for it:

Reason #1 - If the believer <u>teaches</u> false doctrine and <u>refuses</u> to be corrected.

Pickering says, "If a professing believer is teaching error and he cannot be persuaded to the truth, he must be excluded from the fellowship" (*Biblical Separation: The Struggle for a Pure Church*, p. 219).

Dr. Pickering uses **I Tim. 1:18-20** as an example of two who had departed from sound doctrine who Paul "delivered to Satan," which was part of Pauline excommunication.

He further states, "The principle applies whether the professing believer is in our own local church or in some other kind of connectional relationship to us, such as denominational affiliation (*Ibid*., p. 219).

Reason #2 - If a professing believer is walking in <u>immorality</u>. **I Cor. 5:1, 13**

I personally know of a situation in which a key man of a church was living with a woman and did not want to marry because of financial reasons. He wanted to be accepted in the church and actually wanted the church to have some ceremony sanctioning their immoral situation. When the pastor took a stand against this immoral behavior, some in leadership stood against the pastor. From God's perspective, the pastor shines bright and the church is totally leavened.

Dr. Pickering said, "Unity and fellowship cannot be maintained when there is unconfessed sin in the camp. The pure witness of the church is sullied thereby, and separation from such a person is the only course of action" (*Ibid*., p. 219).

Reason #3 - If by cooperating with a believing leader who is walking contrary to Scripture, we would become <u>partakers</u> of wrongdoing. **I Tim. 5:22**

Dr. Pickering writes: "Here again is a principle which flows out of specific instruction. A servant of God may contaminate his own testimony by giving public recognition or endorsement to another who, though a brother in Christ (the verse does not speak of apostates), nevertheless is not maintaining a walk that is pleasing to God (*Ibid*., p. 220).

Reason #4 - If the professing believer is walking in a <u>disruptive</u> manner. **II Thess. 3:6-15**

"Some believers were disregarding the apostolic instructions. They are referred to as 'disorderly' **(vv. 6, 7, 11)**. The word is a military one and was used of soldiers who marched out of step or who broke rank. …The principle is this: Where our brethren do things which are wrong–caused by an incomplete knowledge of or deliberate disobedience to some teaching of Scripture–we should not merely continue to fellowship with them as those who have done nothing wrong, but we should warn them, remonstrate with them and seek to recover them to a Biblical position" (*Ibid*., p. 221).

BIBLICAL SEPARATION (18)

In the immediate context of **II Thessalonians 3**, the disorderly matter was refusing to work. These believers were pestering and bothering other believers and causing problems because they had too much time on their hands and did not work like the other believers. There is no doubt that some real problem people in the church can be those who don't work and then spend their time being a nuisance to the church. There are six key Biblical questions to ask in this matter of separation:

(Question #1) - If we continue to fellowship with this brother or sister, am I a <u>companion</u> of one who fears God and truly desires to keep His precepts? **Ps. 119:63**

(Question #2) - Can I truly <u>honor</u> God with my fellowship with this brother or sister, or is this one who is not truly interested in the Word or will of God? **I Cor. 10:31**

(Question #3) - If we fellowship with this person, do we aid in <u>encouraging</u> them to continue to walk in their same path of disobedience? **I Tim. 5:22**

(Question #4) - Will my cooperation with this person or organization give the impression that I <u>condone</u> a lackadaisical attitude toward the apostasy or sin and send a message that I do not really fear the Lord and hate the evil? **Prov. 8:13**

(Question #5) - Will others, who I <u>influence</u>, be tempted to further compromise or be confused or weakened in their testimony because of my action to fellowship? **I Cor. 8:12**

(Question #6) - What long range effects will this fellowship have? One person wisely said, "Never sacrifice the <u>permanent</u> on the altar of the <u>immediate</u>."

<u>**Separation Type #3**</u> **-** There is church separation from other <u>churches</u>.

In the book of Revelation, in the Great Tribulation, is the description of a religious harlot that will lure many and ultimately be completely destroyed by God. Many believe that this harlot is the Islamic religion. **The admonition given to God's people in the Tribulation is found in Rev. <u>18:4</u>.** It is very clear from this text that when God starts pouring out His judgment on a religion or religious institution that is false, God's people in no way want to be connected to it.

We also know that this very same principle is given to the church in the Church Age, specifically to the <u>Corinthian</u> church. Paul admonishes that church to have nothing to do with religious systems that are corrupt and demonic **(I Cor. 10:20-22; II Cor. 6:15-7:1; 11:3-4, 13-15)**.

A church or a person who presents "another" Gospel other than the pure grace of God in Christ Jesus is to be <u>accursed</u>, not befriended **(Gal. 1:8-9)**. When a church or religion is spotted which is not carefully, clearly and accurately presenting God's Word, it should be marked and <u>avoided</u> **(II John 10-11)**.

A believer is expected by God to identify and <u>separate</u> himself from heretical churches, religious institutions and religious teachings. There are certain observations we make in spotting a heretical church, heretical instruction and a heretical person.

(Observation #1) - Heretical instruction will feature <u>another</u> gospel. **Gal. 1:6-7**

The pronoun "another" (ετερος) means another of a different kind. This is a critical point to know because a heretic will present a message of salvation that is different than the pure grace of God. A heretic will make salvation dependent on your works or will try to infuse works into grace.

(Observation #2) - Heretical instruction and institutions are <u>demonic</u>. **I Tim. 4:1; I Cor. 10:20**

People need to realize that when they willingly go to a religious ceremony or service that is not true to God or His Word, they are entering that which is satanic and demonic.

(Observation #3) - Heretical instruction and institutions are led by <u>liars</u>. **I Tim. 4:2; II Pet. 2:1-3**

These kinds of religious people and places are destructive, sensual, greedy liars. In **II Pet. 2:1-3**, two grammatical points are worthy of note: 1) Two words are used to describe them–"false prophets" and "false teachers" who give false instruction; 2) The word "destruction" which is repeated three times in three verses is a word connected to loss of eternal life or hell. What Peter is revealing is that religious institutions and instruction that is not presenting the truth of God will actually lead both leaders and people into hell. As believers we want to stay far away from such people and religious places.

(Observation #4) - Heretical instruction and institutions <u>oppose</u> Divine authority. **Jude 8**

The verb "reject" (αθετεω) means these false people continually (present tense) reject, set aside and disregard the character and quality of any Divine authority. This includes the authority of the Word of God, the authority of one accurately communicating the Word of God and even the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. What we need to realize is that those who refuse to submit to the authority of the Word of God are those who are living in total opposition to any authority of God. As believers we do not want to associate with these kinds of people or in these kinds of religious places. In any religious setting, if the Word of God is not taken seriously as the authoritative, inspired Word, then we are to have nothing to do with it.

(Observation #5) - Heretical instruction and institutions are spiritually <u>dead</u> and produce no good or real <u>fruit</u>. **Jude 12**

False systems of religion are demonic and dangerous. The leaders will lead people to spiritual areas that have no solid roots which produce no fruit and which are the ways of death.

BIBLICAL SEPARATION (20)

Some people believe all religions are good. Nothing could be further from the truth. Any religion that is not focused on the Truth of God is evil.

(Observation #6) - Heretical instruction and institutions appear to be very <u>pious</u> and <u>religious</u>.
II Tim. 3:5; II Cor. 11:13-15

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. We must always evaluate religious things by the truth of the written Word of God for Satan plays his greatest game in the arena of religion. **When we spot religious institutions that are moving away from God's Word, we need to move away from them.** Dr. Ernest Pickering made the following observations (*Biblical Separation*, pp. 159-162).

1) Apostasy is very <u>serious</u>. God's <u>anger</u> burns against it.

2) Apostasy is definable and <u>discoverable</u>. God has plainly outlined it in His Word.

3) Apostasy is pervasive and <u>progressive</u>. It is like leaven or gangrene that will work until the whole is spoiled. **Matt. 13:33**

4) Apostasy awaits <u>judgment</u>. **II Pet. 2:17, 21; Jude 11-15**
   In none of these passages is there any hint or hope that apostasy will be checked and truth will triumph.

5) Apostasy will come to full fruition during the <u>Tribulation</u> with Babylon. **Rev. 17ff.**

It is the responsibility of the individual and the church to discover and denounce heresy and heretics. Separation is demanded by God and those who refuse will one day discover they have incensed the anger of God.

When we read a text such as **Ps. 26:4-5**, it is very evident that King David would not even sit down and talk with deceitful pretenders who were wicked. King David made an individual and collective decision to separate himself from such people. Notice from this text that the noun "men" is plural and the noun "assembly" speaks of a group gathering. David was a man after God's own heart and one of the reasons why is because he separated himself from certain things and people.

There are four key concluding considerations on this matter of separation:

<u>Consideration #1</u> – There are certain things from which <u>every</u> believer is expected to separate.

Matters of sin which are clearly stated in the Word of God or any false doctrine or heresy are things God expects every believer to make separatist decisions.

It is imperative that separation be based on that which is Biblically <u>written</u>. Usually separatists are people with strong convictions about something and it becomes very difficult for these people to draw a distinction between their opinions and true Biblical principles or statements. Opinions and convictions may or may not be Biblical, so we must always stick to the written Word of God in our separatist determinations.

A key valid question that a truly God-honoring separatist will be willing to ask and answer is "Can I base this <u>decision</u> of separation on clear definitive principles from the Word of God?"

Even though a separatist may be emotional, it does not automatically make a separatist Biblical. God-honoring separatists will always be interested in asking, "What says the Scriptures?"

<u>**Consideration #2**</u> **-** Leadership must make separatist decisions to protect the <u>purity</u> of the church. **I Cor. 5:7; Rev. 2:14-16, 20-23**

Let me cite a recent example from the history of Texas Corners Bible Church. For years we have been a place that permits elections to be held in our church as one of the precincts. Things are now beginning to surface for election that has serious moral ramifications. If you vote one way, you vote for what pleases God and if you vote another way, you vote for that which is an abomination to God. As a Board, we have decided that we do not want anyone to be able to vote in this church for something that is immoral and therefore, we have contacted proper officials and informed them we will not let them use this church as a precinct. One of the responses we have received is that "all the other churches let us use their facility; this is your civic duty." What most don't realize is that we have a duty far above that which is civil; it is theological. We are responsible to God for the purity of the church and we will not permit some God-mocking person to walk into this facility and vote for something that is an abomination to the Living God.

<u>**Consideration #3**</u> **-** Leadership must make separatist decisions to <u>protect</u> the flock. **Acts 20:28-30**

Sooner or later a pastor and the elders will be forced to answer the question of separation for the flock. Sometimes these decisions are very clear-cut and relatively easy. Other times they are not.

In determining whether or not some connection to others will harm the majority, leaders must think through a variety of principles. One of the great illustrations from Scripture may be given from Mr. John Miles:

"God gave a book in the Old Testament to picture separation, the book of Nehemiah. We perhaps have asked, 'Why did God put such an emphasis on a wall?' It is because God is picturing something to us in the Old Testament which is His pattern for separation throughout the Word of God. There were some enemies of Israel, Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem. They hated those walls; they did everything they possibly could to stop the building of those walls, because those walls separated Israel from the heathen.

They didn't want separation; they wanted the plan of Satan, which was put all people together. They wanted amalgamation, infiltration. They hated separation because separation spoke to them of their sin. …They wanted to be part of the people of God without actually meeting God's conditions. Nehemiah said to them with boldness, 'You have no portion nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem' (you don't have anything to do with Jerusalem or with us). Those were strong words. Sanballat and Tobiah tried to laugh Nehemiah to scorn, to ridicule the walls into nonexistence. When this did not work, they accused Nehemiah of disloyalty to the king and with angry threats said, 'We are going to come with spears and with swords, and we will stop the building of this wall.' But the wall went right on. Then after the wall was built and Israel was a separated people, Nehemiah went back to the land of Babylon for a short time. When he returned to Jerusalem, he discovered that the people were so degenerated in their relationship with God that they had built Tobiah a room right in the temple, inside Jerusalem. They put the enemy of God in God's temple. Nehemiah exploded with righteous wrath and indignation and expelled him from the temple, cleansed that room, and took those people to task because they had lost their separated position. This is the lesson of the book of Nehemiah and the lesson of the entire Word of God" (*Tightrope of Separation*, p. 7).

Thank God Nehemiah held his ground. Thank God for godly leadership. Most of the people could not even see the danger of having fellowship with Tobiah, but Nehemiah saw it clearly and as a leader he took a bold stand and God honored him. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem tried to infiltrate through a lot of behind scenes communication with people–writing letters and verbal communication. But in the end, the people responded to the godly wisdom and leadership of Nehemiah and God was honored and blessed Israel. **It is very important to notice that a key to this was a focus on the written Word of God (Neh. 8:1-8, 13-14; 9:1-3)**. It is always a focus on the Word of God that will lead leaders and people to understand true Biblical separation.

Leadership must, at times, take a stand of separation against someone or something, especially when they know that it can harm the flock that God has entrusted to their care. This point has never really been called into question by most Biblically-minded people. However, the point of controversy concerns matters not specifically stated in Scripture.

Some have concluded that it is the judiciary responsibility of leadership to make separatist decisions on indifferent things, things the Bible does not specifically address. Others have concluded that it is not the judiciary responsibility of leadership to make separatist decisions on indifferent things.

For example, some believe leadership has the responsibility to compile a list of things not named in Scripture from which people should separate themselves, and others believe that on matters not specifically addressed in Scripture, the Holy Spirit must be given the freedom to develop the individual so that he forms his own spiritual convictions.

J. Oliver Buswell, in his Systematic Theology, cites a good example of this kind of thing:

BIBLICAL SEPARATION (23)

A church in China makes a rule that the use of opium by church members is wrong. The leadership is motivated by a danger in the culture and with a desire not to see its members become addicted to a certain dangerous drug. As a result, the leaders make this a mandate for church membership. The obvious assumption the leaders make is that unless they have a judiciary rule concerning opium, some church members will use opium because it is legal. It also assumes that this rule will cause some of the church members to abstain from the use of opium because it is an ecclesiastical regulation (*A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1, pp. 378-379).

Now at surface level this may appear to be a good thing the leaders are doing, but there are three major problems:

1) There are times when opium would not be wrong to use. For example, there are medicinal uses and purposes that are very legitimate. However, if such a mandate has been stated by church leadership, then the believer is faced with a decision to disobey church leadership.

I know of a faithful man of God, who loved Jesus Christ and the Word of God, who had some kidney issues and his doctor advised him to drink a beer every day. The problem was this man was in a church that had added a rule about drinking any alcoholic beverage. So the man was faced with a real problem–do you disobey church leadership or do you protect your health and obey the recommendation of the doctor? Well the man went to his pastor and told him straight up. The pastor agreed that if he could drive several miles to a place where he could get his beer, so no one else in the church would know, it was okay. This is exactly what the man did. In my view, this matter is Biblically addressed in **I Tim. 5:23**. It seems to me the leaders should simply stick with Scripture rather than invent non-biblical rules which could actually harm the flock. Certainly drunkenness is a sin, but total abstinence should not be a mandated rule in the church.

2) Whenever church leaders make rules not found in the Scriptures, they are adding to Scripture. To compile a list adds to what God has revealed in His Word and that is a very serious and very dangerous thing to do. When we consider a text such as **Rev. 22:18-19**, it would seem to me that leadership is far better off to stick with the written Scriptures rather than inventing things not in the Scriptures. The truth is I have known many people who know a lot more about their church rules than the written Word of God, which is a terrible disgrace.

3) Every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who is God. The Spirit of God moves a true child of God in a direction of holiness, which no man-made law can possibly accomplish. Laws tend to downplay dependency on and development by the Holy Spirit. Paul specifically addresses this issue in the book of Galatians. In fact, in **Gal. 5:18-23**, he contrasts those who live their lives walking by rules versus walking by the Spirit of God.

We would certainly agree that there are times when church leaders must make separatist decisions. For example, if there were a so-called brother who became idolatrous, then it does become the leaders responsibility to determine when that "so-called brother" crossed the line into idolatry that demands separation (**I Cor. 5:11**).

BIBLICAL SEPARATION (24)

Leaders are called to protect their flocks, and the leaders must be willing to prayerfully and carefully analyze Biblical principles regarding separatist issues.

One of the more contemporary and complicated illustrations of the complexity of the matter of separation concerns the ministry of Billy Graham. Some churches and ministries are totally supportive of Billy Graham and others are not. We think this is a good illustration worthy of careful examination and thought.

1) Billy Graham came to faith in Jesus Christ in 1934 at an evangelistic meeting.
2) He graduated from Wheaton College in 1943 and married Ruth Bell, daughter of a missionary to China.
3) He became a well-known evangelistic speaker for Youth for Christ.
4) In 1947, William B. Riley asked Billy Graham to succeed him as president of Northwestern College in Minneapolis, a small Christian school, but he soon realized he was not cut out to be president of a theological institution, but an evangelist.
5) In 1949, he rose to national prominence when he led an evangelistic crusade in Los Angeles.
6) In 1950, he brought together a talented team to form the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and he started a radio program he called "The Hour of Decision."
7) In 1952, he resigned as school president to devote himself to full-time evangelistic rallies in major cities of the world.

At this point it appears that most fundamental churches were behind him, but that would change in the next five years due to compromises made with liberals.

8) In 1957, in a New York crusade, Billy put on his crusade committee, Henry P. Van Dusen, president of Union Theological Seminary, who had written a book on "The Vindication of Liberal Theology."

9) In 1958, at the San Francisco crusade, Billy named as his co-chairman, Carl Howie, a leading liberal who, in his book The Old Testament Story, attacked creation, the flood and the miracles of Elisha.

10). In 1961, Billy Graham attended, as a friend, the New Delhi meeting of the World Council of Churches. This organization had been known to sanction witchcraft in the church.

11) In 1963, at the Los Angeles crusade, the noted liberal Methodist, Bishop Gerald Kennedy, was involved as one of its leaders.

12) In 1966, Billy Graham addressed the National Council of Churches in Miami. He praised some of the liberal ministers and he did not rebuke any of the false teachers who sat before him.

13) In 1968, at Belmont Abbey, Billy accepted an honorary doctorate from the Catholic institution in Belmont and was the main speaker at the Institute for Ecumenical Dialogue.

14) In 1969, the U.S. Congress on Evangelism met in Minneapolis, sponsored by Billy Graham. The event featured rock music and an address by civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy. A morning devotion was given by a Roman priest.

15) In 1971, a Roman Catholic priest participated in the crusade in Oakland.

16) In 1973, Billy Graham described that it had been a beautiful experience for him to participate at a funeral mass.

The big problem here is summed up well by Dr. Ernest Pickering: "The problem of Billy Graham is perhaps the toughest one that contemporary separatists have had to face. He is personable. He preaches the old message, 'Ye must be born again.' His ministry has touched millions and continues to do so. Many have been saved through his preaching. The average believer, hearing him on the radio or seeing his TV programs, only knows there is a stirring call to sinners to receive Christ. Why then are some preachers for him and others upset with him? Is he not a good man? Does he not preach Christ? These are natural reactions. To criticize a wonderful person like Billy Graham is like criticizing motherhood, the flag and country or even the Lord Himself. …But the issue is not Billy Graham. The issue is far deeper and more far reaching than merely a person. The issue is a scriptural one. It is not a question of whether or not we like Graham. It is a question of whether or not the philosophy of Christian work which he represents is a Biblical one. It is not a debate over the merits of a particular preacher, but a debate over the teaching of the Bible regarding separation from evil doctrine" (*Biblical Separation*, p. 144).

In the very unique case of Billy Graham, people have reasoned that it is legitimate to support him based on the fact that evangelism is aimed at all kinds of people.

Typically the arguments of support are these:

(**Argument #1**) **-** He is winning souls; therefore we should not judge or criticize.

Dr. Pickering does not agree with this argument and cites **II Sam. 6:1-11** as an example. In Old Testament times, a man was struck dead for doing God's work in the wrong way. When it comes to the work of God, the end does not justify the means.

Another important point to note is that our first responsibility as a Christian is not to win souls, but to do the will of God. Obviously, one part of doing the will of God involves witnessing. But above this responsibility is obedience to God's Word (**I Sam. 15:22**).

There is only one reliable measuring stick of what God's will is and that is the written Word of God. The question that must be raised is whether or not it is Biblically right to fellowship with known heretics.

(Argument #2) - He obtains a wider audience to hear the Gospel by inviting heretical liberals to participate with him.

Again, when one analyzes this with a statement such as found in **Ps. 1:1**, which says, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly…" it seems that such a mindset is not sanctioned by Scripture. Furthermore, a passage such as **Rom. 16:17** says that we are to avoid those that teach false doctrine, not invite them to participate with us.

We make a major mistake in thinking when we think that we must use our humanistic tactics to accomplish the will of God. As Pickering said, "Must we enlist the puny efforts and blessings of vessels of clay (and apostate ones at that) in order to insure the success of an evangelistic crusade? Does the Omnipotent God need the help of unsaved preachers to gather for Himself a crowd so that His saving Gospel may be heard? Surely the answer to this is self-evident" (*Ibid.*, p. 147).

<u>Consideration #4</u> **-** Both leadership and individuals must make separatist decisions pertaining to <u>Doctrine</u>.

We offer seven Biblical points for consideration:

1) We are to separate ourselves from those not <u>sound</u> in the faith and who manifest personal traits mentioned by Paul. **II Tim. 3:5**

2) We are not to <u>assist</u> those who are doing ungodly things contrary to the Word and will of God. **II Chron. 19:2; I Tim. 5:22**

3) We are not to listen to and give honor to one who is preaching a <u>works</u> gospel. **Gal. 1:6-9**

4) We are to carefully examine a person's theological beliefs so that we do not fellowship with that which is <u>demonic</u>. **I Tim. 4:1**

5) We are commanded not to join forces with <u>unbelievers</u> in any religious or spiritual matter. **II Cor. 6:14**

6) We are never to promote <u>unity</u> at the expense of doctrinal <u>purity</u>. **Jude 3-4**

7) We are never to <u>encourage</u> religious people who go beyond the Scriptures and we are not to even let them into our <u>house</u>. **II John 10-11**

Every one of these points demands a careful understanding of true doctrine and the ability to spot false heresy and heretics. Individual believers must be making assessments in their own lives and so must the leadership of the church. Doctrinal separation is demanded in Scripture.

We would like to conclude this with a lengthy quote from Ernest Pickering:

"Separatists through the ages have ever had a strong commitment to doctrine. If they have had to make a choice between loyalty to God's truth in His word and the continuance of personal fellowship with friends and cohorts, they have opted from truth and broken fellowship. This is why separatists are frequently criticized. But should they be? Doctrine is important. The New Testament emphasized that doctrine has been revealed by God. It is not merely the invention of men. Doctrine is truth about God and His works. Paul in **I Cor. 2:9-12** defends the divine source of his doctrine. Sound doctrine produces healthy Christians (**I Tim. 6:3; II Tim. 1:13** - 'wholesome, sound, healthy words'). Solid doctrine makes well-rounded, stable believers (**II Tim. 3:16, 17**–'that the man of God may be perfect'). Accurate doctrine will produce godly living **(Titus 1:1)**. Jude made a pregnant statement about doctrine in **Jude 3**. He declares that doctrine is: (1) cohesive ('the faith,' interrelated, systematic truth); (2) exclusive (not 'a faith' but 'the faith'); (3) authoritative ('delivered to the saints'–revealed from heaven).

Notice especially **Eph. 4:1-16**. The theme of the section is that of harmony in the Body of Christ. **Chapters 1-3** of the epistle are primarily doctrinal in nature. The practical exhortation to unity **(4:1-3)** flows out of the doctrinal portion. Note the two phrases which do not contradict but rather complement one another: 'the unity of the Spirit' **(4:3)** and 'the unity of the faith' **(4:13)**. The Holy Spirit teaches us through God-appointed pastors and brings us to the unity of the faith which, of course, is doctrinal in nature. 'The faith' involves doctrine. It is an entire system of divinely revealed truth. We are to heartily reject false doctrine **(4:14)**, gratefully embrace sound doctrine **(4:11-13)**, and thus enjoy the blessings of fellowship within the body **(4:15, 16)**. This is certainly contrary to the notion that the doctrine should be minimized in order to promote fellowship, a concept not uncommon among those who oppose separation on doctrinal grounds, thinking they are promoting Christian unity" (*Biblical Separation*, pp. 183-184).

"God is not pleased with the promiscuous and unchallenged presence of evil doctrine among His people. When vital doctrines of the Christian faith are rejected and heterodox views are either embraced or tolerated within a fellowship that purports to be Christian, the obedient believer must leave. He must follow his Lord "without the camp, bearing His reproach" **(Heb. 13:13)**.

One of the most moving accounts of how a prominent Christian wrestled with the question of his personal response to the presence of liberalism in his denomination is given in Richard Ellsworth Day's biography of Henry Parsons Crowell, the founder and leader of the Quaker Oats Co. He had been a lifelong Presbyterian and for long years a member and elder of the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago. Crowell was also an active board member of the Moody Bible Institute and a large financial supporter of that institution. In May 1943, when Crowell picked up a Chicago newspaper, he read that the notorious liberal and president of Union Theological Seminary in New York, Henry Sloane Coffin, had been elected moderator of the Northern Presbyterian Church. Under the faithful Bible teaching of William R. Newell years before, Crowell had learned about the nature of apostasy and about the believer's responsibility to separate from it. To make matters worse, Crowell's own pastor had seconded the motion to nominate the liberal Coffin to this high office. Crowell, then a very elderly man, set aside an extended period of time to pray and seek God's face as to what he should do.

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His biographer tells of his agony of soul. …"What was the will of God for him? Perhaps he ought to advise with friends. He quickly decided against that. He knew that many who affirmed loyalty themselves would beg the question with a plea for 'denominational loyalty,' or a bromide of 'it will come out all right. Be patient.' He examined afresh the evidences that Dr. Coffin was a liberal, and the evidences were clear from his own statements. On June 25, 1943, Mr. Crowell dictated a letter to his pastor, Dr. Anderson. It read in part: The conclusion that I have finally reached is not in harmony and sympathy with the decision of the Assembly in electing Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, the President of Union Theological Seminary of New York City, as Moderator of the Assembly. In arriving at this decision, I believe the delegates have made a serious error and one difficult to understand. …How could a majority of them cast their ballot for a man known to be an outstanding modernist for many years, as well as the President of Union Theological Seminary of New York City ever since 1926? …I have protested against Modernism before and have done many things that I have hoped might check it, but the present issue and its apparent popularity indicate that the trend is now stronger than ever before. There is one further protest that I can make and as I have been led to it through prayer, communion, and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, I make it known to you. I desire to sever all relationship that I may have with the Presbyterian denomination. I hereby resign from membership in the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago and retire from the office of Elder in said church, which service of love I have prized for many years. …Something should be done at once to stop this drift toward Modernism and I have thought of nothing better than for me to withdraw from the church as a definite forceful protest against changing standards and the weakening of the church's loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ…" (Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation*, pp. 186-188).

Grace Age Commandments for Grace Age Family Members

1. Grace Age Commandments as they relate to God
    A. Positive Commandments
        1. Trust God – John 14:1
        2. Love God and seek to know God – 1 John 5:2; Philip. 3:10, 15
        3. Be thankful to God; worship God and praise God – John 4:23; Col. 3:15
        4. Serve God – Rom. 12:6-8, 11; I Cor. 15:58
        5. Pray to God – Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Philip. 4:6; Col. 4:2; I Tim. 2:2
        6. Pray to God – Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Philip. 4:6; Col. 4:2; I Tim. 2:2
        7. Walk yielded to the Holy Spirit and not O.T. law – Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 5:18
        8. Hold fast to sound doctrine and contend for the faith – II Tim. 1:13; Jude 3
        9. Witness for Jesus Christ – John 15:27; I Pet. 3:15
     10. Do everything as unto God – I Cor. 10:31; Eph. 6:7-8; Col. 3:17, 23-24
     11. Be diligent in devotion to and the study of God's word – John 5:39; Col. 3:16
          II Tim. 2:15; I Pet. 2:2
     12. Be faithful in attending church services – Heb. 10:25

    B. Negative Commandments
        1. Do not have any idols – I Cor. 10:7, 14; Eph. 5:3; Philip. 3:19; Col. 3:5; I John 5:21;
        2. Do not receive false teachers – II John 10
        3. Do not mock or speak against God – Gal. 6:7; Col. 3:8

II. Grace Age Commandments as they relate to other human beings
    A. Positive Commandments
        1. Love others, especially our brothers – John 15:17; Rom. 12:10; I Cor. 16:14;
          I John 3:2
        2. Be sympathetic and compassionate – Eph. 4:32; Philip. 2:4; Col. 3:12
        3. Forgive and forbear others – Rom. 12:19; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13
        4. Deal honestly and fairly with others – Rom. 12:17b; 13:7; 13:13; I Thess. 4:12
        5. Do good to all and help all – Rom. 12:13; Gal. 6:2, 10; I Thess. 5:15; Titus 3:1
        6. Tell the truth – Eph. 4:25
        7. Be courteous and live peaceably with all – Rom. 12:18; I Pet. 2:17; 3:8
        8. Treat others as you would like them to treat you – Rom. 12:17a
        9 Provide a good example for others – I Cor. 8:9, 13; Philip. 2:15
     10. – Urge godly works and seek to challenge and restore those who are backslidden –
          Gal. 6:1

B. Negative Commandments
        1. Do not lie or bear false witness – Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9; Titus 2:3
        2. Do not steal – Eph. 4:28; I Pet. 4:15
        3. Do not murder – I Pet. 4:15
        4. Do not commit adultery or sexual immorality – I Cor. 6:18; I Thess. 4:13
        5. Do not judge others in regard to gray areas – Rom. 14:13
        6. Do not speak evil of others or malign them – Titus 3:2
        7. Do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever – II Cor. 6:14

8. Do not have fellowship with professing Christians who are living scandalous lives – I Cor. 5:11; II Thess. 3:14
9. Do not get involved in lawsuits against other Christians – I Cor. 6:1
10. Do not glory in men – I Cor. 3:21
11. Do not associate with troublemakers and those who want to argue about senseless things – Rom. 16:17;II Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:12
12. Do not have unpaid debts – pay bills on time – Rom. 13:8

III. Grace Age Commandments as they relate to yourself
A. Positive Commandments
1. Be holy – I Pet. 1:15; 2:11; II Pet. 3:1
2. Devote yourself to that which is good and do good things – Rom. 12:9; I Thess. 5:15
3. Study God's word and think and meditate on it – I Thess. 4:11; II Tim. 2:15
4. Grow spiritually by learning and responding to God's word – II Pet. 3:18
5. Think about good things, not evil things – Philip. 4:8
6. Think accurately about yourself, not more highly than you ought – Rom. 12:3
7. Be ambitious in a right way and in right pursuits – I Cor. 12:31; 14:1; II Cor. 5:4
8. Be content with what God gives you – Heb. 13:5
9. Rejoice in the Lord – think about joyful things about Him – Rom. 12:12; Philip. 3:1
10. Live life in view of facing the Judgment Seat of Jesus Christ – I Cor. 11:31; I John 1:9; II Cor. 13:5
11. Judge yourself and confess sins to God immediately – I Cor. 11:31; I John 1:9; II Cor. 13:5
12. Conduct yourself in a good, positive way for outsiders to see – Col. 4:5
13. Develop your mind on the grace of God and in the deep things of God – I Pet. 1:13
14. Do your work well and consider your job as a place of provision and ministry – Eph. 4:28; II Thess. 3:12
15. Keep your body involved in clean things, using it for God – I Cor. 6:15, 19, 20; 10:31; Rom. 12:1
16. Be faithful in attending church and fellowshipping with God's people – Heb. 10:25

B. Negative Commandments
1. Hate anything that is evil an avoid it – Rom. 12:9; I Thess. 5:22
2. Be humble and not proud and arrogant – Rom. 12:3; I Pet. 5:6
3. Do not conform yourself to the world's ways or views – Rom. 12:2; I John 2:15
4. Do not fellowship with evil – Eph. 5:11
5. Do not sin through anger – Eph. 4:26
6. Do not constantly worry – Philip. 4:6; I Pet. 5:7; John 14:1, 27
7. Do not be lazy or undisciplined – Rom. 12:1; II Thess. 3:11-12
8. Do not use filthy speech – Eph. 4:29; 5:4
9. Do not become drunk – Eph. 5:18
10. Do not constantly complain – I Cor. 10:10; Philip. 2:14