

The Law of Separation

by Jim Cymbala

The Law of Separation teaches Christians to separate themselves from worldly influences and to live a holy life, as taught in the Bible.

Duration: 34:59

Scripture: Ezra 9:3, Nehemiah 9:2-3, Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 32:17, Matthew 21:13, 2 Corinthians 6:17

Topics: "Separation"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor shares a personal experience of God speaking to him on a boat in Florida, promising to supply everything the church and his family would need if they led the people to pray and call on God. The pastor emphasizes the importance of maintaining a house of prayer for all nations and warns against compromising with sinful practices. He gives examples of people being trapped by various temptations and urges the congregation to say no to anything that leads them away from God's light. The pastor also references the dispersion of the Jewish people and the consequences they faced for turning away from God's directions.

Transcript

One of the famous periods in the Bible that we all need to know about is the time of the dispersion of the Jewish people. God sent prophets to warn Israel, the Northern Kingdom, and Judah, the Southern Kingdom, and God warned them and said, turn back to me or there's gonna come judgment on you. You're not listening to my directions.

You're turning your back to me rather than your face. Sure enough, the Assyrian Empire came in and conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel and then a couple hundred years later, even though the Southern Kingdom in Jerusalem, capital in Jerusalem, temple in Jerusalem, even though they saw what happened, they were kabehe sadura, they were hard-headed, stiff in their heart, and they didn't listen. And now it was the Babylonians who came in and destroyed the temple, destroyed the walls, did everything the prophets said would happen, and the big pride of the Jewish people became a matter of rubble.

And what the Babylonians did was they took away all the elite young men especially. They took away all the elite young men, all the promising men, like young guys named Daniel, and then there was a trio. They used to sing doo-wop on the corner of Jerusalem, Shadrach, Meshach, and what? They were a big group back then.

There were the platters, the coasters, the temptations, and then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. All of them were taken into Babylon where they were trained and looked at to see if they could help the Babylonian Empire. But God had prophesied, even using the name of the king that would do it, God said, after a certain amount of time, the punishment will be enough, and I will bring the people back.

Even the man's name was mentioned, Cyrus. Except it wasn't a Babylonian. By the time 70 years passed, the Persian Empire, which was greater than the Assyrian and greater than the Babylonian Empire, they conquered the Babylonians, and they were now the rulers of that part of the world.

And sure enough, Cyrus was moved upon by God to send a remnant of Jewish people back to rebuild the temple and to rebuild the walls so that prayers could be offered up for the Persian people. Well, the people were led by a man by the name of Joshua, or Yeshua. Joshua, a priest, and a man by the name of Zerubbabel.

And they went back and said to the Jewish people who were dispersed, who wants to go back to the homeland and rebuild? Most of them, a lot of them said, hey, we're making money. We've set up our families. We've been living here for half a century.

What are you talking about, going back? To what? We've never even been there. What's back there to go back to? But a lot of the people had God move upon their hearts, and they said, we're gonna go back. We're gonna go back and rebuild God's temple and rebuild Jerusalem and set up the religion of Jehovah the way it was supposed to be.

So they went back, and the going was tough. They were attacked by people on the way there almost, and then when they got there, there were a lot of discouragements. But by perseverance and the favor of God, the story is too long to tell, but it's told well in the book of Ezra.

What happened was they laid the foundation of the temple, the rebuilt temple, and it was so modest compared to the temple Solomon had built, who succeeded David, his father, as king. But at least they started the sacrificial system back. The priests started to play their instruments.

Worship started to go up to God. They were restoring what God had said should be going on according to the word that he gave Moses and then to David. This was going on, and finally, they dedicated the temple, the foundation of the temple, and everybody was so happy, and they celebrated Passover that they hadn't done in decades because they were away from Israel, and there was a great time of jubilation.

The story picks up that Ezra was still living in the Persian Empire. God moved upon him so that he and other leaders that were still dispersed would go back and help with the work that was going on in Jerusalem. God gave them favor with the new king of Persia, and they were able to travel and go back.

It was a long journey. It took them months. It was dangerous, but God watched over them.

And when they got to Jerusalem, and when they got to the temple area, they waited and walked around to see, well, what's going on? We've never been here. This has been 70 years since anyone had been there, and some of the returnees had been building up things, but Ezra was a scribe. He was very knowledgeable in the word of God, and he found out something very terrible had happened.

Even though they had rebuilt the temple, started to, and even though they were working on the walls to rebuild the walls, his visit revealed a terrible spiritual blight that had happened. Let's read how it went

down when he returned. After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, the people of Israel, including the priests, this is, he's back now getting a report, what's going on, including the priests and the Levites have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Brooklynites, Bronxites, Egyptians, and Amorites.

Now stop there for a second. What was happening here? These were the people that they were to drive out, and what God had said is the one thing you can't do is you can't marry their women, because the women will lead you astray to serve their gods, which are an abomination. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them.

And the leaders and officials have led the way, they led the way in the unfaithfulness. The leaders were not closer to God, they were leading the way in this backsliding. When I heard this, Ezra says, I tore my tunic and cloak.

I pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles, and I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice. See, they were still having sacrifices, they were still going to the temple, everybody was celebrating, we're back in the land, but in their everyday life they were marrying women that God said were off limits.

Then at the evening sacrifice I rose from my self-abasement with my tunic and cloak torn, and I fell on my knees with my hands spread out to the Lord my God. So that was his posture in prayer. And now we pick up the prayer a few verses in.

But now, O our God, what can we say after this? For we have disregarded the commands you gave through your servants the prophets when you said the land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices, idolatry, they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. Stop there for a second.

You got to remember that the gods that all these Ammonites, Amorites, and all these people were involved in involved child sacrifice, prostitutes who worked in the pagan temples so that guys would come and worship and then get it on with the prostitute, offering children in the fire, detestable things. Detestable things. And that's why God said you got to stay away from them because you won't win them, they're going to win you.

Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage, you said to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons, do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance. What's the picture we see here? Weakness came from compromise. God said I want to bless you, but to be blessed, you have to say no to certain things.

In this case, pagan women. No matter how pretty they are, how shapely they are, no matter how the sexual attraction, you have to say no because if you hook up with them, they're going to lead you away from me and that leading you away from me, you're going to miss the blessings that I have for you. In other words, I want to bless you, I don't want to rain on your parade, I want to bless you, but these people are going to seduce you you can't do that and when you say no to them, you're saying yes to me.

You see, you not only say yes to God when you go to Rwanda, you say yes to God when you say no to certain things. When we say yes to God, it's sometimes by saying yes and sometimes a no is a yes. When you say no to temptation, when you say no to certain things that God has said, that's not good for you, that's unclean, that's unholy, that speech is wrong, that cursing is horrible.

Don't take those words on your lips. Isn't this interesting? No army overcame them, they fought off all the armies. What got them? Intermarriage.

See, that's just like Satan. If he can't overwhelm, he comes in and he tries to seduce you to make a treaty and permit something that God says no, don't do it. Many people are overcome by a frontal assault.

Satan just tries to wipe them out by an attack and other times when Satan sees that we call on God when he attacks like that, he goes a little bit more subtle and he just sends people just like God has people that he'll send into your life. Satan has people he will send into your life. Some people are messengers of Satan.

That's not to denigrate anyone, that's just to say how it is. The Bible tells us that this intermarriage made Ezra just go nuts, pulled out his beard, started to lament, humble himself, sackcloth, ashes, prey. And actually, this is one of the places where in the Old Testament, they came together and agreed, read the story when you go home, and they broke all of the marriage bonds that they had made which were against God's law with these women, that's the Old Testament.

And God's blessing came on them when they stopped compromising and marrying the wrong person. To dilute our love for the Lord and to compromise us, Satan can use many things. He can use a certain kind of movie, pornography, gossip.

People get engrossed in it, they get taken in by it, and they don't realize that's Satan's way of snaring them and now that draws them away from God and then they miss the blessings. We lose the blessings. When you're involved in something, God doesn't want you to be involved in, you're gonna miss blessings from God.

Don't believe anyone that says, it doesn't matter how you live, God just loves you so much, it's all gonna work out. That is foolishness. There's a way that seems right to a person, but the end is destruction.

And this seemed right to them. Some of these girls walking by, winking, and the guys would just take off not knowing that they were being hooked like a fish. We learn here that one of Satan's ways of trying to rob God's blessing from our lives is to compromise and make a treaty with some practice, in this case it was intermarriage with pagans, that God says no, but it can be other things.

There's many things that he tries to just slide into my life and your life, and God, the Holy Spirit, is quickening us and saying, if you wanna stay in the light, say no. Say no. Wait, wait, there's nothing to clap about because it's so serious and we've all been trapped that we should be pulling out our beards even if we don't have one.

We should just pull them out. Am I right or wrong, everybody? Have we not all been trapped? Have not we all been trapped? From the years that Pastor Burgos and I and others have counseled, we can tell you stories of people trapped in things you can't believe. A woman, a man, a kind of music that speaks to them of their old life before Christ, and next thing you know, they're back in the party scene, and all the time the devil's teaching them to say, nobody can judge me, God loves me, and all of that, and they don't even

know they're going to the butcher shop.

They don't even know that they're gonna be chopped up. Now, let's just do a little teaching on this here. That's why the New Testament says, put away then certain things.

Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Christians are to be a peculiar people, not because we act peculiar in the way we use peculiar. That's a bad translation of that word, but we're a special people.

We're a people that's, we're not supposed to go with the flow of the world. We're supposed to stand out like a sore thumb. How many are with me? Let's put our hands together.

If you want to fit in with the world, it's like them marrying those pagan women. If you want to fit in with the world, you're gonna fall away from God, because the world is against the things of God. The media, our government, everything about this society is opposed to God in one way or another.

Let's just do a little teaching, and then lead to a kind of a praying that we could do. What's the teaching of the New Testament about marriage and who you marry? Remember, we're not Israelites. We're not living under the old covenant.

First Corinthians seven is a chapter where Paul is dealing with problems like this. What do you do if you get saved, and you're married to an unbeliever? What should you do? Well, Paul tells us, you stay with that unbeliever. Just because you became a Christian, you can't say, well, boy, I see the light now.

God has somebody better for me than you. I'm cashing you in. No, that is not the word of God.

Amen? Yeah. I was in the ministry about a month, and I was preaching in Newark, New Jersey a month, as scared as could be, and I preached a message, and a guy came up to me at the end of the service, and he said, I really enjoyed what you said, and I couldn't believe it. That was the first compliment anyone had ever said to me, because my sermons were so horrific, so terrible, and I didn't even like them, and I was preaching them.

That's how bad they were. And I said, really? And he went, yeah, because when you were preaching, God told me the wife that I have is not the one for me. He's got something seven times better than the one I have.

And I remember looking at him and saying, God told you that while I was preaching? Paul tells us, listen, if you get saved, and you're married to an unbeliever, you stay with the unbeliever, and you try to win them to the Lord by your love, your sweetness, your grace, your patience, but you don't use that you're a Christian to attack them and act ugly. That is totally forbidden by Scripture. Then it deals with things about what happens when your spouse dies.

Well, when your spouse dies, you're free to remarry. What happens if you're deserted? There's two basic grounds for divorce in the Bible, in the New Testament. There's 100 grounds for divorce in the Old Testament.

There's 1,000 grounds for divorce in the New Testament. If you didn't think the woman found, if the woman wasn't pleasing to you, you could write a bill of divorce. That was the Old Testament.

In the New Testament, there's just two grounds according to Matthew 19, and then the teaching that we find in Romans and 1 Corinthians. It's immorality, proven, infidelity to the marriage bed, and number two, desertion. If someone deserts the other one and takes off to God knows where, that person is not in bondage and not free to remarry eventually, but all these things must be done with pastoral and spiritual counsel.

But those are the only two grounds, and by divorce, I mean with the freedom to remarry because in the Bible, there is no divorce where you can't remarry. The Catholic Church teaching that you're divorced but you can't remarry is not found in the Bible. You're either married or you're not married, and if you're not married, you can marry, but those grounds are very, very carefully outlined in Scripture.

What happens if you're fighting like a cat and a dog? Paul talks about that and says, if they're so immature that they can't get along, let them separate for a while, unfortunately, until they come back and can grow up enough to get along and honor Christ. That's speaking of two Christians. One thing the Bible teaches us is that if your spouse dies, you are free from that marriage bond, obviously, because of the death of your spouse, and then 1 Corinthians 7 says this.

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. So let me just say two things before we pray for our children. If you're here today and you've justified some relationship with someone who, quote, and it doesn't matter what the excuse is, you don't know how I feel, God brought them in my life, you can't violate Scripture.

God's giving us this for our own good. Do I get an amen? For our own good. You can't marry anyone outside the Lord.

First of all, how could you love Jesus and wanna be with someone who doesn't give a hoot about him, how is that possible? How is that possible? Remember, the enemy used seduction to trip up the Israelites. Don't let him use seduction to trip you up. Guys, are you listening to me, men? Don't tell me she fined.

I don't wanna hear that. You gotta get somebody in the Lord. Fine in the Lord.

How many say amen to that? Amen to that. Okay, let me tell you something. Who you marry is so important.

Now, if you become a Christian and you're already married, whether they're unsaved or saved, now you follow the Bible and you live the Christian life in front of them and you see God do great things like my mom saw what God did in my dad's life after 20 some years of alcoholism and the stories are replete in our church of people who have been prayed into the kingdom, been prayed into the kingdom by a godly spouse. But who you marry is all important. The best thing that ever happened to me outside of finding Jesus Christ is when God sent Carol into my life.

Carol is not just my wife, the mother of my children. She's my best friend. She's been there when I've been weak.

She's been strong. She's prayed for me. She's been moved on by the Holy Spirit to help me get through things that no one else knew I was going through.

Who you marry is so important. Now, we all have children. A lot of us have children here.

I have grandchildren. I was so moved by the fact seven, eight years ago that I heard that Dr. Billy Graham, who was still able to walk around then, I talked to someone who knew him and they told me, you know what he does most of the day? I said, what? They said, he just takes long walks and all he does is pray for his grandchildren and great-grandchildren that they'll marry the right person because who you marry will just determine so much. You marry someone who doesn't care about the things of God, it's very likely instead of you changing them, they could change you.

Trust me, I have seen that over and over again. My son's getting married to a godly girl on September 1st. My three children will all be married then.

The other two daughters are married to pastors. I got grandchildren. My Tommy, Pastor Toledo's boy, probably his wife is already living somewhere.

She's alive. She's a girl somewhere. Oh, how I want God to watch over her.

How I want God to bring Tommy and her together and they'll know as they fall in love that this is what God has planned because how many of you believe that God has a plan for every one of our children? Come on, for every one of our, lift your hand up high if you believe that, every one of our children. And one of the elements of that plan is who they marry. Who they marry is so important.

Who's my baby Levi gonna marry? Who is that little guy gonna marry? He needs to get saved first before he even looks for a wife. I'm just thinking about him. I babysat him last Friday and he was with my wife and I and he must've heard me talking and he was listening.

So he and I are just hanging out together and Carol walks into the room and my wife walks in the room and he just turns and goes, how are you Carol? And my wife went, what did you just call me? He said, how are you Carol? So sweet. You know what? The right wife will bring blessing. The wrong wife will hurt my little grandson.

The wrong husband will hurt my Annie. Now my oldest granddaughter Susie, she's married to a godly guy named Josh. I'm so thankful.

I wept at that wedding. I didn't perform the wedding, I wept like a baby because I know how much that means when you marry the right one. I want everyone who has a child or a grandchild, that's a single, stand up right now.

Come on, stand up. You got a child or a grandchild? Pastor Burgos is gonna pray. He's gonna pray for his own son.

He's gonna pray for all of our kids. Come on up Pastor Burgos. God, we pray if our children are involved in a relationship right now that they shouldn't be in, separate it, break it, whatever it takes, oh God.

God, I pray that we separate our children for you tonight, oh God. God, our heart breaks when we see pain and suffering. And God, the years that we have seen in our life where we have gone to bed at night when we didn't know you, when we have suffered and we've gone to bed sleeping with tears in our eyes.

God, we don't want that for our children, oh God. So God, what we pray for our children is your perfect will and nothing less, oh God. Oh God, we pray that you cover them with your precious blood, oh God.

God, we pray that you would take that spirit of anxiousness away from them, oh God. God, we pray that you would give them perfect peace, oh God. Oh God, we pray that you would shield their eyes, oh God, from things that they should not see, oh God.

God, I pray that they would enjoy the years of their youth, oh God. Let them enjoy the years of innocence, oh God. We are living in a world where our children are growing up too quickly, oh God.

Oh God, I pray that our children will find themselves in the house of the Lord. I pray, oh God, that you would cover their minds and their eyes and their ears, oh God. Oh God, as some of our children return back to school this year, we pray, oh God, that you would send angels to protect them, oh God.

Protect them, oh God. Oh God, God, we know that the enemy never stops. We know that the enemy never rests, oh God.

But God, we know tonight that we serve a God who is always fighting for our children, oh God. So God, I pray that we in this building tonight would not live in fear, oh God. That we would not live in worry, oh God.

But that we would live as a victorious Christian, knowing that our children will marry a godly man, a godly woman of God. We claim that tonight in the name of Jesus. And God, we pray that you give us wisdom in this house.

Give us wisdom to not compromise from the things of this world, oh God. God, I know for a fact that in homes that are here tonight, that there are children that are running to homes instead of us as parents being in control, oh God. We pray, oh God, that as parents, we will take our rightful place in that home, oh God.

And God, I know that if we bow before you, we can stand before anyone. So God, I pray that as I bow before you, our children see us kneeling before you and praying and reading your word, oh God. They will see a godly example.

They will see a godly example. Oh God, that our children will be able to say, I want my home to be like the example that my parents are showing me. But Lord, we ask you that we would not only be Christians in the house of God, but we would be examples in our home, oh God.

So Lord, we pray for a covering over our children. If there are relationships that are taking place right now, oh God, that is not a view, we pray that you break it in the name of Jesus. God, if there's anyone that is coming into this building tonight and they are wavering on the fence tonight, they have heard the word of God for you, oh God.

I pray that you would speak to the hearts of everyone that is in this building. Break every relationship that is not a view tonight, oh God. God, we know it is not easy, but oh God, through your precious blood, nothing is impossible tonight.

So God, I pray in closing. That you give us wisdom to speak to our children, oh God. God, we can come and say a word that has no edification, but God, I pray that even before we open our mouth and begin to speak to our children, that we would bow our knees and begin to cry out to you, oh God.

And you will show us what to say. You will show us what to do. You will show us when to go.

But I pray, God, that we would not say one word, oh God, before we have spoken to you, oh God. And God, we claim tonight in this house that our children will grow up in godly homes. Our children will have godly marriages.

And from one generation to the next, they will serve the Lord. They will serve the Lord. They will serve the Lord.

And we claim marriages that will take place in this building. And God, we will rejoice. We will rejoice.

But God, we confess and we promise you tonight that every one of our children that marries a man and woman of God, we will give you the honor and the glory and the praise because you are worthy, you are worthy, you are worthy. So be it done in Jesus' name, amen. Everybody stand.

Everybody stand, close your eyes. Lord, I lift my voice now on behalf of your people, starting with my own life, that we will learn that a no on earth is a yes in heaven. Now, Lord, I go beyond who we marry.

There's anything that the enemy is using to compromise us, any secret treaty that we've made with sin, anything that our eyes are looking upon, that we know in our heart of hearts, this is not pleasing to the Lord. Any conversation, any words that we're used to saying, any temper tantrums, any filthy speech, violent talk, Lord, we say no to it in the name of Jesus Christ. We will not marry those things.

We will not be joined to those things. We ask you to forgive us for those things, but we are walking away. We repent, God, we turn around, give us pure eyes and good ears and pure heart, Lord.

Cleanse your people so that we can enjoy all the blessings that you have stored up for us. Satan, the blood of Jesus is against you. Let's clap our hands.

Come on, the blood of Jesus is against him. Everybody join hands with the person next to you, okay? I wanna say something to you, okay? As your pastor, a lot of years ago on a boat in Florida, God spoke to me the best I know and the closest to an audible voice experience I ever had, that if my wife and I would just lead the people to pray and to call on God, that he would supply everything the church would need, that Carol and I would need. So you know that people are probably, if he's visiting here tonight from out of town because they've heard about a prayer meeting, they're in downtown Brooklyn on a Tuesday night because they heard the people pray, call on God.

Lord, help us to keep this as a house of prayer for all nations, Lord. You know that I'm not much, Carol's not much, none of us here have special talents, Lord, but you are mighty to save when people call upon you and you do great and marvelous things when people reach out in faith. We pray that between now and Sunday, we will speak great words to people, show great love, pray great prayers, and that we will be sensitive to immediate obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Whatever you show us to do, Holy Spirit, give us the grace to immediately obey it, immediately obey it, whatever it might be. Help us to be sensitive to your Holy Spirit. Bless any visitors that are here for the first time.

I pray that they've received something from you, Lord. And now get us home safely. Help us to just be praising you all the way home, Lord, for the joy of the Lord is our strength.

We pray this blessing in Jesus' name, amen.

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