

“The Holy One Has Called Us” Lesson Two:
The Call to Be Separate:

I. God has always desired that He have a people that are separate for Himself:

A. **While this** is something that we discuss as a concept associated with both the Old and New Covenants, this desire can be seen in the very first chapter of God’s Word:
read Genesis 1:26-28

1. Consider how amazing those verses are!
 - a) God had already brought everything that comprises the universe into existence-- and when God looked out over His handiwork, each and every part was described as being good:
 - b) And yet even after all this had been accomplished, God looked out and desired that there be a portion of that creation which was separate for Him:
 - c) So He created man: Man was *different*: He could think, and reason; He had a soul-- *he was made in the very image of the creator*
2. And so in keeping with being a special and separate creation, God gave man a specific purpose and task: to *serve God* as the caretaker of the garden he was placed in ***Gen. 2:15***

B. **To our great sorrow**, it didn’t take long for man to stop living up to the purpose of serving God in the capacity he had been set apart for, and turned to the service of self:

1. After giving Adam his helpmeet Eve, God gave them both the chance to be distinct from the rest of creation, *by giving them the choice to obey*:
2. They were given a specific charge and set of instructions to follow, and it was part of what made them different: ***Gen. 2:16-17***
 - a) When Adam and Eve gave into their desires, ***Gen. 3:6***, there is a sense that they lost what made them separate, because they chose to follow their baser instincts like the mindless animals around them in the Garden:

C. **And yet even** after they were commanded to leave the Garden, God still desired that this special creation that was made in His image have the chance to separate itself for a higher purpose:

1. And so in **Gen. 4:4** we see that God has instructed Adam, Eve, and their children Cain and Abel how they could worship and serve Him:

a) But as one continues to read through Genesis, it seems that as much as God desired to have man as significant and exceptional among the creation, man was equally determined to reject that calling; choosing instead to follow their own selfish urges and desires; again, like the soulless animals God had created:
Gen. 6:5-7

b) And yet even in this time of great despair and endless iniquity, we still see God preserving a remnant that was separate to Him, as the verse follows states that Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord:

II. By the time the reader reaches Genesis chapter 12, God has made the choice to call out from among human kind, the separate creation, one man, through whom God would call a separate people:

A. Read **Gen. 12:1-3**

1. God called Abram to leave his home, his family, and the country that he had made a life. God shut him off from all that he had known:
2. In chapter 17 of Genesis, Jehovah gave Abraham a promise to be “God to you and to your descendants after you” (v 7): He gave instructed Abraham and his descendants to adopt physical circumcision as a sign of the covenant between God and His people (v 17)

B. Let us call our attention to another promise that God made to Abraham: **Turn Back to Gen. 15:13-14**

1. We know that this promise is in reference to the Egyptian captivity, but the promise that Abraham’s descendants would live in a foreign land, and would do so for a period of 400 years certainly sounds like it would present a problem in keeping their separate identity as God’s covenant people:
2. Until you see that in **Genesis 47:4-6** God has given Joseph the power to provide a dwelling place for the family of Abraham to grow into a nation, away from the influence of pagan Egypt.

- C. Starting like we have in Genesis chapter 1, seeing the continuous desire for a separate people, it comes as no surprise that when God deliver's His law to the nation of Israel, the guidelines to be holy were to separate a people for himself from the rest of the world who refused to be separate unto God:
1. This is where one of our "theme verses" from our first lesson appears once again:
Read *Leviticus 20:26, Deut. 7:6*
 2. The call to be *Holy* goes hand in hand with the call to be *Separate*:
- D. Perhaps that seems as if that goes without saying: We certainly looked at how at least a part of what it means to be Holy has to do with being set apart.
1. And yet look around: *People fool themselves all the time into believing that they can be holy without being separate:*
 2. This was certainly the attitude that the Israelites manifested!
 - a) At one time or another Israel violated everything that was to set them apart as God's special people:
 - (1) They broke the laws dictating action and conduct that set them apart:
What they ate, they way they treated others, when they were to work or rest
 - (2) They broke the laws that set them apart as worshipping the True God, turning to idols like everyone around them
 - (3) They disregarded even the most basic definition of being separate by giving their sons and daughters in marriage to nations they'd been forbidden from marrying:
 - b) And all the while they considered themselves as being God's special people:
 - (1) *Yet you said, 'I am innocent; Surely His anger is turned away from me.' Behold, I will enter into judgment with you Because you say, 'I have not sinned.'* **Jer. 2:35**
 - (2) *Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done? They certainly were not ashamed, And they did not know how to blush;* **Jer. 8:12 a**
 - (3) *You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied Him?"* **Malachi 2:17 a**

III. So In What Way do we Apply This to God's People Today?

- A. Consider that we face the same basic problem today: God still desires that He have a special people set apart for His own possession; but as has always been the case, there are few that are willing to separate themselves out from among the world:
 - i. In many ways our challenge is the same as that of Israel:
 - a) Israel was planted in the middle of many nations, charged with being separate yet at the same time acting as a light for the nations,
 - b) We must live separate lives while still living among the world: As Jesus prayed for His disciples in *John 17:15-17*, we are not taken out of this world, but we are not to be of this world: Instead we are set apart in the Truth of God's Word:
 - (i) As Paul would state it in Rom. 12:2 by saying that rather than allowing ourselves to be conformed to the world, we are transformed through the renewing of our minds: *Transformed into what???* A separate creation, a new creature:
- B. And so we can safely say that if God's purpose is still for us to work towards His standard of Holiness by separating ourselves from the world, it is still the work of the Devil to convince us to abandon this pursuit:
 - i. As John would warn in *1 John 2:15* "*Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*"
 - a) With John's exhortation in mind, I want to pose these questions:
 - (i) Can it be said that I've separated myself from the world:
 - (a) If I make the same choices in movies, music, and entertainment as the world around me?
 - (b) If the speech that I use to define myself, the speech I use to define others, and my topics of conversation sound exactly like the world around me?
 - (c) If my level of commitment and activity to my congregation is the same as the world around me, and the casual attitude displayed to religion?

- (d) If the quality of work I give my employer is the same as everyone around me?
 - (e) If someone cannot look into a crowd of people in the middle of summer and tell who has set themselves apart by the way I dress?
- C. If my thoughts, words, and pursuits mirror those of this world: I have not answered God's call to separate myself!
- 1. If the only thing that is separating me from the world is what I do on Sunday and Wednesday, then I am fooling myself into thinking I can be holy, without being separate.
 - 2. If I can borrow from our lesson this morning, let's answer the challenge that Paul makes in Col. 3:10, *that we put on the new self, who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him*

Conclusion:

- The call to be Separate is not always an easy task to accomplish:
 - Satan will work to make the world appealing
 - Those of the world will try to make us feel everything from embarrassed to guilty for our separation
 - We must always remember that we have been called to something higher than those of a worldly mind could ever achieve: a people for God's own possession:
- Next week as we continue this series, we will look at the Call of God's People to be Unashamed.