

YOUNG

PRECIOUS SEED

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Edited by
STEPHEN BAKER

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YOUNG PRECIOUS SEED is a supplement of *Precious Seed International* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live. YPS is published by *Precious Seed International*, Pitcot Farm, Pitcot Lane, Stratton-on-the-Fosse, Radstock BA3 4SX, UK, and is also available separately from the main magazine.
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Editor's Introduction

Here we are with another issue of YPS. I wonder how you have been getting on in the last few months? For many of you the summer will hopefully have been a complete change from studying but no doubt you have had to work some of the time to pay for a holiday or keep your student debt as low as possible. Money matters can be a bit stressful, so it might be useful to read the first of our new series about how you can use what little you have for God. The series is all about what I can do to serve God, I hope you find it helpful.

Have a read of Jack Hay's article on what the term separation means. It's quite a challenging read, not in terms of understanding what is being taught but in living it out from day to day. In the next issue, we will have an article (DV) by Jeremy Singer on the term 'sanctification'. I asked him to give me some questions that you could think about; here they are:

- 1) Why do some Christians avoid going to the cinema?
- 2) How can I be 'good to go' when God has a job for me to do?
- 3) Do you ever play 'spot the difference' between a Christian and a non-Christian? Is it easy?

Hope you find this issue interesting, keep in touch and let me know what you think.

Stephen



Building Blocks of the Christian Faith

'Be ye separate' The concept of Biblical Separation

Key Bible references 2 Corinthians 6. 14-7. 1.

By **JACK HAY** Perth, Scotland

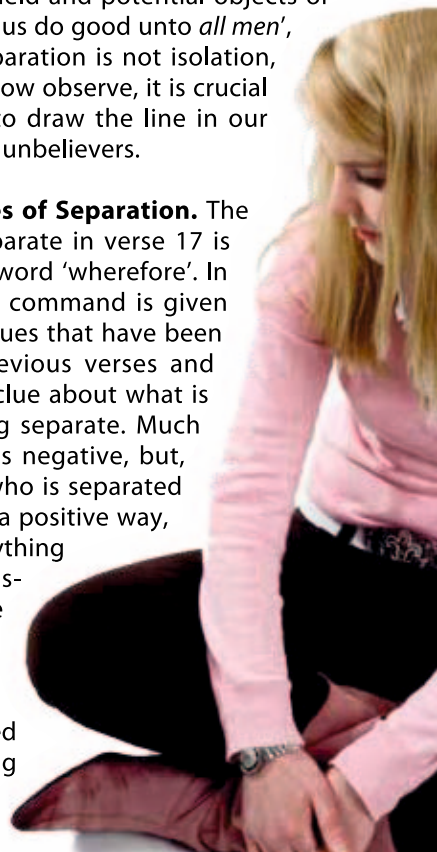
There are numerous key commands in the Bible for the Christian. In fact, Christian life started in response to a command - 'Be ye **saved**', Isa. 45. 22. By obeying that command, we commenced our spiritual lives, and, there and then, other commands came into play. 'Be ye **strong**', 2 Chr. 15. 7. 'Be ye **stedfast**', 1 Cor. 15. 58. 'Be ye **sanctified**' (holy), 1 Pet. 1. 15. And now this, 'Be ye **separate**', 2 Cor. 6. 17. It is a binding decree from the throne of God. He is urging His people to be distinct from those around them. Their standard of morality must be different. Their ethics must be superior. They must be different in the way they use their leisure time. As far as our relationship with the world is concerned, every believer should be a non-conformist. Conformity is not an option, Rom. 12. 2.

Separation and not Isolation. In our study, we will note that biblical separation does mean that we avoid certain locations, and dissociate ourselves from certain people, but, generally, it does not involve us isolating ourselves from the people of the world. Certain religions provide a facility for aspiring holy ones to cloister themselves behind the walls of a monastery or convent. The idea is that by opting out of society with its family responsibilities and commercial demands, they will increase in piety. However, the devil can scale monastery walls! The people carry their sinful nature (the flesh) through the gates with them. In a similar way, modern cults have tried to impose uniformity. They promote a commune life-style that excludes non-members, but isolation is neither effective nor scriptural.

The Bible teaches that to avoid sinners, believers would need to be out of the world altogether, 1 Cor. 5. 10. The Lord Jesus said, 'As thou hast

sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world', John 17. 18. The fact is that interaction with unbelievers is a normal feature of life. We cannot choose our family circle. Very few have any say in appointing work colleagues. We cannot decide who lives in the house next door. Thus, as family members, workmates and neighbours we are in frequent contact with a large number of people who do not share our beliefs. An unfriendly, aloof, holier-than-thou attitude towards these contacts could alienate them. They are our mission field and potential objects of our kindness; 'let us do good unto *all men*', Gal. 6. 10. So separation is not isolation, but, as we shall now observe, it is crucial to know where to draw the line in our associations with unbelievers.

The Practicalities of Separation. The appeal to be separate in verse 17 is prefaced by the word 'wherefore'. In other words, the command is given on account of issues that have been raised in the previous verses and they supply the clue about what is involved in being separate. Much of the teaching is negative, but, then, someone who is separated unto the Lord in a positive way, will turn from anything that would displease Him. The Nazarites were separated 'unto the Lord', Num. 6. 2, but that involved them in separating themselves from forbidden



things, v. 3. A believer who has presented his body a living sacrifice, in a positive way, will not be conformed to this world, Rom. 12. 1-2. The degree of positive separation *to* the Lord will determine the degree of separation *from* the world.

When introducing the subject, the first issue Paul raises is that of **the unequal yoke**, v. 14. The imagery is from Deuteronomy chapter 22 verse 10, ‘Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together’. It would have been cruel to put these two beasts in harness with each other. Their height was different. Their pace was different. Their temperament was different. Ceremonially, one was a clean animal and the other unclean, and, thus, they portray the believer and the unbeliever. Separation involves avoiding an unequal matrimonial yoke, the most obvious application of the principle. However, the rule covers every area of life. To join a political party is an unequal yoke, as is membership of a sports club. A business partnership with an unbeliever is an unequal yoke, and so is membership of a religious denomination with a mixed membership of saved and unsaved. Separation means there should be no close alliances with unsaved people in any sphere of life.

Separation means that the believer will be different **morally and ethically**, v. 14. Righteousness and unrighteousness are incompatible. Light and darkness cannot co-exist. The reason believers step back from close involvement with unsaved people is that obedience to the scriptures in matters of finance, integrity and honesty places them on a plane with which the unregenerate person could never be comfortable. Turning the coin, a close relationship with an unsaved person could present the believer with endless problems of conscience. Separation obviates compromise and the erosion of moral and spiritual principles.

Separation does not only affect our **alliances**,

but it affects our **allegiance**, for no ‘concord’ exists between Christ and Belial, the devil, v. 15. To be involved in the ways of the world is to dally with a system over which Satan is prince and god, John 14. 30; 2 Cor. 4. 4. ‘The whole world lieth in the evil one’, 1 John 5. 19 RV, lulled to sleep in his lap, insensitive to both God’s love and God’s judgement. Senses are dulled to what is right and wrong, so that people glamorise things that should make them ashamed, Phil. 3. 19. When the Christian gets too close to that system with its perverted values, he gives tacit acknowledgement of its head, this Belial with whom the believer’s Lord can never be in harmony. It is a question of loyalties, and the Lord Jesus will never settle for divided loyalties, so the call is, ‘Be ye separate’.



Further, separation impacts on our **activities**, for ‘what part hath he that believeth with an infidel (unbeliever)?’ v. 15. The word ‘part’ conveys the idea of sharing. Believers and unbelievers do not share the same interests; hence, their activities are diverse. Ideally, Christians have set their minds on ‘things above’,

Col. 3. 2, whereas unbelievers ‘mind earthly things’, Phil. 3. 19. Which world are we living for?

The truth of separation also influences our **associations**, for idols can have no appeal for those who comprise ‘the temple of the living God’, among whom God dwells, and with whom He walks, v. 16. Obviously, the verse is teaching that in a religious sense there should be a clear line of demarcation between believer and unbeliever, but it should be understood that, in these ancient times, the idol’s temple was also an old-time community centre, the focal point of the social life of the area. For the believer it was out of bounds. Separation does have a geographical aspect; it should affect the places we go.

Idols are more sophisticated today, but the word is still in use in the western world. There are sporting

idols, and pop idols, and screen idols. Their devotees are legion and are normally described as 'fans', which according to *The Concise English Dictionary* is an abbreviated form of 'fanatic'. These fans expend vast amounts of money in expressing loyalty. They purchase appropriate merchandise, and, with an expensive ticket in their pockets, they travel long distances to the concert or sporting event. Is it legitimate for a child of God to participate? Is there anything essentially wrong with joining the crowd at the gig or the stadium? Let scripture speak for itself, 'What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?' If the 'living God' dwells in us and walks in us, would He be comfortable to accompany us to places where ungodliness is rampant and where vulgarity and violence are rife. A visit to a nightclub would be inappropriate at any time, but how much more so on a Saturday night, with the privilege of remembering the crucified Saviour first on the agenda for the following day. Margaret Mauro wrote a challenging poem entitled *The Young Christian*, and among its sentiments were these:

Can I take part with those
Who nailed Him to the tree?
And where His name is never praised
Is that the place for me?
Nay, world! I turn away.
Though thou seem'st fair and good;
That friendly outstretched hand of thine
Is stained with Jesus' blood.

The call to 'come out from among them' demands that the believer distances himself from the people of the world as they pursue their leisure activities. The company that we keep inevitably affects us. 'Evil company doth corrupt good manners', 1 Cor. 15. 33 RV. Be like the psalmist who chose his companions well, 'I am a companion of all them that fear thee', Ps. 119. 63. He surrounded himself with 'the faithful of the land', Ps. 101. 6.

'Touch not the unclean thing' is a reminder of the contaminating effects of certain associations and pursuits. Under the law, holiness was not infectious but uncleanness was decidedly contagious, Hag. 2. 11-14. The people we associate with, the things we do and the places we frequent can all have a defiling effect upon us.

Incentives to Separation. It could be that the separated believer is marginalized, and made to feel somewhat of an outcast, a real oddity. Is there anything available to ease the feeling of rejection? There is: what the scripture calls, 'these promises', 7. 1. What are these promises? 'I will receive you', 6. 17. In a special way they will be enveloped in divine affection, the affection of a Father who has a deep interest in His sons and daughters, v. 18.



That Father is also 'the Lord Almighty'. So, the One who has called them to Himself from this 'present evil world', Gal. 1. 4, is a source of comfort to them as a Father, when they face

a chilly backlash from that hostile power. As the Lord Almighty, He is a channel of power for them, giving them the needed help to walk an unpopular narrow pathway. He is more than able to compensate for the sacrifice involved in a separated walk.

These promises should be a real stimulus to holy living, 7. 1. 'Cleansing' ourselves should be a top priority, for the inference is that inappropriate associations have a defiling effect on both the body and the mind. The positive pursuit of practical and progressive holiness will be facilitated by the fear of God, 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God'. It has often been said that if we fear God we will fear sin. Reverence for Him will promote proper conduct.

If you have heeded the command, 'Be ye saved', add to it this, 'Be ye separate'.

What can I do for God?

By **STEVEN BUCKERIDGE** London, England

Are you looking for something that YOU can do for God? There are plenty of things to do! In this series we are going to explore some of the things that every Christian can do. No excuses – these things don't depend on age, gift or experience! So keep reading and discover in each issue something that you can do for God. After all He has done so much for us!

First Suggestion – Give financially to God

'Let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him', 1 Cor. 16. 2.

Some ways to use your money to serve God!

- Help people in need, particularly focus on fellow believers.
- Support works being done in the Lord's name.
- Buy outreach materials to tell people about the Lord Jesus.
- Give gifts to fellow Christians who are in need including (but not restricted to) those who have sacrificed employment to serve the Lord.
- Contribute financially to your local church/assembly.

Why should we do this?

- Nothing that we have really is our own, ultimately it all belongs to the Lord.
- The Lord gave everything for us.
- Giving shows our love for others.
- The Lord has specifically promised to reward sacrifices that are made for Him.

How should I give?

- With a happy attitude, 2 Cor. 9. 7.
- Without grudging, 2 Cor. 9. 6.
- Make a sacrifice to do so – it should cost us something, 2 Sam. 24. 24.
- On a regular basis, 1 Cor. 16. 2.
- Without others knowing how much – not drawing attention to ourselves, Matt. 6. 2.

- Sensibly and carefully – we will have to give account of how we have used what we have, Matt. 25. 14-30; 2 Cor. 5. 10.

Some extra advice

- Give as the Lord leads, not based on requests.
- All sums of money are small when given to the God of the universe. God values things based on the cost to you not the amount. Remember stories of the widow with the 'two mites', and the lad with the 'five loaves and two fish'.
- Be wise when giving to those in need, in some situations it is better to give items rather than money.
- Organizations, such as Lord's Work Trust (lwtrust@lwtrust.co.uk, 01563 521098), will forward money to those serving the Lord, and can also enable UK income tax payers to increase the amount given using *Gift Aid*.

Next steps

- Read 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9.
- Set up a method of setting money aside. You could use a box, a bank account, direct debit, etc.
- Pray about how the Lord wants you to use the money He has trusted you with.
- Think about how God is more interested in what we keep back for ourselves than the actual amount we give.



HELPFUL BIBLICAL GUIDANCE FOR BELIEVERS

How do I participate at the Lord's Supper?

By **DAN RUDGE** Bracknell, England

In 1 Corinthians chapter 14 the apostle Paul gives some very useful guidelines, which help us to understand how we should participate when the local church gathers. Although not specifically concerned with the Lord's Supper, they can be helpfully applied.

Firstly, every believer is expected to be **ready** to participate, 1 Cor. 14. 26. Every brother and every sister should come to the meeting with a precious meditation of the Lord Jesus which they are prepared to offer. The brothers will do this audibly and the sisters inaudibly, but both contribute equally. What a wonderful privilege it is to unwrap and present the treasures concerning the Lord Jesus that have been our meditation throughout the week, Matt. 2. 11. We must take time to meditate upon 'the Son of God' *before* the meeting to ensure that the Father takes delight in your contributions *during* the meeting.

Secondly, any contribution should be 'unto **edifying**', 1 Cor. 14. 26, that is, it has the effect of 'building up' the people of God. Although our worship is primarily for God, it is also a real blessing for the gathered Christians to enjoy the meditations of a spiritual believer. As indicated in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 29, we should use 'good' words, words which are **suitable** for the occasion. We are present to remember the Lord Jesus, and not, on this occasion, to pray for the salvation of lost souls.

Similarly, any reading from the word of God (and it doesn't need to be accompanied by any comment) should attract the attention and stimulate the affections of the believers towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Any 'reproof', 'correction' or 'instruction',

2 Tim. 3. 16, is better saved for another, more appropriate occasion. We could also add that any contribution should not be so obscure as to require the use of an 'interpreter', 1 Cor. 14. 27-28, but that would be taking the verse a little out of context!

Thirdly, believers should take the opportunity to speak '**one by one**', 1 Cor. 14. 31. No one brother should take *all* the time! Contrary to the impression some meetings may give, there is no allotted time when brother 'x' stands to pray. Our worship is guided by the Holy Spirit. The Lord's Supper may contain five hymns or no hymns; three prayers or six prayers; the breaking of the bread half-way

through or at the end. It is amazing how many times the Holy Spirit will blend the meditations of another with yours, giving a clear indication when your contribution should be.

Above all, let everything 'be done **decently** and in **order**', 1 Cor. 14. 40. This is no time or place for amusement or entertainment. We should act in a way that is fitting for the presence of our Lord and Saviour at whose feet we reverently come to fall, Matt. 2. 11.



Letter to Philemon - a dramatic interpretation

By **JEREMY SINGER** Bridge of Weir, Scotland

Many parts of the Bible are dramatic stories, including Ruth, Jonah, Esther, and the Gospel narratives. Indeed, W. G. SCROGGIE sees the complete biblical canon as an 'unfolding drama of redemption'. Sometimes in our Bible study we can lose sight of the plot by focusing on technicalities like tenses and emphatic personal pronouns. I remember an English literature teacher once advising me that if I could summarise a Shakespearean play on a postcard, sketching the main characters and the plot, then I would have mastered the play. In this article, we attempt to do something similar for a New Testament Epistle.

We aim to uncover some of the letter's background, using 'sanctified detective work'. We want to engage with the spiritual circumstances that motivated the author to write the letter, and consider the potential reaction of the recipient. As we examine the text in this manner, the letter will come to life. Indeed, all scripture is living,¹ but we often fail to appreciate this in our routine reading methods. What follows is an attempt to apply the dramatic interpretation technique to the shortest Pauline Epistle, namely Philemon.

F. F. BRUCE states that we can use the letter to 'reconstruct a good part of [Onesimus'] romantic story'.² H. C. G. MOULE refers to the letter as Onesimus' 'own passport to . . . his master's welcome and to his love in Christ'.³ J. M. DAVIES describes it as full of 'the aromatic spice of Christian courtesy'.⁴

Cast:

Paul: Now an older man, v. 9, Paul is experiencing his first imprisonment at Rome, v. 1, as described in Acts chapter 28. He is given some privileges, as he resides in a hired house, Acts 28. 30. His apostolic commission and his evangelistic zeal are not diminished by his incarceration. He preaches to all who visit him, and fires off letters to the churches he has seen established across the Roman Empire.

Philemon: A family man, v. 2, who lives at Colosse, Col. 4. 12, 17. He is wealthy and of some social standing⁵ since he owns a large house which is used as an assembly meeting place. He has a great reputation for hospitality, vv. 3, 22. He is known personally to Paul, even though the apostle has never visited Colosse, Col. 2. 1.

Onesimus: A runaway slave from Philemon's house, who has caused loss to Philemon, vv. 11, 18. Although he was perhaps written off by his master, now Onesimus has been saved, vv. 10, 16, and become 'useful by name and useful by nature', F. F. BRUCE.⁶

Act 1:

Scene: Philemon's villa at Colosse

Onesimus the slave gets into trouble. Perhaps he steals something, or damages something valuable, v. 18, or brings dishonour on Philemon's reputation. Rather than

facing up to the circumstances at home, he runs away hastily like the Prodigal Son. 'Because of this he did depart for an hour', v. 15 YLT. Presumably, Onesimus gets transport out of town, and, in the ancient world, all roads led to Rome.

Act 2:

Scene: A prison-house at Rome

Onesimus tramps the streets of Rome. Somehow, he comes across Paul in his prison house. Perhaps Onesimus encountered one of Paul's companions, vv. 23-24, and through them was introduced to Paul? Anyway, the full story emerges and Onesimus confesses his wrongdoing to Paul. Paul gently brings him the gospel, and Onesimus is wonderfully saved in the prison house, v. 10. Just like Jonah's repentance in the whale's belly, Onesimus knows he can't stay where he is. He has to go back and 'face the music' in Colosse, v. 12. Paul encourages him, and writes a letter of explanation to Philemon. Then he hands the letter to Onesimus, who will be the postman to take the letter back to Colosse. (Note: at this point, the letter ends. Therefore any further events can be nothing more than imaginative reconstruction.)

Act 3:

Scene: Philemon's villa at Colosse

'So we watch him in at the courtyard door in the Colossian street'.⁷ Did Paul relate the story of the Prodigal Son to Onesimus? Was Luke drafting that particular parable while he stayed in Rome with Paul? Anyway, Onesimus was uncertain whether the head of the household would welcome him back with an embrace and a fatted calf. F. F. BRUCE speculates on the outcome of the meeting, and decides on reconciliation.⁸ After all, BRUCE reasons, Philemon would not want to preserve the letter if he had not acted on its contents. Indeed, the description we have of Philemon's gracious, noble, Christian character leads us to conclude that he must have forgiven Onesimus, and received him back as a servant, but more, as a fellow-saint, v. 16. It is likely that Onesimus would have taken his place at the breaking of bread meeting in Philemon's atrium on the subsequent Lord's Day morning, 'a faithful and beloved brother', Col. 4. 9.

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Dr. Paul White

By **STEPHEN BUCKERIDGE** London, England

One of my earliest memories of Sunday School is a hand-drawn illustration of Toto the monkey stuck in a bog after chasing a coconut he had inadvertently thrown there. Memorably (it was 30 years ago!), my teacher demonstrated how pulling his own whiskers would never get him out. The squelching noises of Toto's efforts captured my imagination, but I also readily appreciated that our works are pointless with sin.

In case that doesn't sound familiar (and you are wondering which obscure chapter of the Bible you need to urgently refresh!) this came from one of Dr. Paul White's Jungle Doctor stories. The adventures of that mischievous monkey, his long-suffering friend Twiga, the giraffe, the lumbering Boohoo, the hippopotamus, and wise, resourceful Nhembo, the elephant, have enthralled children - and no doubt a few adults! - over the past few decades.

However, I think the best story is how those books came to be written. The author was an only child whose father died when he was young. As a teenager he professed faith in Christ and, in his late twenties, Dr. Paul White and his wife Mary felt called to serve the Lord in Tanzania.

Arriving in 1938, with some items so remarkably provided, they were sure the Lord was in it. They established a new hospital. Their work was in primitive surroundings (no electricity or running water) not far from Dodoma, the modern capital. Paul White learnt local languages and also became convinced that storytelling (or the use of parables as done in the scriptures) was essential in effective communications. He wrote later, 'My target now was to present the great facts of Christianity in a way that everybody could understand'.

Life was not easy with two young children, basic tools and physical weakness that meant he was sometimes pushed to work in a wheelbarrow! Mary White was very ill and, about three years after they arrived, they had to return to their native Australia.



During that journey Paul White was confined to his cabin for a time but he used the time to write. When things have been difficult I have sometimes thought about how I might have felt boarding that ship. Would changes to my plans have been difficult to accept? Would thoughts of care for others have made me bitter? Would perceived confusion about God's direction have made me question God?

The writings during that unexpected journey began a series of books, drawing on their African experience, which, in turn, formed part of a remarkable work that continued for the next half-century. Back in Australia, he worked part-time as a doctor and used their short time in Africa as an effective tool in evangelism. A radio programme lasted for twenty-five years, more than fifty books were written, and their universal appeal meant that his work was translated into over one hundred languages. (More details are in his autobiography *Alias Jungle Doctor*.)

Do your circumstances seem impossible to understand? Do disasters seem to be restricting your opportunities? The story behind the Jungle Doctor stories is an inspirational reminder that the Lord always has a purpose. God has never yet made a mistake and is not going to start with you!

As Joseph, Moses, Job and countless others have proved, God loves us too much to allow anything that is not for our ultimate good and His glory. Sure He doesn't promise to explain everything at the time but He does promise that we can totally trust His infinite wisdom and Fatherly care. There is not just a master plan for our life but, even better, the Master's plan.

