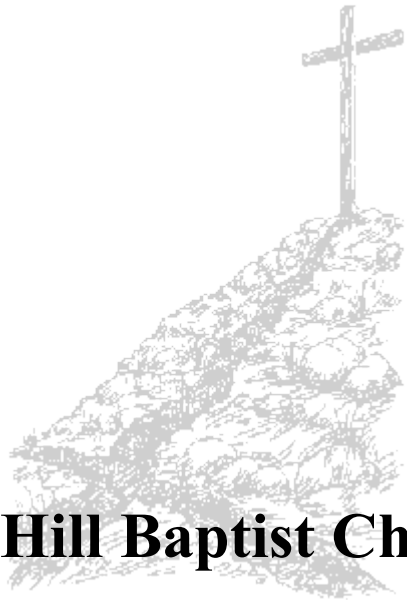


Whom Do I Serve?

Separation Between The Believer & The Unbeliever

Deuteronomy 7:1-10



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FOCAL (Deuteronomy 7:1-4 KJV) "When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; {2} And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them: {3} Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. {4} For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly."

One of the main reasons I reject the idea of *Covenant Theology* - the idea that the Church has *replaced* God's Israel, that the Church is the *New Israel of God* - is because God told Israel, when it went into the promised land, to נָכַח *nakah*¹ {pronounced *naw-kaw*'} the unbeliever. This word literally means *to kill, to strike to death, to beat, scourge, slay*. Do I need to be more illustrative? When Israel went into a land she was to *destroy the enemy*, eradicate them completely! To whom did this apply? Did Israel just kill men of military age? How did Moses interpret God's direction. Read on:

¹ Hiphil Perfect

(Deuteronomy 3:6-7 KJV) "And **we utterly destroyed them**, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, **utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city.** {7} But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves."

(Deuteronomy 2:33-35 KJV) "And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. {34} And **we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain:** {35} Only the cattle we took for a prey unto ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took."

(Deuteronomy 13:13-15 KJV) "Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; {14} Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; {15} **Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.**"

When the walls of Jericho fell, what did Israel do to the inhabitants of that city? The Bible says:

(Joshua 6:21 KJV) "**And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the**

sword."

What about Ai? Did Joshua hear a different message on taking captives in that city? Obviously not, for the Bible says:

(Joshua 8:26-28 KJV) "For **Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai.** {27} Only the cattle and the spoil of that city Israel took for a prey unto themselves, according unto the word of the LORD which he commanded Joshua. {28} And **Joshua burnt Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation unto this day.**"

Israel was a virtual *killing machine*, moving through Canaan and destroying all life that they came against. The nation of Israel did this at God's command, for the Bible says:

(Joshua 10:40 KJV) "So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: **he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded.**"

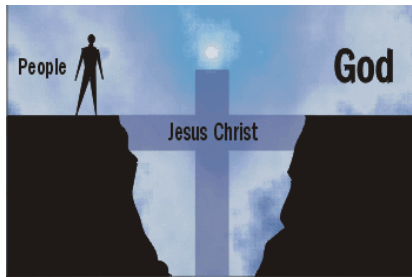
That was the pattern that God gave Israel to follow - move into Canaan and destroy all, taking their land for yourselves. Why was this done? Because the nations that Israel came against were *worshipers of false and terrible gods*. The inhabitants of Canaan often followed terrible rituals of child sacrifice, offering up their firstborn children to appease the demonic gods of that land.

Because of this God gave Israel a national mandate² to *destroy all worshipers of demons that they encountered*, to purge them from the land. This was Israel's mandate - not the mandate of the Church of Christ! The mandate of the Church is to *lead people to know Christ as Lord and Savior*, not to kill the enemy!

Israel's Mandate



In our era, Christians have often become *confused* about the role of the Church and the role of Israel. Many times we *embrace the Mosaic Law* that was never given to us, forgetting that it is **by Grace we are saved, and that not of ourselves: it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.** (Ephesians 2:8-9). Many Christians have forgotten the rebuke that our Lord gave to James and John when they wanted to command fire to come down from Heaven to consume the unbeliever.



Church's Mandate?

The Church's mandate, it's marching orders, are to *tell others about Christ, to promote the Gospel of salvation with all that we do*. We are not called to fuss, nor to fight, nor to kill one another - nor the heathen, for that matter. We are called to tell that wonderful story of Jesus

and His love! Remember the words of the Master when James and John wanted to rain fire down on an unbelieving and rebellious city:

(Luke 9:55-56 KJV) "But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. {56} For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."

Israel's Warning DOES Apply To Us

Though the Church is NOT Israel, nor is it a replacement for Israel - the passage we're reviewing today does have some application for the Christian. The passage warns us:

FOCAL (Deuteronomy 7:3-6 KJV) "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. {4} For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. {5} But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars,

and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. {6} For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

God's Israel was *commanded* to separate itself from the unbelievers around it. Israel was not to *intermarry* with the unbelievers, lest they bring their false gods into the relationship and lead God's Chosen into idolatry³. God warned Israel:

FOCAL (Deuteronomy 7:4 KJV) "... For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly".



Newton's third law of physics teaches us that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. Imagine blowing a balloon up and then, before tying the end of it off, letting the balloon go. The balloon will, quite naturally, fly across the room. The air

shooting out of the nozzle of the balloon will cause the balloon itself to take flight - at least, until the air is all gone! If you take a balloon and drive a pin into it, the balloon will explode as the air rapidly escape. An action - the pressing of the pin - brings with it an equal but opposite reaction!

Just as Newton's Third Law of Physics applies to propulsion, God has established a Law in this section that is true in the spiritual realm. The believer, saved by the Grace of God, must be careful lest the infection of death come back into his life. God *does punish unrepented sin, even in the believer!* You need only look at the account of the Noachic Flood to see that the hands that saved eight souls in love were the same hands that drowned millions in anger. The Eternal Father can and does punish sin - and He wants His people to stay out of it.

God warned Israel that if they *blended themselves* with the unbeliever - if they intermarried with the unbeliever, if they formed bonds of love with those who were unsaved - then the believer would be led away from a right relationship with God. When the believer was led away from a right relationship with God, this would cause the Lord of all Creation to be angry at God's people.

We tend to classify everything in our lives as "little things" or "big things" - and we often consider the big things to be more important than the little things. Yet it is often the "little things", the *seemingly unimportant things*, that often have the greatest impact on our lives. A little fruit caused mankind to fall under the weight of sin,

cast from the Garden of Eden. A little mis-step in a field full of clover can cause a barefooted child to step on a bee. When walking in the woods near marshy land, a one inch fang from a cottonmouth snake could kill you. A tiny bite from the little "Brown Recluse" spider will leave a wound that may last a lifetime. In some countries the "sun fly" can infect a human with an ulcer that will eat a hole through your body. A small, unseen germ can turn a delicious apple pie into something as dangerous as rat poison. Can any of you who have ever been sick with influenza say that little things do not matter?

I was in my study praying the other morning, looking on the Face of the Beloved and being blessed more than words can say. Outside a terrible storm blew, one of the storms that often hit Henderson County without warning toward the end of winter. Suddenly I felt the air move within the house, and the house felt as if a giant hand smacked the roof. I moved toward the window and looked out to see that the large scaly bark chestnut tree next to the house had blown down in the storm, taking with it the power lines between my and my neighbor's house. That tree missed the house by mere feet - but praise Jesus, it missed the house. What caused the tree to fall? Was it the great wind blowing on the tree? Well, yes, I'm sure the wind contributed to its fall. But as I looked at the tree I saw at its base a hole about as big as a man's hand, black, and diseased. Where small bugs had entered the tree, these tiny parasites had formed a weakness in the base of the tree that ultimately led to its destruction. When the stresses of life, that great wind, hit the tree, the weaknesses that came into the tree - evidenced by the diseased hole - helped the wind destroy that tree.

The same thing is true for the believer who, professing Christ as Savior, turns to the world and its pleasures. The Christian who secretly or not so secretly enjoys pornography shames the Master, while leading other unbelievers to ridicule rather than receive the Savior. The professing believer who hates another, publicly bad mouthing a Church he has left, gives substance to the unbeliever's decision in rejecting Christ as Savior. The pastor who begins to feel that he is master of the Body, wresting from the Chief Shepherd the position that belongs to Him alone - has he not sinned the sin of Moses (**Numbers 20:12**)?

Though it is blasphemous when the Christian misrepresents the Master, the greatest blasphemy is the disease that sin brings to the lives of those who should be walking as *kings and priests before God* (**Revelation 1:6**). Beloved, how shall you stand when the winds of life blow if you allow disease to enter? The time will come when the storms of life will gather and suddenly you will be exposed! Flee from the weakening curse of sin's momentary pleasure. Do not believe, as Esau believed, that you can sell your birthright for a little porridge and still enjoy the birthright. The best way to avoid lying helpless on your back when the storms of life hit is to keep your eyes on the Savior at all time. Refuse to be wooed by sin - reject Satan's offering and live!

The Expectations of God

God expects those who profess faith in Him to remain true to Him. When believers begin to absorb the little

disobediences of the unbeliever and the little gods of the unbeliever, then it doesn't take too long before the Christian looks and acts *exactly* like the unbeliever. I certainly do not endorse acting *holier than thou*, especially since I, like Paul, feel myself to be the *chiefest of sinners*. But Beloved, the Christian - just like God's Israel of the Old Testament - is set apart by the Blood of Christ. We are not saved because we are *better* than anyone else - perish the thought! In fact, the Christian is described by the Lord as the *those considered weak or foolish* by the world. We read:

(1 Corinthians 1:27-31 KJV) "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; {28} And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: {29} That no flesh should glory in his presence. {30} But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: {31} That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

God chose us, just as He chose His Israel, not because we were the *best in life*, but because we are *the foolish*. If that hurts your pride, then so be it! What I have, what any of us have to brag on, we have *by faith in Christ*. God told Israel the same thing when He said:

FOCAL(Deuteronomy 7:6-8 KJV) "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy

God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. {7} The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: {8} But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

Israel was *holy*⁴ or *set apart* not because of how good they were, but because God the Savior *saved them*. Israel as a nation was not a great nation, but a tiny nation compared to the great nations of the world. That holy group we call Christ's Church is also small in comparison to all the other nations in this world today. Yet we are nonetheless saved by Grace, just as God's Israel was saved by Grace - and called to live lives that *honor our Savior!*

Professing Christians today have so blended with the world around them that it is often difficult to tell the difference between believer and non-believer. Just as God set **His love upon** Israel, He has set **His love upon** the Christian.

FOCAL(Deuteronomy 7:9-10 KJV) "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; {10} And repayeth them that hate him to

4 qadowsh {pronounced *kaw-doshe'*}

their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face."

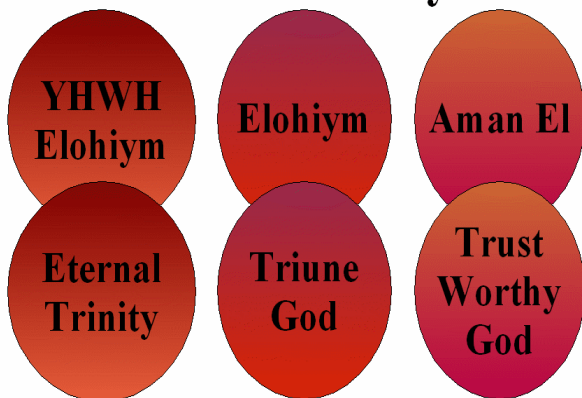
Doctrine of Believer Separation

Three names of God are given in this section to emphasize that what is now said *stands whether it applies to Israel or to the Church*. The first name of God is rendered as **LORD thy God**, or **YHWH Elohiym**. This is the Eternal name of God compounded with the *first name of the Triune God* found in Scripture (see **Genesis 1:1**). This name emphasizes that the statement that follows will be an *eternal truth* that applies to *the Triune God*. The next name of God we see is in the phrase **He is God**. This is the name of the Triune God **Elohiym** {pronounced el-o-heem'} - again emphasizing that the statement that follows applies to the One and Only Godhead. Though the Canaanites worshiped many gods and goddesses, just as Americans do today, there is only One Triune God and He is Elohiym! Finally we see

the third name of God, rendered in the King James as **the faithful God**. This is the Hebrew **Aman El**, which means *Faithful and Trustworthy God*. God is faithful in

Names Of God

In Deuteronomy 7:9



keeping covenant with His people, but He also expects His people to keep covenant with Him.

It is strange to me that those who are called by the name *Christian* should find it strange that God would expect them to keep covenant with Him. When you marry, or even when you're in a intimate relationship with another person, don't you expect that person to be faithful to you? If you have a best friend, don't you expect that person to love you above the average person in the street. If we require of those who we know to be faithful to the relationship we have with them, wouldn't it logically follow that God would expect the same thing? Our Covenant keeping God wants us to bond ourselves to Him and Him alone.

1 Believer separation does *not* mean that we act self righteous, nor holier than thou in the presence of the unbeliever. Listen to God's Word:

(Isaiah 65:2-5 KJV) **"I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; {3} A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; {4} Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; {5} Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day."**

God despises the *holier than thou* believer. We are all sinners! Our Lord Jesus Christ was *condemned* by the Pharisees for allowing the unbelievers of His day to come and eat with Him:

(Matthew 9:10-12 KJV) "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. {11} And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? {12} But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

This in itself gives us a precedence for Believer separation. As Christ did, so must we do. We befriend the unbeliever, and offer aid in the name of Christ to the fallen. But, like Christ our Savior, we *do not fall into the sinful practices of the fallen*.

2 The Christian must *ever be mindful of the truth that he represents the Savior at all times*. Believer separation demands that we walk - that is, live our lives - unsullied by the sins of this world. The Scripture says:

(1 John 1:5-9 KJV) "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. {6} If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: {7} But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus

Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. {8} If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. {9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

We as believers are *commanded to walk in the Light of Christ* - live as He lived. Christ is our example - let us follow Him! Follow Him believing we are empowered and loved. Do not take sin *lightly*, but strive to honor the One Who loves you with everlasting love. Do not fail ; lightly as Israel did. When we fail, and we do often fail, we will confess our sin to Him, repenting of our failure, and *move on*. Watchman Nee in **The Normal Christian Life** stated:

"Oh, it is a marvelous thing! God is the light, and as we walk in the light with Him everything is exposed and open to that light, so that God can see it all -- and yet the Blood is able to cleanse from every sin. What a cleansing! It is not that I have not a profound knowledge of myself, nor that God has not a perfect knowledge of me. It is not that I try to hide something nor that God tries to overlook something. No, it is that He is in the light and I too am in the light, and that there the precious Blood cleanses me from every sin. The Blood is enough for that!

Some of us, oppressed by our own weakness, may at times have been tempted to think that there are sins which are almost unforgivable. Let us remember the word: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from every sin." Big sins, small sins, sins which may

be very black and sins which appear to be not so black, sins which I think can be forgiven and sins which seem unforgivable, yes, all sins, conscious or unconscious, remembered or forgotten, are included in those words: "every sin". "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin", and it does so because in the first place it satisfies God.

Since God, seeing all our sins in the light, can forgive them on the basis of the Blood, what ground of accusation has Satan? Satan may accuse us before Him, but, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31). God points him to the Blood of His dear Son. It is the sufficient answer against which Satan has no appeal. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33,34).

So here again our need is to recognize the absolute sufficiency of the precious Blood. "Christ having come a high priest...through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11,12). He was Redeemer once. He has been High Priest and Advocate for nearly two thousand years. He stands there in the presence of God, and "he is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:1,2). Note the words of Hebrews 9:14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ..." They underline the sufficiency of His ministry. It is enough for God."

You will find no place in all of the Old Testament where God *smacked Israel* for the slightest failures in righteousness. Where the heart sought God, and did its best, the love of God stood ready to lift up.

3 Believer separation *demands* that the Christian find - and stay in - a local Church! You cannot be *physically*



born into a local Church - those who believe this have confused the Church with the nation Israel. You must be *spiritually born again* by faith in Christ, then from that point you are required by God to find - and support - a local Church.

1 John 1:7 states: "... We have fellowship with one another ... and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin." If we are walking with

Jesus in the light, then we will be having fellowship with other Christians. We will be a *contributing part* of a local Church.

Within the bond of the Church believers learn:

(Romans 13:8 KJV) "... to love **one another** ..."

(Romans 14:13 KJV) "... that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."

(Romans 15:7 KJV) "[to] receive **one another**, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

(Romans 15:14 KJV) ".. to admonish **one another**."

(Romans 16:16 KJV) "[to] salute **one another** ..."

(Galatians 5:13 KJV) "... to ... by love serve **one another**."

(Ephesians 4:2 KJV) "With all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing **one another** in love;"

(Ephesians 4:32 KJV) "[to] ... be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving **one another**, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

(Colossians 3:16 KJV) "... teaching and admonishing **one another** in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

(1 Thessalonians 4:18 KJV) "[to] comfort **one another**...."

Christians are designed by Christ to be

(1 Peter 2:5 KJV) "... lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

We are (Ephesians 4:25) members of **one another**, designed by Christ to be a living Body. The Christian *cannot do the work that God has assigned him to do in this world apart from the Church that Christ died for.*

If you're sitting at home watching *Charles Stanley* or *John MacArthur*, refusing to attend and serve Christ through interaction with a local Church filled with *living Christians*, then you are in disobedience to Christ your Lord. You cannot exercise the disciplines of the faith through a television, radio, or magazine. You are *commanded* to be in Church:

(Hebrews 10:24-25 KJV) "And let us consider **one another to provoke unto love and to good works: {25} Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**"

and if you're not, you are not separating yourself as God has commanded.

4 The Christian is to *withdraw intimate fellowship* from professing believers who break shalom or the peace of God. The Bible says:

(2 Thessalonians 3:6 KJV) "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **withdraw⁶ yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.**"

⁶ Present Middle Infinitive stello {stel'-lo}, *withdraw, avoid*

This is one of the few times we are commanded to *abstain from fellowship* with another professing believer. You saw earlier that, as a Church, we are to *encourage* one another and to *admonish* one another. If you want to know how a Church should act within its members, you need only open up the Bible and read through a small section of the Book of Ephesians. Look at this text:

Ephesians 4:25-32 (KJV) "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. {26} Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: {27} Neither give place to the devil. {28} Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. {29} Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. {30} And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. {31} Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: {32} And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Ephesians 5:1-2 (KJV) "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; {2} And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor."

Look at the formula we're given here. **Put away lying.** Why? Because we're **members of one another.** God has put this Body together *for His Eternal purpose*, and it behooves each one of us to *walk together* in unity to achieve His goals. The Church is *not* a loose confederation of individuals bonded together for convenience sake. You go to the movies or a ball game based on that criteria. The Church is a Body of Believers *committed to goals that are loftier than those which Israel had when she went into the Promised Land.* Our goals are to *save souls by preaching and teaching Christ, to change the world not by killing Canaanites but by converting them to know Jesus as Savior.*

The forward momentum of the Body *demand*s that we work together with one another and with Our Divine Sponsor and Power, God the Holy Spirit.

5 Breaking shalom *also includes allowing sin to reign in the life unchecked.* The Christian is *in the world* but the *world must not be in him.* We are not to separate ourselves from the world, but are *specifically sent into the world by Jesus* to tell others about Him, leading them to salvation by faith in Him. But we are never to become perverted by worldliness, nor the evil that is in the world. Jesus said:

(John 17:15-18 KJV) "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. {16} They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. {17} Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. {18} As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also

sent them into the world."

We are sent **into the world** just as Israel was sent into Canaan - but we are not sent to kill, but to lead the world to life! We are told of the lust of this world:

(1 John 2:15-17 KJV) "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. {17} And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

C.S. Lewis said "**Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.**" The Christian who practices *believer separation* realizes that his or her life - and how they live it - is of infinite importance for those in our periphery. We are in the world like firemen are in a burning building: if we do not do our jobs, people *can and will go to eternal damnation!*

6 However, we must be *very careful* to never *break shalom with the Word of God*. We are told in the Scripture:

Romans 16:17-18 (KJV) "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which **cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. {18} For they that are such**

serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

We are *never* told to avoid division and conflict *at all costs* - we are just told to *choose our battles*. I will choose which mountain I die on, and I will not die on the mountain of your opinion, nor on the mountain of what other Churches do. Christ is all in all, and it must be *clearly presented* in God's Word or I'll not fight about it - and neither should you. Satan has often destroyed the local Church through fights and fusses over things that mattered little in the eternal Plan of God. The Jews demand the Gentiles be circumcised or they're not saved (**Acts 15:1**). Peter disassociates himself from the Gentiles when the Jews are around, and is chastised by Paul (**Galatians 2:11**). The Scriptures abound with illustrations of failures in the Church because the followers of Christ were either *too liberal* or *too conservative*. The road that every believer *must stay on* is the clear teachings of the Word of God and the clear leading of God the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us:

1 Corinthians 14:33 (KJV) "For **God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."**

There must be peace within God's Body so that we can preach the perfect peace of the Cross to the lost. We must not make an idol of anything - we must stay focused on God and His Word. We must remain true to

the mission set before us, to preach the Gospel to a lost and dying world. God's cry to disobedient Israel was:

Jeremiah 8:19-22 (KJV) "Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people because of them that dwell in a far country: Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? {20} The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. {21} For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. {22} Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Jeremiah 9:1 (KJV) "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

Let us not fall into the same trap that grabbed His Covenant nation Israel. Move forward, Beloved of God, keeping your eyes on Jesus Christ while we preach the Cross to a lost and dying world.