

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

Scripture Reading: Exo. 10:8-11, 21-26; 12:6-11, 37-42; 2 Cor. 6:17

THE TYPE OF ISRAEL'S EXODUS FROM EGYPT – The Result of Redemption Being to Go Out

God saved the Israelites through the **Passover lamb**. When the messenger of God went forth to kill the firstborn in the land of Egypt, the angel of death passed over the doors which had the **blood** upon them. If there was no blood on the door, the firstborn of that house was killed. It had nothing to do with whether the door was good or bad, whether there was anything special about the lintel or the side posts, whether there was anything good about that family, or whether the firstborn child honored his parents. **The issue was whether there was any blood.** Whether or not you will perish does not depend on your family's status or your behavior; it depends on whether you have the blood. **The basic factor for salvation is the blood; this has nothing to do with us.**

We who are saved by grace are redeemed by the blood. But please remember that immediately **after being redeemed by the blood, we must move and go out.** Do not think that we can buy a house and dwell in Egypt after we are redeemed by the blood.... **The first result of redemption is separation, that is, departure, a going out.** God never redeems a person and leaves him in the old position to continue living in the world... Once you have been separated by the smiting angel, you have to pack up and move out of Egypt. ...As soon as you are redeemed by the blood, you become **a sojourner and a pilgrim** on the earth; you have to go out of Egypt and **be separated from the world immediately.** You must not continue to live there.

There was a sister who taught a class in a children's meeting. Once she was telling the story of Lazarus and the rich man. She asked the children, "Do you want to be Lazarus or the rich man? The rich man enjoys himself in this age and suffers in the next. Lazarus suffers today and enjoys himself later. Which would you choose to be?" An eight-year-old girl stood up and said, "While I am alive, I want to be the rich man, but when I die, I want to be Lazarus." Many people are like this. When they need salvation, they trust in the blood of the Lamb; but after they are saved by the blood, they settle down firmly in Egypt. **They think that they can have the best of both sides. Please remember that the**

blood's redemption saves you from the world. Once you are redeemed by the blood, you immediately become a sojourner, a pilgrim in this world....

The Many Frustrations from Pharaoh

The story of Israel's exodus from Egypt shows us how difficult it was for them to leave Egypt! Egypt tried to hold them back again and again. When the Israelites first wanted to leave Egypt, Pharaoh only allowed the strong men to go; the young and the old had to stay back. Pharaoh knew that if he could hold back the young and the old the strong men would not go far. After a while they would come back. Satan's strategy is to prevent us from having a thorough separation from Egypt. From the very beginning, Moses rejected Pharaoh's delays. If we leave one thing or one person behind, we cannot go too far; eventually we will turn back.

You may recall what Pharaoh told Moses the first time: *"Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land"* (Exo. 8:25). Later, he told him not to go too far. The third time he told him that only the strong ones could go. The fourth time, he told him that all the people could go but the cattle and the sheep had to remain. Pharaoh's way was to persuade them to serve God there in Egypt. This was his basic premise. He was willing to allow a person to be God's child as long as such a one remained in Egypt. He knew that if a person served God in Egypt, he would not have a testimony, and he would have to serve Pharaoh in the end. Even though one wanted to be God's servant, he would eventually end up being Satan's servant.

If you try to serve God in the world, you will surely end up being Satan's slave. You will have to make bricks for him, and he will not let you go. Even if he does, he will not let you go too far. If he lets you go, he may only allow the strong men to go; the rest will have to stay...

Our Way Being in the Wilderness

In New Testament terms, both Egypt and the wilderness represent the world. Egypt refers to the world in its moral sense. The wilderness refers to the world in its physical sense. Christians are in the physical world but not in the moral world. We must see that there are two aspects of the world: the first as a place and the second as a system. There are many things related to the physical world which are attractive, which arouse the lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, and the vainglory of life. This is Egypt. But there is another meaning to the world—the physical world as a place where one's body resides.

Sojourners and Pilgrims in this World

We must realize that we are **sojourners and pilgrims** in this world. As far as the moral world is concerned, we have come out of it. It wants to keep us, but if we stay, we will not be able to serve God. The world wants to be closer to us, but if we allow it to come too close to us, it will be impossible for us to serve God. The world wants to keep our people and our treasure, but if these things are kept in the world, we will not be able to serve our God.

We have been separated from Egypt, and **our faces are toward the promised land**. The basis of that separation is the blood, the blood that has bought us back. The Egyptians have not been bought by the blood; the worldly ones have not been redeemed. As redeemed ones, we have been transferred to another world. Therefore, we must leave this world.

Suppose you go to a watch shop to buy a watch. What do you do after you have bought it? Once the purchase has been made, you take the watch away. I should not buy the watch and leave it behind. I should not tell the proprietor, "Here, you use it!" This is not reasonable. **Buying means taking away**. Whenever there is a purchase, there is a taking away. If I buy a sack of rice, the rice is taken away from the shop. After one buys something, the purchased item is taken away. Please remember that since the blood has bought us, **we must be taken away from the world**. Once a person is bought by the Lord's blood, he should leave for the promised land. As soon as one is bought, he should leave. Those who are not bought can stay behind. But as soon as a person is bought, he should leave. Once a person is bought, he has no choice but to go with the Lord. If I have been bought by the Lord, I must leave the world and go with Him.

AREAS THAT REQUIRE SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

You may ask what we should separate ourselves from. What things are considered the world? What areas should we be separated from? Before we touch any specific item, we should realize that our heart and spirit are the first things that need separation from the world. If a person's heart is set towards the world, it becomes futile to speak to him about anything else. It is useless to try to be delivered from a hundred things if the person himself still remains in the world. **First, there must be a deliverance of the person, a**

deliverance of the spirit, and a deliverance of the heart. Deliverance from matters comes later.

A man must be separated completely from Egypt; he must be separated from the world. He should not be afraid that others will criticize him as being peculiar. Then there is the need to take care of some principles. In some areas we should be separated from the world, while in other areas we should maintain peace with it. We have no intention to be contentious. In the family, in the office, and everywhere, we do not want to arouse controversy. Let us consider five specific things that need to be dealt with:

Things Which the World Considers Improper for Christians to Do

We should refrain from anything that the world considers improper for Christians to do. Our Christian life at the minimum should meet the standard of the worldly people. Everyone in the world has set up a yardstick and a standard for Christians. If you do not meet this standard, you have failed them. When you do something, you should not give the Gentiles any ground to ask, “Do Christians do this?” If others say this, you are finished. As soon as you are rebuked, you are finished. Suppose you are caught visiting certain places. The Gentiles may say, “Do Christians come to places such as this?” There are many places Gentiles like to visit. If you tell them that it is wrong to visit those places, they may insist and argue with you. But if you visit those places yourself, they will ask, “How can you also go to these places?” Some matters are sinful. When the Gentiles do them, they keep quiet about it. But if you do the same things, they will speak up. Therefore, we must refrain from things that the Gentiles consider improper. This is a minimum requirement. When a Gentile says, “Christians should not do such a thing,” we should turn away from it immediately.

Some young people are saved, but their parents are still unsaved. Sometimes these children ask for something from the parents. The parents may say, “Do you Christians want these things as well?” It is most shameful for a Christian to find himself adjusted by the Gentiles. Abraham lied and was rebuked by Abimelech. This is a most shameful thing in the Bible. We must refrain from things that are considered improper by the Gentiles. We must stay away from things that the worldly people, the Egyptians, consider inappropriate for Christians to do. We must be separated from them.

Things Incompatible with the Lord

Anything that is incompatible with the Lord must also be removed. Since the Lord suffered humiliation on the earth, we should not seek glory here. Since the Lord was crucified like a robber, we should not seek to be welcomed everywhere. When our Lord was walking on the earth, He was accused of demon possession. We cannot allow people to say that we have the best mind, that we are smart, or that we are very intellectual. We have to pass through what the Lord passed through. **Everything that is incompatible with the Lord must go...**

To follow Jesus of Nazareth, one must be ready to suffer humiliation; this is not a thing of glory. To follow Jesus of Nazareth means to bear the cross. When others first came to the Lord, the Lord told them that they had to bear the cross in order to follow Him. According to the Lord, this is the main entrance... Suppose a person's parents or brothers are killed. Others may offer a reasonable excuse for the murderer, but the person may say, "My folks are already dead. An excuse cannot change this fact. If my folks were not yet dead, there would be something to talk about. But now that they are dead, there is nothing more to say." In the same principle, we can say that the cross is already here; what more is there to say? The world has already crucified our Lord on the cross. Today, we are on the Lord's side, and we can only say, "World, from your point of view, I am crucified. From my point of view, you are also crucified." **Today, it is impossible for these two sides to communicate. It is impossible for the world to come over. It is also impossible for us to go over. The cross is a fact. If I have no way to annul the cross, I have no way to win the world over to my side. My Lord has died, and there is no longer any possibility of reconciliation.**

Once we see the cross we can say, "I boast in the cross." As far as we are concerned, the world is crucified on the cross. As far as the world is concerned, we are crucified on the cross (Gal. 6:14). The cross will be forever history and a fact. **As Christians, we are on one side, while the world is on the other side. The cross is in between. As soon as we open our eyes, we will see nothing but the cross. If we want to see the world, we have to see the cross first.**

A new believer must be led by the Lord to see that his condition should match the Lord's condition. Some people ask many questions. They ask, "Will we touch the world if we do this?" And they ask, "Can we do that?" We cannot tell people what to do item by item.

We only need to give them the general principle. The world is against the cross; it is against our Lord. If our heart is open and soft before God and if we go to Him, the difference between the world and the cross spontaneously will become clear to us...

Anything That Quenches Our Spiritual Life

It is difficult for us to point out the world item by item; the list is endless. But we should grasp one basic principle: **everything that quenches one's spiritual life in the Lord is the world**. The world is anything that kills one's zeal for prayer to God. The world is anything that takes away one's interest in God's Word. The world is anything that frustrates one from testifying before men. The world is anything that hinders one from coming to the Lord, anything that results in confession. The world is an atmosphere that chokes and dries a person up. It is anything that discourages a man's heart from loving and yearning for the Lord. Here we see a broad principle—anything that quenches our spiritual condition before the Lord is the world. **We must reject all of it.**

Some people say, “This thing is not sinful at all. Can you say that it is worldly?” Many things appear to be very good to our eyes, but they quench the fire within us after we touch them once or twice. Our conscience becomes weak before God. After we become involved with these things, our Bible reading becomes tasteless. We may have the time, but we no longer have the heart for reading. After we participate in such things, we feel empty inside and have nothing to testify before men. **Such things may not be a matter of sin. Our question is whether or not these things are quenching our spiritual life.** Everything that quenches our spiritual life is the world and must be rejected totally before the Lord.

Everything That Fails to Give Others the Impression That We Are Christians

We need to mention one more thing—our relationship with other people. Any kind of social function, communication, or activity that causes us to hide our lamp under the bushel is the world. Many social friendships, functions, and contacts with worldly people **force us to put our lamp under the bushel**; there is no way under those circumstances for us to stand up to declare that we are Christians. **When others engage in such conversation, you have to pretend to be courteous. You have to listen to them and laugh with them. You feel quenched within, but you have to put on a smiling face.** Inwardly you feel that this is the world, yet outwardly you have to go along with it. Inwardly you know this is sin, yet outwardly you cannot say that it is wrong. You should

not remain in this kind of social environment. Many of God's children are gradually sucked into the world through indiscriminate social activities and contacts.

All new believers must know where they stand from the very beginning, and they must make a choice. We are not trying purposely to be antisocial. We are not John the Baptist who did not eat or drink. We follow our Lord who ate and drank. But when we contact people, we must maintain our stand. No one should be able to insult our Christian stand. They should respect our stand. When I take a stand as a Christian, I must maintain my stand even if others criticize me.

If we really want to take the way of separation from the world, we must pay attention to our speaking. We must also show our Christian stand every time we are in the company of others. If we cannot maintain our stand as Christians, it is better to turn away from where we are. Psalm 1:1 says that we should not “stand on the path of sinners, / Nor sit in the company of mockers.” If we stand on the path of sinners, we will end up in their place sooner or later. If we sit in the company of mockers, we will become mockers sooner or later. Sin and mocking are contagious. We must learn to flee these things as if we are fleeing from germs.

Things Disapproved of by Weak Believers

Things which stumble a weak conscience are another class of things that constitute the world. God's children must learn to turn away from them. The previous discussion concerns things which the world considers improper. Here we are talking about things which a young Christian considers improper. If a Gentile thinks that we should not do a certain thing, we will lose our testimony if we do it. Similarly, we should avoid anything that a Christian disapproves of, even if the one who disapproves is the youngest and weakest of all Christians. This is the biblical commandment. It is not the words of the strong Christian but the words of the weak Christian that should determine what we should or should not do. What they say may not be correct; what they consider forbidden may not be wrong. But we should not stumble them because their conscience is weak. They may think that we are on the wrong way. If we take such a way, we will stumble them. Paul said, “All things are lawful to me, but not all things are profitable” (1 Cor. 6:12). All things are lawful, but others may consider these things to be a form of the world. Therefore, we should not do them for their sake.

Please remember that everyone who feels welcomed by the Lord is separated from the world. Many people do not feel the excellency of the Lord when they come to Him because they have not counted all things as refuse. Those who have not counted all things as refuse surely consider earthly things precious. Such people do not know what it means for God to welcome them; they do not know what it means for God to be their Father and for them to be God's children. They do not know that the One who spoke these words is the all-sufficient Lord.... (*The New Believers Series, Separation from the World, book 3. Watchman Nee*)

THE CONTENTS OF THE SATANIC SYSTEM

We have seen that the world in 1 John 2:15 denotes an evil, satanic, anti-God system that is constituted of the things created by God. Satan has used these things to form his system. However, these things are not the contents of the satanic world system.] What, then are the contents of the satanic system? First John 2:16 says, "*Because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*"

The contents of this system are the [lust of the flesh](#), the [lust of the eyes](#), and the [vainglory of life](#). The lust of the flesh is the passionate desire of the [body](#); the lust of the eyes is the passionate desire of the [soul](#) through the eyes; the vainglory of life is the [empty pride](#), [boast](#), [confidence](#), [assurance](#), and display of [material things](#) of the present life.

We may use owning a car as an illustration of the difference between something used by Satan to form his system and the actual contents of this system. How can a car be utilized by the enemy of God to form his evil system? The car itself is not a problem and is not the content of Satan's system. The problem is with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and, in particular, with the vainglory of the present life. [If it were not for man's vainglory, a car would not become a problem. However, many people like to buy an expensive car in order to make a display.](#) In their case, the car they drive is used for vainglory. In this country a car is a necessity. The problem, therefore, is not with the car itself; the problem is with the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. When you consider a certain kind of car, you may desire to have it. Some may think about a certain car day and night. The car is not wrong—the persons are wrong. The problem is not with the car they need; the problem is with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life.

DELIVERED FROM THE WORLD THROUGH BAPTISM

Through baptism we are delivered from the world by water. Noah's family was saved through the flood which destroyed the world and thus was delivered from the corrupted world. The Israelites were saved through the water of the Red Sea which drowned the Egyptian army, and they were thus delivered from the Egyptian world which ruled over them. Baptism is foreshadowed by these two incidents of passing through the waters of death (1 Pet. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 10:1-2). Baptism by immersion delivers us from the world. Therefore, when a believer is baptized, **he has passed through both the flood and the Red Sea**. His ascent from the water denotes his separation from the world. (*Lesson Book, Level 4: Life—Knowing and Experiencing Life, Chapter 14, by Witness Lee*)