



# The Burning Bush - Online article archive

## Our stand on separation

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The Scriptures lay before Christ's Church the will of God pertaining to the doctrine of separation. With regard to this doctrine the following points are made clear in God's Word. (It is important to underline that the points outlined below that present the Biblical teaching on separation, constitute a summary of what the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster has stated, believed and preached during its entire history).

1. The holiness of God is the undeniable root of separation at both a personal and an ecclesiastical level. God's holiness is the essence of His very being, thus He is "glorious in holiness", (Exodus 15: 11); and He is transcendently holy, so that "There is none holy as the Lord", (1 Samuel 2: 2).
2. On the basis of His own holiness the Lord commands His people to be holy, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy", (Leviticus 19: 2), (1 Peter 1: 16).
3. God's eternal purpose for His people is to make them a holy people by conforming them to the image of Christ, "For whom He did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son..." (Romans 8: 29); and "This is the will of God, even your sanctification", (1 Thess 4: 3).
4. Consequently, in keeping with this His eternal purpose, God's saving work in His people is essentially to separate them unto Himself to be a holy people, "Unto...them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints", (1 Corinthians 1: 2). The essential and basic sense of the verb to sanctify is to set apart or to separate, whether in the Old or New Testaments. In this text as in other Scriptures the word sanctified is used in a broad sense with reference to our salvation as a whole. Thus, when God saves a sinner, He separates that person from the rest of fallen humanity. The words of Solomon in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple are a most succinct statement of the divine purpose of God in salvation, "For Thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth to be thine inheritance", (1 Kings 8: 53).
5. Therefore, in keeping with God's eternal purpose, Christ's redemptive work for His people was to sanctify them or separate them, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ", (Hebrews 10: 10); (see also Ephesians 5: 25-27). Moreover, the work of the Holy Spirit is of the same nature, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit", (1 Peter 1: 2).
6. On the basis of this clear Biblical teaching it is the responsibility of Christ's Church to preserve the highest possible standards of purity in both doctrine and practice, "holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever", (Psalm 93: 5).
7. Therefore, in matters ecclesiastical, particular churches – such as the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster – are called by God to separate themselves unto Christ and thus for the glory of Christ, (see Hebrews 13:13). This is a key issue – we are separatists for Christ's glory, not just for the sake of being separated from other churches, organisations or individuals.
8. Moreover, God's call to separate is also for the purpose of preserving the purity of the gospel. Scripture shows that unholy alliances with deniers of the gospel will lead to corruption of truth, (1 Cor 15: 33, Gal 5:9). Therefore, on this basis of desiring to preserve the purity of the gospel Biblical separation cannot be viewed as being schismatic, as has been alleged against separatists. The word schism in the New Testament literally denotes a rent, or cleft, and is the sin of rending the body of Christ through a failure to care for the members of that body, (1 Cor 12:25). In nature schism is the sin of introducing self-centred division in a church situation where there ought to be mutual love and tolerance. But this is not the nature of Biblical separation with its desire to preserve the purity of the gospel by separating from professing churches in which Christ and His finished work are denied.



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9. Thus, God's call to separate means that a particular church is to separate from all participation or co-operation in worship or ministry with churches, organisations or individuals that have apostasised through denial of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, (see 2 Cor 6:14-18, Eph 5:11, 1 Tim 6:3-5).

10. They are also called to separate from brethren who maintain fellowship with those who deny the faith, (2 Thess 3:6,14-15); to repudiate unscriptural ecumenism and ecumenical evangelism; and to refuse to compromise any essential truth of the gospel in an effort to pursue and gain visible church union with degenerate churches, (see Prov 23:23, Amos 3:3, 2 John 9-11).

11. In the light of this Biblical teaching on the Doctrine of Separation, this Commission recommends the following:

(a) that in a time of deepening apostasy from the faith and an increasing unscriptural ecumenical agenda, the Presbytery publicly reaffirms that the historic separatist stand of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster is according to the Scriptures, (2 Cor 6:14-18); and that this Presbytery repudiates any association with the World Council of Churches or with any national or local arm of this body as well as any association with the Charismatic/Pentecostal delusion; and calls on God's people to separate from these unscriptural bodies and movements.

(b) that Presbytery requires all ministers and sessions to uphold and maintain this separatist position in the public ministry of each local Free Presbyterian congregation through expounding the Scripture on the Doctrine of Separation and by ensuring that this separatist position is upheld by the communicant membership; and to recognise that this requirement is in obedience to Scripture and is in keeping with the particular Presbytery ordination vow that reads and is subscribed by every minister and elder – "I vow to maintain the truly scriptural separatist position of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster..."

(c) this Presbytery rules that no Free Presbyterian minister, elder and communicant member should be in attendance at religious services sponsored and promoted by ecumenists whose agenda is to promote the goal of the false ecumenical movement; namely the further establishment of 'the one-world church'.

(d) that, believing the Church of Rome to be the apostate system of antichristianity under the headship of the Pope within the visible church (WCF ch.25 Section 6), and therefore believing that, on the basis of their blasphemous doctrines no member of the Roman Catholic clergy can be recognised as a minister of the New Testament, this Presbytery requires that no Free Presbyterian minister, elder or communicant member should ever be in attendance at the Mass and must also exercise due diligence so as not to become entangled with, participate in or attend any service of worship in which any member of the Roman Catholic clergy or orders is taking part;

(e) that members of the Free Presbyterian Church who, because of public office, are invited to attend civic services should enquire beforehand as to the format of and participants in such services, and should not attend those civic services that are billed as ecumenical/cross-community services, thereby ensuring that they will not be perceived to compromise the separatist position of this denomination;

(f) where there is an alleged breach of the separatist position of the Free Presbyterian Church on the part of any minister the Presbytery will appoint an investigative/judicial Commission to deal with the case; and the allegation of such a breach by an elder or communicant member will be investigated by the local session; and according to the findings of each body appropriate discipline will be administered;

(g) that, in keeping with our former practice, liberty of conscience should be granted to ministers with respect to participation with ministers of other Protestant denominations at funerals and weddings.