

## **A CALL TO BE SEPARATE!**

### **INTRODUCTION**

On Friday this week, South Africa began its 21-day lockdown, as many countries around the world have been forced to do. This lockdown is to protect citizens and help isolate the virus from spreading. It is called flattening the curve.

As human beings, this is not easy, we are separated from our loved ones, we don't have the freedom of movement that we are used to, and we may not even know what to do with ourselves for 21 days.

Just as it's necessary to protect ourselves from this virus that can rob us of our lives, there is a spiritual parallel. There comes a time in each Christian's life when we need to do a spiritual lock down and separate ourselves from worldly influences, people and behaviour and draw near to God.

This may not appear to be so important when facing the challenge of a virus that can cause physical death, but it is even more important because spiritual separation can protect us from physical death. The 21 days of lockdown we have right now are the ideal opportunity to apply not only physical separation, but spiritual separation to our lives. In the Bible we have examples of times of separation, let's examine, the reasons and the results of some of these today.

### **MESSAGE**

#### **SEPARATE YOURSELF TO PREPARE FOR MINISTRY**

When Jesus was ready to begin His three years of ministry on the earth, he was baptized and immediately the Holy Spirit drove Him into a time of separation.

**Mark 1:9-14** (NKJV) It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. 11 Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 12 Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness. 13 And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to Him. 14 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel the kingdom of God,

- It says the Holy Spirit drove Jesus – there are times the Holy Spirit will call us into a time of separation – sometimes it can feel like a wilderness experience.
- Separation is necessary in times of getting ready for ministry – Jesus fasted 40 days and when He came out of the wilderness, He was ready for a time of ministry that changed the world.

- During this time God sent His angels to minister to Jesus. He was separate, but not alone!
- At the end of the fasting, Jesus went through a time of temptation, but he was ready. Every angle that satan came from, Jesus defeated using scripture.

I deliberately take times of separation for myself. These are time when I seek the Lord's face for direction, victory over my own fleshly nature and fresh anointing for ministry. The loneliness is not easy, but I can testify that the Lord has always honoured those times of separation.

- ***During this 21 day lockdown, we should be seeking the Lord's face for what He wants us to be doing once it is over!***
- ***During this time we can, know we are not alone. God is with us and His ministering angels will help us.***
- ***Never expect it to be easy when you come to the end of the separation time – satan only came to tempt Jesus at the end of the 40 days, he didn't succeed and Jesus began three years of prolific ministry.***

## **SEPARATE YOURSELF TO IDENTIFY AND PROTECT**

God told Noah to build an ark, this would be a vessel of separation to protect Noah, his family and all the living things and animals from the flood He would send on the earth. He also instructed Moses regarding separation:

**Exodus 12:3-13** (NKJV) Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. 4 And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. 6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight. 7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. 8 Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. 9 Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire—its head with its legs and its entrails. 10 You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire. 11 And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. 12 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. 13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

Everyone was subject to the plague of the loss of the firstborn. The only thing that could protect the Israelites was their obedience to God's word - "Take some of the blood of the lamb and put it on the doorposts & lintel of the house where you stay.

- This separation identified God's people from those who were not God's people.
- This separation required meticulous obedience.
- They were only allowed to eat unleavened bread for seven days. Leaven represents sin which spreads and spoils the whole lump.
- This separation saved lives because of the blood of the lamb.

We know that this was a foretaste of what Jesus did. He is the Lamb without blemish, slain from the foundation of the earth. When we call on Him and live in obedience, forsaking the leaven or sin in our lives, His precious blood is applied to the doorposts and lintels of our lives.

I believe the doorposts represent our hearts and the lintels our minds. Let us apply the blood of the Lamb to our hearts and minds. By doing this we identify ourselves as children of the Living God. We bring ourselves under His protection both physically, and Spiritually.

Taking Holy Communion is a parallel to what the Israelites did. As we eat of the bread and drink of the wine (or grape juice), we identify ourselves as children of God and we place our trust in the Passover Lamb of God. I encourage all of us to do this regularly, even every day. Jesus said, "do this as oft as you do in remembrance of Me."

***Let us use these 21 days of separation to deal with the leaven in our lives. Let us seek cleansing and forgiveness, surrendering obediently to the Lord, returning to Him if we have slipped away, and identifying ourselves as His children. Those with the blood of Christ on the doorposts and lintels of their lives can then expect the precious covering and protection that God gives to His children.***

## **SEPARATE YOURSELF AND BE HOLY**

Our God is a holy God and He calls us to a holy life.

**2 Corinthians 6:17-18** (NKJV) Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty."

This speaks of separation! Right now, we are faced with a 21day period of physical separation so that we will not come into contact with this virus. We must be careful to touch no unclean thing. Our physical health depends on it.

But... during this lockdown, let us make it a time of spiritual separation too. Let us deal with spiritual uncleanness, carnal and fleshy behaviour and consecrate (separate) our lives afresh to Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 7:1 (NKJV)** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

***I encourage you to spend time with Jesus, get into His word, pray, worship and come out after 21 days thoroughly right with God. Jesus is coming back for a church without spot, wrinkle & blemish, and here even as we face this awful hour of trial, if we choose correctly, it can transform into an hour of great victory.***

How do we start? We pray the prayer of David in **Psalm 139:23-24 (NKJV)** Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; 24 And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

If we then find ourselves lacking, we can cry out like David in **Psalm 51**, Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. "Create in me a clean heart O God, renew a right spirit in me."

And let us never forget the promise in **1 John 1:9 (NKJV)** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our God is a good God, merciful and kind. Even in the darkest hour, He is with us, He cares for us and He calls us into His best plan for us. He spoke to the exiles in **Jeremiah 29:11 (NLT)** For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

Let us therefore take these 21 days He has granted us and separate ourselves unto Him.

- Separate to prepare for ministry.
- Separate to identify ourselves as His children and receive His protection.
- Separate ourselves from sin and fleshly pursuits so that we can be holy as our God is Holy.

May you encounter God's presence in this time in a great and powerful way.