Separation Unto

By Frances Ridley Havergal

"Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself?" (Numbers 16:9).

The thought of separation, so inseparable from true and growing Christian life, (John 17:16), is sometimes viewed as unnecessarily stern, because it is only viewed in one aspect. Young Christians are tempted to think "separation *from...."* a hard thing, because they do not see how it is far more than outweighed by "separation *unto..."* (Romans 1:1). Let us think a little of this bright and beautiful side of it.

There is no true separation *from* the things which Jesus calls us to leave (Matthew 4:19,20), without a corresponding separation *unto* things which are incomparably better (Mark 10:29,30). One hardly likes to speak of it as compensation, because the "unto" is so infinitely more than the "from." It is like talking of a royal friendship compensating for dropping a beggar's acquaintance, or the whole Bank of England for a few pennies, or palace life for giving up workshop life! (Philippians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

First and chiefly, we are separated unto the Lord Himself (Numbers 6:2). He wants us not only for servants, but for friends (John 15:15). And He makes the friendship a splendid and satisfying reality. He wants to bring us "near to Himself," that we may be "a people near unto Him" (Psalm 148:14). He will not have a half possession in us, and so He says He has "severed you from other people," (why?) "that ye should be Mine!" "chosen unto Himself," "His peculiar treasure" (Psalm 135:4), "separated from among all the people of the earth to be Thine inheritance" (1 Kings 8:53).

Is it "a small thing" thus to be the Lord's Nazarite, "holy unto the Lord all the days of his separation"? (Numbers 6:8). Is any earthly crown to be compared to "the consecration (margin, separation) of his God upon his head"? (Numbers 6:7).

We are separated also to far happier human friendships than the world knows. There is no isolation intended. "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this" (2 Chronicles 25:9). Those who separated themselves *from* the people of the land *unto* the law of God, "*they* clave to their brethren" (Nehemiah 10:28,29). That is just it. We may lose "people," but we find brethren (Mark 10:30) with all the love and pleasure and freedom of fellowship--yes, and even mirth--which that relationship brings. Is not this "much more" than the society of "*people*"?

But we do not get this, perhaps do not even guess its existence, as long as we try for both (Matthew 6:24; James 4:4). Both means *neither*, in this case. We are conscious of the hollowness of the one, and we are not separated unto, and therefore cannot possibly know the enjoyment of the other.

Phoca PDF

Then we are separated unto work, "*the* work whereunto I have called them" different kinds, but to every man his own work (Mark 13:34), and thereby an end of all the gnawing purposelessness, and down-weighing uselessness and miserable time-killing and sense of helpless waste of life.

Languor or boredom is no part of a separated life. There is no room for that wretchedness any more. "Whose I am, and whom I serve" (Acts 27:23), fills it up. Some are separated more especially "to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord" (Isaiah 52:11). Some are only to stand before Him, it may be "by night" (Psalm 134:1), so that "songs in the night" (Job 35:10), may ascend to His glory. Some in a thousand ways are "to minister unto Him," to His poor, to "His prisoners," spiritually or temporally; always "unto Him" (Matthew 25:30), in His representatives. But *all* "to bless in His name" (1 Chronicles 23:13), for praise is the invariable service of separation.

"Ye see your calling" (1 Corinthians 1:26). Is it not a high one? "Seemeth it but a small thing to you?" Seemeth it too stern a thing? Is it not rather a "better thing" than fallen man could have dreamed of aspiring to? (1 Corinthians 2:9,10), a brighter life than has entered into the natural heart of man even to imagine? Is it for *you*? Listen! "Be ye separate," and what then? "*I* will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

This is His commandment to you and this is His promise. Will you obey? Then you shall know a little, but every day more and more of that unspeakable blessing of being "received" by the Father, unto the day when Jesus shall come again and receive you unto Himself (John 14:3) for the grand separation of eternity with Him!

"As by the light of opening day
The stars are all concealed,
So earthly pleasures fade way
When Jesus is revealed."

– John Newton

– From *My King And His Service* by Frances Ridley Havergal.

Frances Ridley Havergal is well known--at least among the older generations--for her hymn, "Take My Life And Let It Be." Written over one-hundred years ago, this hymn's appropriateness for today was experienced in the recent "Heart-Cry for Revival" conference, when it was sung by the congregation in a worshipful and meaningful way, giving beautiful expression beyond their own words, to the consecration the singers felt to God.

Phoca PDF