

THE NAZARITE VOW

Last week I talked about separating from people because of perceived spiritual danger. This week, I would like to take a few minutes to look at another reason for separation from others—and it has to do with our desire to be *spiritually pure* for the Lord. The desire to remain spiritually pure is *also* a relative issue. What one person considers impure, another person may not see anything wrong with. Just as it is with the issue of spiritual danger, so it is with the issue of spiritual purity. The one who is has a better understanding of what is *impure*, will always end up having problems with his friends who do not have that understanding. Eventually, the one who understands that some of the things and relationships his friends are involved in are spiritually impure will have to separate from them if they continue to involve themselves in those things. And of course, since they cannot see the uncleanness of the things they are involved with, they will mis-judge the motives of the one who separates from them.

We all have different *levels of tolerance* for sin, for spiritual impurity, and for spiritual bondage. Some Christians will settle for some spiritual freedom and some spiritual bondage. Others will settle for *much* bondage and *a little* freedom. Still others won't settle for *any* spiritual bondage in their lives at all. They will do whatever it takes to get free and remain free in the Spirit. These kinds of people are usually viewed as being too extreme, and even “elitist” by the rest of the brethren.

The same is true when it comes to spiritual purity. Some Christians will settle for some purity and some impurity. Others will settle for *much* impurity and *a little* purity. Still others won't settle for *any* impurity. They will do whatever it takes to get pure and remain pure before the Lord. And again, most of the time they are viewed as being too extreme, and even elitists by the rest of the brethren.

But there is a Scripture basis for this quest for purity, *both* in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. I've mentioned the numerous passage in the New Testament that call us to this kind of purity many times. Tonight I want to look at it from the Old Testament in what was called the “*Nazarite Vow*”.

*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When **either man or woman** shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, **to separate themselves unto the LORD: He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernels even to the husk. All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in the which he separateth himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separateth himself unto the LORD he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head. All the days of his separation he is holy unto the LORD. And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave***

his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it. And on the eighth day he shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons, to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, and make an atonement for him, for that he sinned by the dead, and shall hallow his head that same day. And he shall consecrate unto the LORD the days of his separation, and shall bring a lamb of the first year for a trespass offering: but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled. And this is the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: And he shall offer his offering unto the LORD...

Numbers 6:1-13

I'm not going to do a detailed study of this vow tonight. I just want to highlight some of the main points and show how they apply to our lives in the spirit. First of all, the central issue of the Nazarite Vow was not simply *separation* to God in general, but an intense, "above the call of duty" kind of separation. When people took this vow, they were separating themselves unto God in a *very special* way—a way that was above and beyond that which God demanded normally—for the whole nation was *already* separated to God. The whole nation was already a "holy people" unto the Lord. People took this vow when they wanted to show their devotion to God, or their love for God, in an radical, extraordinary way.

The *degree* of separation between the Israelite's general calling and this special, Nazarite walk represents the different degrees of *commitment* to the Lord in today's believers. It's not a comparison between the believer and the unbeliever. Nor is it a comparison between the true Christian and the false Christian. The only person who could take the Nazarite vow was the one who was already in a covenant relationship with God. This is a comparison between commitment and *radical* commitment. It's a comparison between the believer who gives God what He is requiring of them, and the believer who gives God much more than what He is requiring of them. This is a comparison between those who love God to a certain degree, and those who love God with *all* of their being.

God required a certain level of commitment and obedience from the Hebrews if they wanted to be His people, if they wanted to be His peculiar treasure. He required an even higher standard of commitment and obedience from His priests if they wanted to represent Him before the people. But He never required the Hebrew people or their priests to take a Nazarite Vow—the exception being Samson. This particular vow was completely voluntary.

Secondly, *women* were allowed to take this vow as well as men. This represents the equality of the sexes in the eyes of God under the New Covenant. Regardless of what cultural restraints are put on women by men, God has provided a way for them to live lives that are just as holy and just as dedicated to Him as the men. As such, rewards in the coming kingdom will *not* be affected by the bloated egos of men.

Thirdly, the people who took this vow were held to a *higher standard* of holiness than even the priests of Israel were. Priests could cut their hair—Nazarites could *not*. Priests could drink wine and partake of all the things that come from the grape vine—Nazarites could not. Priests could touch the dead bodies of their *immediate* family members without be made unclean—Nazarites could not. Nazarites couldn't touch *any*

dead body, including the bodies of immediate family. The Nazarite vow actually put a person in a walk before God that was higher and holier than the priests and the rest of the people of Israel.

In today's context, spiritually speaking, when a person chooses to walk the walk of a Nazarite, they are choosing a higher walk than the rest of their brethren and even the religious leaders of the Church. Sooner or later this reality will surface and the average Christian will immediately begin *accusing* the one who has chosen this *higher* walk of thinking they are better than everyone else. They will accuse them of having an "elitist" mentality and maybe even accuse them of being part of a "cult". They will say all manner of evil things against these kinds of people because they don't have any idea there are *different kinds of walks* in Christ, and some of them are *better* than others.

That's right! Some of them are BETTER than others.

The word "*Nazarite*" comes from the Hebrew language and means "one who abstains" or "one who is set apart". Being a Nazarite was not usually a permanent lifestyle. However, certainly there were some who may have taken this vow for life. In Jeremiah chapter 35 you read of the "Rachabites" who seem to have adopted the Nazarite Vow in perpetuity. When they are brought before the king to drink wine, they refuse and tell how they have abstained from wine for generations. Also, God called Samson to the Nazarite Vow from his birth. He was a Nazarite his whole life.

As I said, the word "*Nazarite*" means "one who is set apart" and it clearly denotes a spiritual walk that is separated from others and consecrated to God. It represents a holy life—a life completely devoted to God and separated from *all* sin, *all* spiritual impurity, and *all* spiritual bondage. Just as it was in *the natural* under the Old Testament, so it is in *the spirit* under the New Testament. The hair that was not to be cut, represents the "covering" of the Holy Spirit over the person's life who has taken this vow in the spirit. That covering is Christ and Christ alone. There can be no "priest", no "elder", no "bishop" or any other office or title between us and the Lord. We are to be led by the Spirit of God *directly*.

Not partaking of wine or anything from the vine of the grape represents giving up the pleasures of this natural life—both the lawful and the unlawful. Not only was intoxicating drink withheld, but also the sweet grape juice (Heb. *chamar*). Alcoholic wine—which is made from rotten (fermented) grapes, and which represents the worldly pleasures found in the rotten, putrefied areas of a worldly life were forbidden. But so too were the God-given pleasures (*ie: the other portions of the vine*) which a person may partake without guilt of sin.

The Nazarite Vow was a fast from pleasure—a self-imposed *austerity* that was engaged in to keep a person from being *distracted* by things both legal and illegal, by things moral or immoral, in order to draw close to God and perform extraordinary exploits for Him. Anything that intoxicates us spiritually—money, fame, entertainment, food, relationships, the flesh—even *Christian* "ministry"—will ultimately dull our spiritual senses and *draw us away* from God. Today, God is calling those who have ears to hear and a heart to obey, to the life of a Nazarite.

The last major point about the Nazarite vow was that the person was to avoid dead bodies at all costs. What this means under the New Covenant is *staying away from* (separating from) anything and everything that brings spiritual death into our lives. This includes possessions, goals, experiences and people. When

you look at the Levitical priesthood, you will see that many of the ordinances concerning what they could or couldn't do were set in place to keep them spiritually pure. They had to remain pure if they were going to function as priest before the Lord. Well, the whole point of the Nazarite Vow was to *dramatically increase* that spiritual purity. Whereas a priest could touch the dead body of his close relative, the Nazarite could not touch any death at all. We are to separate ourselves, not just from *some* impurity and spiritual death; not just from *most* impurity and spiritual death, but from ALL impurity and spiritual death—and our immediate family members are *not excluded* from this separation.

I don't want to get too deep into this. Just let me say that God has called many, many people to the High Calling, or to Sonship—and many of the people He has called this way have answered that call. But a large percentage of those who have heard and answered that call will *not* attain the prize. They will *not* hit the mark because at some point, the price that is required to hit that mark and gain that prize will *get too high* for them. I've seen many people start off well, but after a few years of walking this way and after the price tag starts to rise, they throw in the towel because they simply aren't willing to pay the price that required to go all the way with God.

Some of this is the fault of the preachers and Bible teachers who presented the vision to them in the first place because they weren't honest about what it will *really* cost them. They talked about death to self but they never really explained just how far that death would *intrude* into their family life. Like the salesmen who stand behind the pulpits in the system, they assured the people that as long as they were faithful to God, God would take care of their family. God would see to it that their wife, or their husband, or their children would walk right into Sonship with them.

When it didn't happen for many of them; when instead of having their family come with into this glorious walk with them just the opposite happened, they got bitter and dropped out of the race. When God started really touching their family relationships, they cut and run. That's why I have said over and over again, when it's all over and the dust settles, we are going to find that the price most of these brethren couldn't was in the realm of *relationships*. Many have ended up trading God's best to save their relationship with their spouse or their children.

It's not that hard to separate from *the unsaved* and the workers of iniquity. It's not even that hard to separate from *deceived Christians* in the Religious System. But when it comes to our immediate family, well, that's a different story for most people. But that's part of the Nazarite walk. It's a commitment to be free from all spiritual death, regardless of *who* that death resided in.

Now listen folks, if you are a regular Israelite (*ie: Christian*), or even a priest (*ie: minister*) in Israel, you are *not* required to separate from spiritually "dead" family members. You are not required to stay separate from your spiritually dead wife, or your spiritually dead husband, or your spiritually dead children. You can be around the death that is in your immediate family members without being guilty of sin. Separation from *all* death so we can be *absolutely* pure for our Lord is only a requirement for the one who willingly embraces the Nazarite walk. I'm not trying to force anyone to do anything. I'm not trying to manipulate anybody into doing anything. I'm just presenting a truth that most Christians can't stand to hear or face.

If you don't want to hear this kind of truth, you can always find some preacher or Bible teacher who will assure you that God would *never* instruct you to engage in such a separation because he is sure certain

passages in Corinthians or Romans *forbid* it. You will always be able to find a blind guide who assures you that God would never have you separate from a spouse, or separate from your own children because they have willingly chosen to walk in spiritual death. Those kind of preachers and Bible teaches are a dime a dozen. They are everywhere you turn, including out here. But I can assure you, that is precisely what the Old Testament command to avoid ALL dead bodies represents.

You see, one of the reasons people think Dan Mace and people like me are much too fanatical and unbalanced is because we are walking the walk of a Nazarite. We have voluntarily chosen to live a life of separation from anything or anyone which can defile us spiritually. And the people who don't "get it" will continue to view us as religious freaks until they come to understand how dangerous and spiritually impure *they are* because of the things and the people they are involving themselves with.

The cold-blooded truth is this: most of God's people are involved in all kind of things, doctrines, experiences, and *people* who are spiritually unclean. But because of what they have been taught by deceived religious leaders inside the system, they will never realize these things and these people are defiling them. Because of all the errors they have been taught, they don't view their fellow Christians as being a possible *danger* to them spiritually.

This is especially the case with those who *leave* the Religious System. They leave that system and they come out here and find some little group, and they think they've found "The Remnant". They get involved with some group and they think: "*I've found the remnant—now I don't have to be on my guard 24/7. Now I don't have to discern every little things that's being said by the pastor or the Bible teacher. I don't have to worry about these people getting deceived because they are God's remnant and God's not going to let His remnant get deceived*".

The fact is, it's much easier to *talk* about being spiritually pure than it is to actually pay the price that's required to *become* spiritually pure and *remain* that way until the Lord returns. I guarantee you that for every 50 people who are talking a great talk about keeping themselves spiritually clean, on 1 or two of them are actually walking that kind of walk and living that kind of life.

God will have His Nazarites in this hour. The only question is, will *we* be one of them? The only question is, will we pay the prices that's required; or are we willing to settle for something less? You *can* settle for something less, you know? It's not "Hell or the High Calling". "*In my Fathers house are many mansions*", said Jesus (John 14:2). There are *many* places in God where we can dwell for all eternity.

But like I've said before; my ministry is to encourage people to go for God's BEST. There are a lot of good "talkers" who talk about reaching for God's best, but they will never pay the price to be one of God's Nazarites. I hope and pray that those of you in *this* room won't just be one of those talkers, but you'll be a "doer" and go for the gold—the *spiritual* gold, that is!