

The Division of Christ

Luke 12: 49-53

Today I want to address an issue that has become skewed and clearly out of focus. We are all well aware of the need for unity among the church. A house that is divided against itself cannot stand. Many of the problems that local churches and even associations face are the result of a lack of unity. Ps.133:1 – Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! Ephes.4:3 – Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [13] Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

I'm sure that you would agree that unity is essential for the church to thrive in the work we've been called to do. However, there is a clear and present danger when we abandon doctrine and biblical truth for the sake of unity. We ought to desire harmony with those around us, but we cannot forsake truth for the sake of maintaining harmony. We are in the world, but we are not of the world. We are not expected to conform to the dictates of the world and the flesh for the sake of unity. 2 Cor.6:17 – Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, Rom.6:11-13 – Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. [12] Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. [13] Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

This passage deals with an element of our Lord's character that some had rather not consider. This morning I would like to consider the implications concerning: [The Division of Christ](#).

I. The Purpose of our Lord (49) – I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?

A. His Mission – Christ reveals that He had [come to send fire on the earth](#). That sounds very serious and it is. Fire is typically a picture of judgment, as it is in this context. Christ came to judge this world of sin.

- We live in an age, even among the churches, that only wants to consider Christ in light of the miracles, His teaching, and His compassion. These are all noble characteristics of our Lord, but we cannot overlook His holiness. He is a God of love; that was proven on Calvary, but He is also a God of righteousness.
- The Lord has no part in sin or unrighteousness. He came not to conform to the world, but to reveal the holiness of God and condemn sin!

B. His Message – [what will I if it be already kindled?](#) The fires of judgment had already begun to burn. Sin had taken root and had to be judged.

- Some view this statement in light of His dread of the cross and a desire for the suffering to be over. That may well be, but I believe that Jesus is revealing a profound truth here.
- We all know how Adam sinned and fell in the garden. Because of that initial sin, all are born in sin, condemned by their sin. As we've said, God is holy and cannot condone sin. It must be dealt with. Christ came to offer Himself the ransom for sin. Our sin was judged in His body as He bled and died upon the cross. **Jn.12:31-32 – Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. [32] And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.**
- Jesus paid the price for the sins of humanity. All who come to Him by faith can receive salvation and pardon from sin. But, for those who reject the saving power of Christ, the fires of judgment are already kindled. If you reject the offer of salvation, atoning for your sin, you will stand accountable to God for that sin and face His judgment!
- Salvation is available to all, but isn't accepted of all.

I. The Purpose of our Lord (49)

II. The Passion of our Lord (50) – **But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!**

A. His Crucifixion – Christ speaks of His **baptism**. Clearly this is a reference to the cross. Many only viewed Christ as a compassionate Man, a great prophet, a miracle worker, but that was not why He came. Christ came to die. **1 Pet.2:24 – Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.** **2 Cor.5:21 – For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.**

B. His Constraint – **how I am straitened till it be accomplished!** That is an insightful thought. Bear in mind that Jesus was God in flesh. He possessed the deity of God; He is God. Consider how He must have felt as He contemplated bearing the sins of all humanity. His deity dreaded the sin and His humanity dreaded the suffering.

- The word **straitened** means “*to constrain or compress, to press in on from every side. It has the idea of a besieged city, a narrow strait or channel for shipping, and even used to describe restraining an animal to administer medication.*” Doesn't that present an emotion of heaviness and pressure? The Lamb of God was soon to be crucified and He was under enormous strain.

- We find a similar emotion revealed in the Garden of Gethsemane. [Lu.22:44 – And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.](#)

➤ **Now I would like to consider how our Lord's passion ought to affect our lives.**

➤ The baptism that our Lord faced was no insignificant matter. He went to the cross, bled and died for the sins of the world. God demanded righteousness and Jesus was the only way that could be achieved for humanity. Sin caused our Lord to die upon on the cross.

➤ It was the cross and the bearing of that sin that caused such agony in our Saviors heart. He was repulsed at the notion of bearing that sin in His body. He was willing and I praise Him for that, but He didn't enjoy it!

➤ So, if the need of men because of sin sent Him to the cross, bringing such agony to our Lord, how should we consider sin? We have gotten to the place that we are comfortable with sin. We have lowered our standard and no longer are willing to stand against sin according to God's standard!

➤ Sin and rebellion ought to create the same emotions in us. We cannot embrace the world for the sake of harmony. We must have compassion, but we must stand for truth and right!

I. The Purpose of our Lord (49)

II. The Passion of our Lord (50)

III. The Position of our Lord (51-53) – These verses deal with the emphasis of the message. They reveal the position our Lord holds and the effect that position has on mankind. Consider first of all:

A. The Misconception (51) – **Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:** Jesus came unto His own and His own received Him not. The world looked to Him at that time, expecting Him to defeat the Romans and establish peace. The time for that had not come.

- Now I am aware that Jesus is the Prince of peace. Through Him we have the peace of God and peace with God. However, Jesus knew that all would not receive Him and there would be division.

- We are called to show compassion and love others as God has loved us. That is the second of the two great commandments. But, we are not to forsake biblical truth just to preserve peace. There are times when we will be called upon to stand for truth and those around us will not like it. We have not been called for popularity or the approval of men, but to live for God according to His Word! Standing against sin and heresy is not ungodly.
- One of the pastors in our area declared that we ought to lay aside doctrine for the sake of cooperation. That is not what Jesus is teaching in these verses!

B. The Division (52) – **For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.** Clearly Jesus reveals that there will be division to come. What is the source of that division? Those who follow Him will face opposition for their faith and their own families will turn their backs upon them for that faith.

- I am not a prophet of doom, but I am realistic. Nowhere in Scripture do we find that the world will embrace us for our faith. We are not promised a journey void of difficulty and opposition. In fact, we know that trials and adversity will come. I know folks who have been rejected by their families because of their relationship with Christ.
- We are not called upon to be intentionally difficult, but the fact remains that the world around us will not accept or support biblical truth. You might as well expect opposition if you stand for the Lord and His Word.
- I don't want to bust your bubble, but it will likely surprise you from where this opposition will come. Often those whom we expect to stand with us will be the ones who oppose us.
- Division is not enjoyable or even desirable, but there are times when it is necessary! I refuse to abandon the truths of Scripture for the sake of cooperation. Sometimes we may have to stand alone, but stand we must!

C. The Obligation (53) – **The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.** Jesus reveals that those who commit to follow Him will face rejection by those closest to them. Some would be rejected by their own families, but even then they were obligated to continue to follow the Lord.

- I am not one who enjoys conflict or division. I like for things to run smoothly and everyone to be happy. But I also realize that this environment is not always possible. At the end of the day, we as individuals must lay our heads down to sleep at night. We must be confident that we have followed the Lord to the best of our ability. Sadly, for that to be a reality, we may have to face division from some we once had fellowshiped with.

- I am in no way encouraging discord or seeking to create problems. I merely want us to see that we can't agree with everything the world presents and please the Lord. We can't go along with everything that other churches approve of and practice for the sake of cooperation.
- I have no problem fellowshiping with anyone who stands for truth. We may not agree on everything, but as long as they stand upon the Word, I will stand with them.
- I do refuse though to embrace error and turn a deaf ear and blind eye to those who purposely ignore the truth.

We ought to seek harmony and unity as much as we possibly can, but that will not always be possible. We must handle ourselves in a godly manner when we disagree, but we must stand for truth and biblical purity.

I don't pretend to be perfect, but I do want to live and lead this church according to God's Word. I would ask today if there are burdens that you need to bring before the Lord, why not come and lay them at His feet. As a church we need to pray for those who have abandoned truth for the sake of cooperation. The world doesn't need false doctrine presented with a smile; they need truth from a heart of love and commitment!