

# GOD'S WORD

## DIVISION IN THE BODY

---

*Let's glorify God, not ourselves*

---

Glen C. Robertson

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

- PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES
- RESPONSE
- REBELLION
- LEADERSHIP
- THREE POINTS TO NOTE
- "NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY"
- CONCLUSION

**L**et's look at divisions and splits in the Church realistically!

When was the last time we saw in a church body a rift of division that was actually caused, primarily, by difference in doctrine, in understanding of Scripture or of morality... and not originally on PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES?

### PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES

In *reality*, are we Spiritual heroes, and really so Scripturally and Spiritually attuned that we are willing to become martyrs, socially or however else, for the sake of the Truth? We should be, but usually are not. So is this in truth the reason behind our rebellion against church authorities, established or otherwise, or against the "other half" of the church? Scripture is a wonderful excuse for an already-established personality conflict! Dr. Elmer L. Towns, a recognized authority on church planting, growth, and dynamics, states that, "Most of the church splits I know arise over personality rather than doctrine. Individuals could not get along.<sup>1</sup> If doctrine is claimed to be the basis for any such embroilment it's generally used merely as an attempt to legitimize what was started by, and is based upon, a disagreement between personalities. Scripture is 'cheapened' by its misuse; one could say that the Lord's Name is used in vain! And no less sinful is the fact that the church body, also, has been drawn into a dispute, and one based upon nothing more substantial than personality conflict!

Usually someone in the body actually does have just cause to feel offended - often very much so! Christ recognizes the inevitability of such problems,

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Elmer L. Towns, [Getting A Church Started...](#), p. 164.

Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!

**Matthew 18:7, Luke 17:1 The BIBLE**

## RESPONSE

The offense, the sin, is not the difficulty, however; the problem comes from our reacting to the offense how Christ would not! (It is, for example, truly a sin to strike someone. But Christ did not in Matthew 5 address the sin of striking: He addressed the sin of taking revenge by striking back, commanding that we, "Turn to him the other *cheek* also." Regardless of the fact that the hit is indeed a sin, we as mature Christians must address **our own** attitude and **our own** response! In Luke 12:13-21, Christ didn't address the offense a disciple's brother committed by not sharing an inheritance with him; rather, Jesus addressed His disciples' response to the offense!)

In the mature Christian 'it all boils down to,' not what happened, but how it is reacted to!

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather *suffer yourselves* to be defrauded?

**I Corinthians 6:7 The BIBLE**

Christ,

23 Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him That judgeth righteously:

**I Peter 2:23 The BIBLE**

18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

19 Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.

20 He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.

**Proverbs 16:18-20 The BIBLE**

No instance of standing up for one's rights has ever earned a "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! (Matt. 25:21&23)" from Christ, nor ever will. Humbling one's self, however, and for the sake of Christ and the unity of His Body, appearing to, "give in," has always earned that. And always will.

32 He (Christ) was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth:

(33 In His humiliation His judgement was taken away... .)

**Acts 8:32-33 The BIBLE**

23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

**Proverbs 29:23 The BIBLE**

Indeed, when was the last time that we saw a church split, or even just a division in a church body that was not based upon a difference of opinion or personality? Such exist, of course, but are so rare as to be unexpected. Scriptural or moral reasons often do become or are part of it, though. But, once again,

God is concerned less about issues, than about the Christianity and character of the victim. The church should respond strongly and appropriately. But regardless, God Himself will deal with the perpetrator!

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

**Romans 12:19 The BIBLE**

For, if we take revenge, God now has not one, but TWO people to punish (keep it to just one)!

20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

**James 1:20 The BIBLE**

## REBELLION

Often, rebellion is hidden behind an excuse of 'hurt for the purpose of correcting.' ("I'd like to teach him a thing or two!" is the world's way of putting it, the acknowledged far-fetched idea being that one's negative actions toward another will do him a service by correcting him!) Some Christians actually do attempt to accomplish their revenge behind this excuse, but, realizing that their motive is wrong, try to hide it behind a more effective concealment, usually Scripture.

Having been promised by God the kingship of Israel (I Sam. 16:1, 13), and therefore being pursued by King Saul for execution, David realized, however, how grave the sin would be of: a) lifting up his or someone else's hand against the Lord's chosen (anointed) one, or of: b) trying to accomplish God's own work for Him against His chosen one.

9 And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD'S anointed, and be guiltless?

10 David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle, and perish.

11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed: but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go.

**I Samuel 26:9-11 The BIBLE**

23 The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand today, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S anointed.

24 And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let Him deliver me out of all tribulation.

**I Samuel 26:23-24 The BIBLE**

## LEADERSHIP

When David's men urged him to King Saul, the man trying to kill him, David showed *leadership*, and refused to submit to the wishes of his men. Instead, *David*, the great leader and man of God, *led*, contrary to his peoples' wishes, and accomplished *God's will*, instead. (In contrast, God took from Saul his kingship because Saul *listened to* and *followed* his peoples' disobedient wishes - I Sam. 15:13-31). David even executed in anger (II Sam. 10:1-16) the man who (thinking he would thus gain David's gratitude) claimed to have killed Saul, the same Saul who had been attempting to kill David, but who was nonetheless God's chosen one!

**THREE POINTS TO NOTE**

- 1) Rebelling against leadership because of a lack of confidence or lack of support of the pastor or leadership accomplishes nothing: the people who rebel and leave, or who oust leadership, thus relinquish any possibility of correcting the leadership, as they are no longer part of the group, or under those leaders. Thus, the excuse of 'rebellion in order to correct' is shown to be a mere excuse!
- 2) As a result of 1), above, resistance to the leadership accomplishes nothing more than to get one's self out from under the guidance and authority of present leadership. This is a mark of rebellion evident to the entire church body.
- 3) A show of open resistance with hope of taking people with you, or of ousting present leadership, spreads your improper heart attitude to others by encouraging them to share your resentment over the particular incident or by encouraging them simply to share the general rebellious attitude that is compelling you to leave. (And, especially in Spiritual matters, the end definitely does *not* justify the means.)

23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...

**I Samuel 15:23 The BIBLE**

In condemning rebellion, Scripture is not as much condemning the action;

27 (Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time Thou shalt not commit adultery:  
28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

**Matthew 5:27-28 The BIBLE)**

... It is condemning the *heart attitude*. Once again, Christ is not addressing a 'sin of the hands,' as His major concern; He is addressing the sinful *nature*, a 'sin of the heart.' Consequently, the *object* of the rebellious attitude is immaterial: directed against legitimate, or illegitimate authority, it is still sin. Christ, at age twelve, was asked by His mother why He had not stayed with her and Joseph on their trip, as they supposed they had the right to demand of Him:

48 And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.  
49 And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?  
50 And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them.  
51 And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart.  
52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

**Luke 2:48-52 The BIBLE**

Either Christ had disobeyed (an impossibility for Him, the Son of God, at *any* earthly age, as that is sin), or they had no right to expect that of Him. Yet verse 51 explains that Christ (*voluntarily*, since they had no right to expect obedience of Him) subjected Himself to them.

**5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:**

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, **He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death**, even the death of the cross.

**Philippians 2:5-8 The BIBLE**

Obedience for the Christian is therefore evidently a matter not of the law but of *the heart*, going beyond that which the written Word, or the Law, can require, and giving as much submission and obedience as is possible to give, for the sake of Christ, and the glory of God!

6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

**Ephesians 6:6-7 The BIBLE**

### **“NOT DISCERNING THE LORD’S BODY”**

It is an extremely serious thing, in the eyes of God, to be found guilty of causing division or hurt in the Body of Christ, the Church!

17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

**I Corinthians 11:17-19 The BIBLE**

Paul here rebukes the church for, “not discerning the Lord’ Body,” (verse 29). It is often thought that this is done in two ways: by a) not treating fellow believers as Christ would: not sharing their food during their communal meals, and by b) taking the Lord’s Supper while in a state of sin. But these two concepts aren’t at all separated in this passage; they are one and the same! Scripture here tells us that the first of these is the source of the second: the sin of letting fellow believers go hungry while they themselves are feasting, at the church’s communal meals,

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (are dead)!

**I Corinthians 11:30 The BIBLE**

So this isn’t two different sins; this is a single sin against a single entity, “The Lord’s Body,” which is here depicted in two ways: a) Believers and, b) the bread and wine of Communion. These two are intertwined and inseparable. And sin against them is enough to make a person, “weak and sickly.” And dead It is for this reason that Jesus said,

7 Woe unto the world because of offenses! For it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by who the offense cometh!

**Matthew 18:7, Luke 17:1 The BIBLE**

This is what Jesus said also about causing offense to His, “little ones.”

42 And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.

**Mark 9:42 The BIBLE**

(Who is prepared to declare with certainty at what age, if ever, a person ceases to become one of Jesus' "little ones?"<sup>2</sup>) It is a fearful thing to fall in to the hands of the living God!<sup>3</sup> It is a fearful thing to divide and offend the Body of Christ! Again:

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

**I Corinthians 11:30 The BIBLE**

The Lord places causers-of-division in the Body of Christ, and heretics, into the same antiGodly category.

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

**Romans 16:17-18 The BIBLE**

So, rather than listening to the complaints and divisiveness of those who would divide the Body of Christ, their, "good words and fair speeches deceiving the hearts of the simple," we are told to mark those people, and if necessary cast them out of the Body before they can succeed in infecting and destroying the very Body of Christ which we are! Our Heavenly Father tells us that division and heresies must be outed in the body, must be made evident by offenses and divisions caused in the Body of Christ, in order to reveal to God's people who the false believers are, and who are those approved by God (in other words, those approved by God are those who are neither preaching heresy, nor causing the division in our midst). The Lord has made a difference between His good shepherds, and the wolves. The good shepherds gather the sheep into the fold; the wolves scatter them.

18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

**I Corinthians 11:18-19 The BIBLE**

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

**I John 2:18-19 The BIBLE**

11 I Am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

---

<sup>2</sup> 32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

**Luke 12:32 The BIBLE**

<sup>3</sup> 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

**Hebrews 10:31 The BIBLE**

12 But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.

13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.

14 I Am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and Am known of Mine.

**John 10:11-14 The BIBLE**

8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.

10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves.

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

13 Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

14 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, 15 To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

**Jude 1:8-16 The BIBLE**

These divisive, contentious individuals must be marked as such, and avoided or ousted, for a little yeast affects the whole lump of dough! Again:

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

**Romans 16:17-18 The BIBLE**

4 In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,

5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover Is sacrificed for us:

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

**I Corinthians 5:4-8 The BIBLE**

## CONCLUSION

**The maintenance of a person's status in his church, no matter how well earned, must *never* be permitted to jeopardize the unity and work of that church!**

Usually, when for the sake of his hurt pride such an eminent person will take a stand against leadership, the resulting contest will damage a church: both its members and its effectiveness.

Neither a church split nor a church divided is ever justified on the basis of personal differences. God must necessarily work through the sinful and the imperfect. There will never, before Christ returns, be a perfect church. He and we must work with and within what we have (see also, IS GOD'S BLESSING APPROVAL, OR IS IT JUST LOVE? [WWW.MICAIAH.COM/BLESSING.HTM](http://WWW.MICAIAH.COM/BLESSING.HTM)). We do not 'bat an eye' to sin, but we do deal with it Scripturally!

Knowledge is familiarity with the truth;  
Wisdom is the ability to best use that truth.

"Napoleon and Wellington both made the point that when handfuls of men are involved in combat, the outcome depends on individual fighting ability, but that when armies are involved individual ability may be less important than ability for an army to fight as a whole, Napoleon's example being that two Mamelukes would beat three French cavalrymen, but that an army of one thousand French cavalrymen would beat fifteen hundred Mamelukes.<sup>4</sup>

While a person's individual giftings may be invaluable in one-on-one and small-group settings the Christian's ability in a large group, whether that be the local body or Christianity as a whole, is most importantly based first on how well he is able to maintain a "...unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)."

35 By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.  
**John 13:35 The BIBLE**

---

<sup>4</sup> Dr. R.V. Jones, Most Secret War, p. 666.