

## Division Causes Failure

*“No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man” (Mark 3:27)*

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### Definitions

One of the many definitions listed for the word **“division”** is: “the act, process, or an instance of separating or keeping apart: SEPARATION; the condition or an instance of being divided in opinion or interest.” (Webster).

A definition for the word **“failure”**: “Omission of occurrence or performance; failing to perform a duty or expected action. A state of inability to perform a normal function. Lack of success. A falling short. Deficiency. One that has failed.” (Webster).

### An Old Principle

The title of our lesson is one of the oldest principles known to man: **“Division Causes Failure.”** It has been true in many areas of life. It has been true in battle since the beginning of battles. The old adage is: “Divide and conquer.”

Of course, we are not emphasizing this principle in physical battle, or any other physical aspect or experience. We are mainly talking about religious division. When we are divided from God and His word, it always leads to failure. Everyone knows the truth of this and has witnessed it many times in their experiences. God and the devil know the truth of this principle. In Genesis 3, Satan came to Adam and Eve when they were not in personal contact with God in the garden. No doubt, Satan believed that if he could get to them when God was not in their presence, he could bring them down. And it was true. Divide and conquer.

God knows the truth of this principle and has used it Himself. One hundred years after the flood, man began to congregate in the plains of Shinar, according to Genesis, the eleventh chapter. God had intended for man to spread through the earth, conquer and subdue it. Perhaps in an attempt to control the rapidly multiplying people, the leaders, probably Nimrod, chose to “build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach into heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). In Genesis 11:5, the Scriptures say, “And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men built.” This is a figure of speech known as anthropomorphism (which speaks of God as a man so that man may better understand). The figure of God coming down to see the city and tower shows how tiny the whole enterprise must have appeared in His eyes.

In verses one through six of chapter eleven, we see where the people were able to be united in their endeavor because they were of one language and of one speech. God acknowledges the surety of getting things accomplished through unity when it records, “and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.” These words are a great testimony to the

power of unity. They are also a great testimony to the power of division, to bring about failure. God confounded their language, which would prevent their success, since they would be unable to understand one another. The people had to stop the building of the city and tower because their language was confused. God accomplished His purposes of scattering the rebellious people through the basic principle that division causes failure.

### **Our Text: Mark 3**

In verses 1-6, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. Mark tells us that there were some in that synagogue who wanted to catch Jesus in some act so that they could use it to bring charges against Him. Jesus calls the man with the withered hand forward, and then sets forth the contrast between Himself and those who wanted to kill Him. Notice the question of Jesus in verse 4, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? To save life, or to kill?" He was there to do good and to heal people, to cast out demons, and to preach the good news of God's spiritual kingdom. They were there to try to find some way to accuse Jesus and get rid of Him. When they refused to answer His question, Jesus reacted with anger and sadness, and the reason for this reaction was because of their hardness of heart.

After the man was healed the text says that the Pharisees joined with the Herodians in an effort to "destroy" Jesus. The Herodians were more of a political party, and the Pharisees were the consummate religious legalists. The only thing that could have brought them together was their mutual hatred for Jesus.

In verses 7-19, we find the twelve apostles appointed. There is nothing here that we want to mention in regard to the lesson at hand.

In verses 20-30, we have charges being brought against Jesus. The multitudes continued to follow Jesus, to the extent that Jesus and His disciples could not even find time to eat. Amazingly, after the crucifixion, there were only about 120 who were still considered disciples (Acts 1:15). Some friends, and maybe family, came to try to bring Jesus home to talk some sense into Him, thinking He was insane, which is the meaning of "beside himself."

Some scribes came down from Jerusalem to contend with Jesus, men who supposedly were well-versed in the law, because they spent their time copying and studying it. They did not believe that Jesus was casting out demons by God's power, so they accused Him of using the power of "Beelzebub" or "the prince of devils," which was a reference to Satan.

In answer to the scribes' ridiculous charge, Jesus uses flawless logic to prove that their assertions were false. The points that He made were clear: If He was using Satan's power to cast out the demons of Satan, then Satan was casting out Satan. That would mean that Satan's kingdom ("house") was divided against itself and would not stand. Therefore, what they said about Jesus was false: He was not using Satan's power to cast out demons.

In verse 27, which serves as our text for this lesson, Jesus is actually describing what is really happening in the casting out of evil spirits. The "strong man" here is the devil, and his "house" is the world, including the humans whom the demons were possessing. Jesus was the One who had

entered the strong man's house, and was "spoiling his goods" by casting out the demons. For Jesus to do this, He must first bind the strong man, which means that He is stronger than the strong man, or else He could not bind him. And all of this is to show that Jesus has power over Satan.

Jesus shows in verses 29-30 what their sin of unbelief led to, and that was blasphemy against the One who was, in reality, working through Jesus to perform the miracle of casting out demons – the Holy Spirit Himself.

Then, in verses 31-35, Jesus tells who the true brethren of Jesus are. Here Jesus was not being disrespectful to Mary and the others outside, but He was teaching the lesson concerning who could be in His spiritual family. He wanted everyone to know of the absolute necessity of obedience to His word. He said that if one wants to have a relationship with Him, he must "do the will of God."

### Is God Pleased with Division?

It doesn't take much study in the word of God to realize that God is not pleased with division. That needs to be explained, in that, God is not pleased when division occurs between His children and between God and His children. He does want division between His children and the world. He tells us in 2 Corinthians 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." He does want division between His children and all evil, but God does not want division between His children and the word. This does not mean that there is no room for differences in the body of Christ. We are free to differ with one another, but we are not free to differ with the word of God. We are free to differ so long as our differences do not lead into a course that is out of harmony with the will of God!

Notice what the Scriptures teach on the subject of **UNITY**.

- Psalm 133:1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."
- Acts 4:32, "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul."
- Romans 12:16, "Be of the same mind one toward another."
- 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."
- 2 Corinthians 13:11, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace."
- Ephesians 4:3, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
- Philippians 1:27, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."
- Philippians 2:2, "Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."
- Philippians 3:16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

- 1 Peter 3:8, “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”

All of these passages teach us to be united, like-minded, and of one heart, one mind, and one soul. Could God be pleased with a people divided against His word and one another? These passages teach us – NO, God would not be pleased!

Well, what causes division? In the majority of cases, if not all, division is caused by **GOING BEYOND THE WORD OF GOD!** Please note these passages that deal with **GOING BEYOND:**

- Deuteronomy 4:2, “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”
- Deuteronomy 12:32, “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.”
- Proverbs 30:6, “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”
- Galatians 1:8-9, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”
- Revelation 22:18-19, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

It is easy to see that UNITY occurs through the Scriptures and DIVISION occurs when we go beyond what God teaches.

Some clear examples that explain the principle of how division occurs is seen in a couple of Scriptures. For example, in Exodus 3:2 we find, “And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.” It is revealed to us in God’s word that the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush. We can, and must be united on that fact. But division occurs when we step out of what is revealed. Why didn’t it burn? “It was just an illusion,” some will say. “It wasn’t a real fire,” others will say. “Maybe that kind of bush doesn’t burn.” You see, when we stick with what’s revealed in the word we can be united in God’s word. Division occurs when we go beyond what is written.

Another example is found in John 8:6, “This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not.” It is revealed to us that Jesus wrote on the ground. We can and must be united on that fact, because that is what the Bible says. Division occurs when we step out of what is revealed. What did He write? Some say, “the people’s sins.” Some say, “He began writing their names in the sand.” Others may say, “He didn’t write anything, just scribbled.” When we stick with what’s revealed we can be united in God’s word. Division occurs when we go beyond what is written.

## Conclusion

We sometimes hear that religious division exists because of different doctrines that are taught and practiced. This is only partly true. Religious division exists because most people don't care enough about the unity of all believers to give up the religious teaching and practices that cause division, and embrace that upon which all believers can be united – THE BIBLE!

When people reach the point where they are willing to move away from the Scriptures and embrace something of man, division results. It means division from God and from those who are God's. And when such happens, and people grow content with man's ways, failure is always the result.

Jesus gave His blood on the cross that He might reconcile all men unto God in one body (Ephesians 2:16). Do you know when unity occurs? When people reach that point, they are willing to give up their long-held human traditions; their human names in religion; their man-made churches; their divisive creeds. Then, and only then, can all believers be united in that one body, which is the church purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). If people never get to that point, then division occurs and its results will always lead to failure. Failure in our relationship with God, and with God's children, the church.