

FRAGMENTATION OR DIVISION

INTRODUCTION:

1. One of the great problems we have had in churches of Christ in late years is division over non-doctrinal issues.
2. Brethren just WON'T TRY to get along with one another; they don't have the attitude of Abraham as he talked to Lot -- Gen. 13:8
3. The carnal spirit prevails in many places -- I Cor. 3:3
4. Let us now study the cause, the evil, and the cure for division.

I. THE CAUSES OF DIVISION

1. FACTIOUS MEN: Paul said, "*A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse*" ASV (Tit. 3: 10)
 - (1) "*Reject a divisive man*" NKJV
 - (2) A factious man is "an agitator who creates divisions and makes parties" *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
 - (3) *Vine* says: Factious "denotes ambition, self-seeking rivalry, self-will, being an underlying idea in the word"
 - (4) A factious man is self-ambitious, self-seeking and self-willed
 - (5) A self-willed person is so dedicated to appeasing self that he will do it at all cost.
 - (6) Self-ambitious men bring confusion in congregations -- James 3: 14 - 16
 - (7) A factious man seeks to win followers; he is a "party-maker"
 1. He draws disciples after him -- Acts 20:30
 - (8) He is a LITTLE MAN who seeks to be BIG.
 - (9) DIOTREPHESES was such a man -- III John 9 - 10
 1. He was proud, arrogant and insensitive to others.
 2. He was power-loving and he did much to harm the church
 3. DiotrepheSES was not interested in the peace and prosperity of the church -- he was interested only in being first in the church, even at the expense of its peace and prosperity.
 4. He would be first and chief of all, and at any cost.
 - (1) Paul's warning in Gal. 5:15 -- "*But if you snap at one another, and devour one another, you must watch that you do not end up wiping each other out*" *Barkley*
 - (2) I Cor. 3:17
 5. He defamed the fairest reputations -- III John 10; I Cor. 4:13
2. PERSONAL MATTERS:
 - (1) Disturbances between two or more brethren over business affairs.
 - (2) Disturbances between couples over children and other matters.
 - (3) Disturbances over family matters, when several members of the same family are in a congregation
 - (4) These matters should be settled personally -- Matt. 18: 15 - 17

(5) Many times a whole congregation becomes involved in personal matters.

3. INACTIVITY:

(1) In every congregation there is a certain amount of vitality which must and will find expression in some way.

(2) Inactivity promotes discontentment.

(3) Discontent grows into a spirit of dissatisfaction with each other.

(4) We are to be busy at work -- Phil. 2: 12 - 14; I Cor. 15:58; Eph. 4:16

4. THE RULE OF OPINION:

(1) The religion of Christ is a religion of faith -- II Cor. 5:7

(2) Faith is no broader than REVELATION -- Rom. 10:17; I Cor. 4:6

(3) Faith is the basis of all acceptable obedience to God -- Heb. 11:6

(4) The opinions of men bring division among God's people.

5. BEING SOON ANGRY:

(1) Some have explosive tempers and stir up strife.

(2) An elder is not to be soon angry -- Tit. 1:7

(3) "*A wrathful man stirreth up strife*" -- Prov. 15: 18; James 1: 19 - 20

6. SELF-JUSTIFICATION:

(1) It is difficult for some to admit wrong.

(2) Some take a wrong position or utter wrong words, and cannot say they have sinned.

II. THE EVILS OF DIVISION

1. The UNPLEASANTNESS of division.

(1) The factious spirit in a congregation manifests itself in the home, in business affairs, and in the social life of its members.

(2) Unity is good and pleasant -- Psa. 133: 1

2. Division hinders progress.

(1) A church in confusion and strife cannot hope to do very much in converting their neighbors.

(2) Our ACTIONS are a more potent comment on our conception of righteousness than anything we can say.

(3) A congregation, by its strife, contributes to the damnation of those it should save:

1. Our young people

2. Our neighbors

3. IT LEADS TO SINS OF ALL SORTS

(1) Gal. 5:15

(2) James 3: 14 - 16

(3) I Cor. 3: 1 - 3

(4) Heb. 12: 14 - 15 "root of bitterness"

4. THE EFFECTS OF DIVISION ON MEMBERS

(1) Those who are not a party to division are disturbed and discouraged, and many times drift into unfaithfulness.

(2) Those who are responsible for the division have destroyed him for whom Christ died -- I Cor. 8: 11 - 12; Rom. 14:13; Matt. 25:40; Acts 9:4

III. THE CURE FOR DIVISION

1. All must accept all the truth -- John 17: 20 - 21

2. All must DESIRE to promote the unity of the Spirit -- Eph. 4: 1 - 3

3. All must deny self -- Luke 9:23; Rom. 15: 1 - 3; Phil. 2: 3 - 5

4. There must be mutual love for one another -- John 13: 34 - 35; I Pet. 1:22; Rom. 13:10

5. All must genuinely love the church.

6. There must not be any retaliation -- Rom. 12: 19 - 21

7. All must try to understand the other person -- Ezekiel said he went to those of the captivity and "*SAT WHERE THEY SAT*" Ezek. 3:15

IV. THE DESIRABILITY OF UNITY

1. David said it is both GOOD and PLEASANT -- Psa. 133:1

2. Paul urged it -- I Cor. 1:10

3. Peter exhorted it -- I Pet. 3: 8 - 9

4. Jesus prayed for it -- John 17: 20 - 21

CONCLUSION

1. The unity of the New Testament demands:

(1) That brethren AGREE on the Word of God -- John 17: 20 - 21

(2) That we speak the same thing -- I Cor. 1: 10

(3) That all put forth effort to keep unity -- Eph. 4:3

(4) That there be no schism in the Body -- I Cor. 12:25

(5) That brethren stand together against all evil -- Eph. 6: 10 - 17