

# The Old Paths

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## “Division”

Jarrod Jacobs

If there was only one thing we could find in the Bible that God abhors, it certainly is division. While Christ was on earth, John records a prayer of Christ wherein He prayed for unity among the believers (Jn. 17). We see numerous times the Bible emphasizes unity. Some times when unity is stressed include I Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 1:27, 2:2, and John 10:16.

Jesus also understood that married couples are to be “one”, that is, to be united (Matt. 19:5-6; Eph. 5:31). The apostle Paul made it clear that it is a work for all Christians to be united (Eph. 4:3).

Sadly, unity is not always achieved among God’s people, whether at home, in the church, at work, etc. This is sad because division, and the results of such, play into the hands of Satan. One of his “wiles” (Eph. 6:11) or “devices” (II Cor. 2:11) is to divide and conquer! This he does on a daily basis with many of us.

### Division In The Old Testament

Division is certainly nothing new. God’s people were divided at different times throughout Old Testament history. For example, folks were divided during the time of Korah’s rebellion (Num. 16:1-3). There were those who followed Korah (and suffered), while those who followed God

were spared (Num. 16:23-50).

Of course, the very fact that we speak of a “northern” and “southern” kingdom, Israel and Judah, speaks of a division that took place in the nation (I Kings 12:16-17). Yes, this was something God had purposed (I Kings 12:24), but it was not because God wanted them divided. Rather, it was because of Solomon’s sin (I Kings 11:11-12)! Therefore a divided kingdom was the result of yielding to Satan’s temptation and sinning in the sight of God! After this time, God’s people were never the same, and this division was never healed! Both kingdoms were defeated by heathen people (Assyria and Babylon), with only a remnant remaining to return to Jerusalem and await the coming of the Messiah.

### Division In The New Testament

Division was known among the disciples, as they were divided concerning who would be the “greatest” in the Lord’s kingdom (Matt. 18:1; Lk. 22:24). Jesus had to correct them on that wrong assumption (Matt. 18:4; Lk. 22:26). The Christians at Corinth were divided as well! The reason division arose among these brethren was because they were still carnally-minded and wanted to wear the names of men rather than Christ (I Cor. 1:11-13; 3:1-6). Division continued to sweep through the early church as some folks taught that the resurrection had passed already and overthrew the faith of some (II Tim.

2:18). The apostle Paul warned the elders at Ephesus that there would be men arise that would not spare the flock when they came in with their false teaching. Also, among the elders themselves, Paul warned that men would arise and speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:28-31) — Division! Later on, we see the apostle John dealing with division as he named Diotrephes as a man determined to have the preeminence among the brethren (III Jn. 9). His pride drove him to sin by, “*prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church*” (III Jn. 10). Such descriptions ought to let us know just how destructive and dangerous division is! These descriptions ought never be seen in the lives of Christians today, but sadly, it is all too real!

### Defining The Word “Division”

The danger of division is seen even as we examine the word “division”! Literally, this word is broken down as “di-vis-ion”. The prefix “di” means two. “Vis” has to do with strength or power. The suffix “ion” has to do with the action or condition. (Source: Webster’s Dictionary) The point being that instead of people having one source of power or strength (i.e., unity), the strength or power of the people has been broken into two (or more) pieces! Such a condition actually weakens what was strong!

For example, in a home, we see that the father is to lead his family (Eph. 5:23-24, 6:4). Yet, if the wife decides that she will assume his role, then there are two people vying for the power/authority! Not only are the spouses divided, but this divides the children, as

they must also “choose sides” to determine who they will follow! Sometimes, the children are allowed to rule and parents then shirk their responsibilities. Again, such actions lead to division in the home. Why is this? It is because the “power” which rests with the husband has been separated from him, and has been assumed by another. Such a development can happen in churches as well. This begs for a multitude of problems. This is not what God wanted at all.

God and Christ want men to be united. In other words, God wants what is best for men and wants them as strong as they can be. When husband and wife are “one”, (united) their bond is the strongest that it can be. In like manner, when a church is united, it is the strongest that it can be. A divorce weakens both spouses in a marriage, just as division weakens the Christians in the local church.

It is for this reason that Satan wants men divided! In division, we see families, churches, and even nations weakened; for their strength is separated! They cannot be at their best in those situations! Consider this fact in light of someone like Diotrephes who wanted the preeminence and was actively trying to take men away from God so that they would follow him. In addition to this, Diotrephes was deliberate in keeping away those who spoke the truth, for fear that he might lose his power! (III Jn. 9-10) Translation: The church was weakened due to division, and their strength continued to fail due to Diotrephes refusing to allow men of sound character to preach God’s word in its fullness!! Truly, Satan was rejoicing in the activities of Diotrephes!

In the case of division at Ephesus, Paul warned the Ephe-

sians about men arising to “draw away disciples” (Acts 20:28-31)! If that is not Satan’s plan to “divide and conquer” gone to seed, I don’t know what it is! When this division reaches its full force, brethren can not rely upon one another and draw from the Lord’s strength (Eph. 6:10) to make that united stand against Satan! They have been separated from their strength (God), and in so doing, the people have been weakened spiritually!

### Conclusion

The Old Testament prophet Amos asked, “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*” (Amos 3:3). Obviously, God was emphasizing the need for unity at that time. The need for unity was recognized as necessary in those days, just as unity is needed today!

Division is dangerous! Let us all strive to be united (Eph. 4:3). Let us all be active in pursuing peace (Ps. 34:14; I Pet. 3:11), based upon the “wisdom ... from above” (Jas. 3:17)!

*“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life forevermore”* (Ps. 133).

## Thoughts About True Freedom

R.L. Whiteside

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (Jn. 8:31-32).

People who long for freedom usually know little of what it is nor do they know how to obtain it. An illustration or two may help us see what freedom is. A machine runs free when all parts move as the designer intended. A living thing is free when it moves unhampered in the element, or surroundings, in which God intended it to live. A fish in water, not in a net or otherwise confined, is free; for there is where God intended it to live. Out of its element it is not free. Contrary to speculative theology, man’s natural element is righteousness. That is the element in which the creator intended that he should live and in which he is placed. He is not free anywhere else any more than a fish is free on dry land. By sin man, each man, brings himself into bondage. Adam’s sin did not bring you into bondage to sin; you did that yourself. “Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (Jn. 8:34). While living in sin, men are under the most servile slavery, from which there is only one way to escape. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18). Obedience to the truth is the Lord’s way of making us free from the bondage of sin. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Jn. 8:36). But Jesus forces freedom on no one.

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Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs Elders: Paul Dubois & Jeff Lankford

Phone: (270) 683-5386