

Title: **CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION**
Text: John 7:40-53
Subject: *The Division of Men because of Christ*
Date: Sunday Morning — July 12, 2009
Tape: John #57
Reading: *Ephesians 4:1-5:21*
Introduction:

What horrible divisions there are among men! Since the days of Noah, men have been dividing into groups. It seems that man, by nature, prefers strife to unity, conflict to communion and war to peace. Men and women everywhere look for excuses to quarrel. How easily even families, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, children and parents are divided from one another! How sad! How very, very sad!

Even among those who are brothers and sisters in Christ, divisions often come. Paul and Barnabas were both true servants of God, brothers in Christ and co-laborers in the Gospel. Both were loved of God, redeemed by Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Both were used greatly by God for the furtherance of the Gospel and the glory of Christ. Yet, Paul and Barnabas fell into strife and were divided from one another!

What is the cause of strife and division among men? What causes strife in your home? What is the cause of strife among brethren? This is what the Book of God says, — *“Only by pride cometh contention”* (Proverbs 13:10 — Pride of Race — Pride of Place — Pride of Face).

- Nosey busybodies cause strife.
- Idle gossips with their slandering tongues cause strife.

“A wrathful man stirreth up strife” (Proverbs 15:18).

“He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends” (Proverbs 17:9).

“A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends” (Proverbs 16:28).

“He loveth transgression that loveth strife” (Proverbs 17:19).

“Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife” (Proverbs 26:20-21).

“He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife” (Proverbs 28:25).

“An angry man stirreth up strife” (Proverbs 29:22).

“The forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife” (Proverbs 30:33).

May God teach me kindness and give me grace to use my influence and energy to promote others and promote peace. Spirit of God, keep me from grieving you by that corrupt communication, bitterness, anger, wrath and evil speaking that injures others and causes strife. — *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”* (Matthew 5:9). I want to be a peacemaker. Don’t you?

But, having said all that, I hasten to say, not all strife is evil and not all peace is good. Division is not always evil; and unity is not always good.

- A united mob of rebels is still a mob of rebels.
- A peaceful cemetery is still a cemetery.

If you will turn with me to John 7, we will read about a strife that cannot be avoided, if we are faithful to our God and faithful witnesses of Christ. **Christ Himself is often the cause of great division among men.** The title of my message is **CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION.** Let’s read John 7:40-53 together.

(John 7:40-53) Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. (41) Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? (42) Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? (43) So there was a division among the people because of him. (44) And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. (45) Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? (46) The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. (47) Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? (48) Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? (49) But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. (50) Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) (51) Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? (52) They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. (53) And every man went unto his own house.

Why was John inspired by God the Holy Spirit to record these things? Why does he tell us about this division of men because of the Lord Jesus? What are we to learn from this passage? — **FOUR THINGS ARE OBVIOUS.** May God the Holy Spirit teach us these four things.

USELESS KNOWLEDGE

First, there is a vast difference between religious knowledge and spiritual knowledge. Religious knowledge without faith in Christ is useless, damning knowledge. Spiritual knowledge is the gift of God, the gift and accompaniment of saving grace. Religious knowledge is but the acquirement of the flesh.

We are told that some of our Lord's hearers knew clearly where Christ was to be born. They were obviously very familiar with many facts recorded in Scripture.

- They knew the prophets. They knew that the Messiah would be of David's seed.
- They knew that He would be born in Bethlehem.
- They knew that the time for His coming was then at hand.

Yet the eyes of their understanding were not enlightened. They groped about in utter darkness.

- The Christ, the Messiah was standing before them; and they could not see Him!
- He was standing in their midst; and they were debating about places, family trees and dates!
- Christ was in their midst; but they did not know Him, believe Him, receive Him, trust Him, or obey Him.

Without question, where there is no knowledge there is no faith. — *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."* Faith is not a leap in the dark. An *"unknown God"* can never be the object of true worship, worship in spirit and in truth. You cannot know, trust, love and

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

worship an unknown God! But spiritual, saving knowledge is not something that can be acquired by human effort.

- Many in our day, like these men in John 7, know the words of Scripture well, who haven't a clue what those words teach.
- Many know the facts of Scripture history, who haven't a clue what those facts recorded mean, what they are intended to teach.
- Many know the doctrine of Christ, who do not know Christ.
- Salvation is knowing Christ (John 17:3). — Salvation is not knowing about Christ, but knowing Christ. — It is not knowing what He taught, but knowing Him! — Eternal life is not knowing what Christ did, but knowing Christ!

(John 17:3) And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

(Jeremiah 9:23-24) Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: (24) But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.

The very devils know the Scriptures better than you or me; but they are devils still. They are unaffected by what they know. And many men and women are just like them. They are familiar with the letter of Scripture, and are able to quote scores of texts. They reason, argue and debate about theological theory; and they are dead in trespasses and sins.

Saving knowledge is heart-knowledge. Sunday School teachers cannot convey it. Preachers cannot bestow it. Parents cannot give it. Heart-knowledge comes when Christ is revealed in you (Galatians 1:15). Heart-knowledge is bestowed when Christ is formed in you in the new birth. When Christ is in you, you have the mind of Christ. Until then, you have no spiritual knowledge.

(1 Corinthians 2:12-16) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Saving, spiritual knowledge, that knowledge that comes by the new creation of grace causes the heaven born soul to know...

- The plague of his own heart.
- The guilt of sin.
- The righteousness of God in Christ.
- And the accomplishment of redemption by Christ.

(John 16:7-11) Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. (8) And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

This is the highest degree of knowledge to which any mortal can attain. If you have it, it is God's gift; and you have eternal life. If you lack this saving knowledge that causes poor, needy sinners to cast all hope upon Christ, all your learning and wisdom, all your knowledge and skill in religious things is but darkness and delusion.

PREACHING WITH AUTHORITY

Second, our Master is held before us in this passage as the example to be followed by all preachers. He shows us what it is to preach with authority. We are told that even the officers of the chief priests, who were sent to arrest Him, were struck with awe and amazed by His preaching. They said, — "*Never man spoke like this Man*" (v. 46). That is exactly what we are told people said about our Savior when He finished preaching the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:28-29).

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

(Matthew 7:28-29) And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: (29) For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes.

Our Lord's authority in preaching was not in the loudness of His voice, or the oratorical skills He displayed. He obviously displayed none. It was not the authority of learning, or the authority of bombastic theatrics.

- Our Master's authority in preaching was the confidence with which He spoke the things of God. — He believed; therefore He spoke!
- His authority was displayed in the simplicity with which He spoke. — Authoritative preaching needs nothing to cover it, no hedges to hide behind, no hidden meaning to which one can retreat.
- His authority in preaching was this: — He preached to the hearts of men.

God give me grace to be such a preacher (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). May God raise up many to preach with such heavenly authority.

(1 Corinthians 2:1-5) And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (3) And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. (4) And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: (5) That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

A GRADUAL WORK

Third, we see in the example of Nicodemus that the work of God's Spirit in converting a sinner is often a gradual work. We are told that Nicodemus stood up in the council of our Lord's enemies, and mildly pleaded that He deserved fair dealing. — "*Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?*" (v. 51).

Nicodemus is the man who, eighteen months earlier came to our Lord by night. Yet, here he is, still content to be numbered among the Sanhedrin. Still, he appears to have been, even now, a disciple, a secret disciple being forced to identify himself with his Savior. Obviously, I cannot speak with

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

certainty about him; but that appears to be the case. Though he does not speak boldly, he does speak up in the Master's defense. Soon, this same man would openly identify himself with the despised Nazarene when very few would. He was soon to come with Joseph of Arimathaea to seek permission from Pilate to prepare our Lord's dead body for burial. He did so, remember, when all His chosen Apostles had forsaken Him and fled (John 19:238-39).

The work of the Spirit does not always go proceed with the same speed in the hearts and lives of chosen sinners. In some cases God's work of grace may appear to be very slow, though real and true. We are often too ready to condemn some as graceless, because their experience does not exactly tally with our own. We should never set ourselves up as judges who can tell who is saved and who is lost. We should always be content to leave every man and every woman to stand or fall before his Maker. They do not stand or fall before you and me. Because we judge everything by outward appearance, we always judge wrong.

- Some I thought once to be strong examples of faith and faithfulness proved to be reprobate in the end.
- Others I thought had proved themselves reprobate have proved themselves faithful.

Illustration: You cannot tell wheat from tares until harvest time. At harvest time the tares stand straight and tall. The wheat bows its head.

DIVISION ABOUT CHRIST

Fourth, we are plainly told that our Lord Jesus Christ is the cause of division among men. — “*So there was a division among the people because of him*” (v. 43). He who is the Prince of Peace is the greatest divider of men the world has ever known.

There was a division among the unbelieving people here because of Him.

- Some said He was a prophet.
- Others said He was a deceiver.
- Still others acknowledged His claims, but still did not trust Him.
- A few became His disciples, trusting Him and following Him.

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

There was a division of believers from unbelievers because of the Lord Jesus. There always is. This is a great and wide division. The more clearly it is seen the better. It is a division that must be maintained. Those who believed and those who believed not could not walk together. Eventually, Nicodemus was forced to separate himself from his life long friends, because he belonged to Christ. The same will be true of you and of me, if we belong to the Son of God.

In Revelation 18:4 we have a command from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the command our Lord gives to his people in every age.

(Revelation 18:4) “And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

Babylon is God’s name for all false religion. It is any religion and all religions which declare that salvation is ultimately dependent upon, decided by, or determined by man. Babylon is the religion of man. Babylon is the religion of the world. From Babylon, we must come out, “*and deliver every man his soul*” (Jeremiah 51:6). We are given the same command, only in broader terms, in 2 Corinthian 6.

(2 Corinthians 6:14-18) Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (15) And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (16) And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (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, (18) And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

(2 Corinthians 7:1) Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

It is the responsibility of God's people in every age to thoroughly and distinctly separate themselves from false, apostate religion.

As God commanded Lot to come out of Sodom, so he commands us to come out of Babylon. But, like Bro. Lot, we are all reluctant to do so. Our flesh is opposed to distinct separation. The religion of Babylon is so appealing and gratifying to our flesh that we will not leave it unless God lays hold of our hearts by the hand of his omnipotent grace and brings us out, even as the angel laid hold of Lot and brought him out of his beloved and cherished Sodom. May the Lord God be pleased to lay hold of our hearts and bring us altogether out of Babylon.

- “*Come out of her, my people.*”
- “*That ye be not partakers of her sins.*”
- “*That ye receive not of her plagues.*”

The Greek word translated “*division*” in John 7:43 is schism. It is used to identify a violent split, a split involving fierce contention. This cleavage caused by Christ divides the dearest friends and relatives. It is the deepest, the tenderest, the most real and the most permanent separation of men in the world.

Yet when faith comes and the separation is made, unity is produced that can never be dissolved or broken. Union with Christ gives us union with one another. In Christ all who are born of God are one: One Body — One Family — One Kingdom — One Church.

(Ephesians 2:11-22) Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; (12) That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: (13) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (14) For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; (15) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; (16) And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the

CHRIST THE CAUSE OF DIVISION

enmity thereby: (17) And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. (18) For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (19) Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; (20) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; (21) In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: (22) In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

In Christ Jesus nationalities are blended. Calvary heals Babel. Personal peculiarities cease to divide. Position, rank and wealth bow before the uniting influence of grace. All God's elect in all the changing ages of time are one in Christ Jesus. All the saints in heaven and on earth are one in Him.

(Colossians 3:1-3) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

(Colossians 3:10-15) And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: (11) Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all. (12) Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (13) Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye. (14) And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Amen.