

Revivals And Church History :: Great message by Jim Cymbala

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Division Brings Destruction

By Jim Cymbala

"And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebub,' and, 'By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.' So He called them to Himself and said to them in parables: 'How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end' (Mark 3:22-26).

Jesus' opponents saw that He had power over evil spirits but they would not attribute His authority as from God, so they said the most hideous and blasphemous thing. They argued that Jesus had power over evil spirits because He was in league with Beelzebub. Jesus responded, in effect, "Men, think about what you are saying. You are saying I am on the side of Beelzebub, and yet I am casting Beelzebub's evil spirits out of people. Do you think Satan is that ignorant?"

Jesus then laid down a crucial principle that we all must remember. Any house divided against itself cannot stand. In all division there is an inherent weakness that will tear away at the fabric and at the substance of the entity, and eventually if not checked it will destroy it. I do not care if it is a church, if it is a nation, if it is a basketball team, if it is a political party - nothing divided against itself can stay vibrant and strong. It automatically begins to weaken and in the end it will come tumbling down according to Jesus.

This truth is so little understood in the body of Christ. When I first went into the ministry I was shocked by the evil of the party spirit. I was taken aback that ministers would rejoice in the scandal and the problems that other churches would have. And if another church was blessed, they would downplay the blessing of the other church if it was not their own group. So you have the body of Christ supposedly believing in the Bible where Jesus prayed, "Father - that they may be one just as We are one" (John 17:22), and yet instead of praying for one another and rooting for one another, we are competing against each other. God will never bless that!

In the New Testament the sign of a division within the body of Christ was a sign of carnality. "For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?" (1 Cor. 3:3-4). In Galatians chapter five, Paul listed along with murder, wrath, adultery and fornication, that one of the works of the flesh is a party spirit. Would you not say this is one of the great sins that we do not repent of and that we do not talk of? We are all part of one family - the family of God! When your church is blessed, I am blessed. When your church hurts, I hurt because we are on the same team. But this is not something the body of Christ excels in. We have forgotten what Jesus taught in our text: "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

The Holy Spirit is like unto a dove and any division in the body of Christ grieves Him and He withdraws His influences. If you have division in your church you will get nowhere until the division is dealt with. No kingdom divided against itself can stand. The kingdom of darkness understands this principle, the sports world does, the corporate world does, but not the church. We have division and strife all the time, and it is tolerated. Then we wonder why there is a lack of conviction of sin, why there is a lack of anointing on the preacher's sermons, why the church is not moving ahead.

A first spiritual principle the Lord gives us for church work is that anything divided against itself cannot stand. That is why the Bible says to mark those who cause divisions among you, and after warning them to have nothing to do with them (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10). What church practices this? We put up with all kinds of nonsense. If those promoting division have money and they tithe, most pastors look the other way. But we are to mark those who cause divisions among us (Rom. 16:17) and we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Our silence regarding this sin allows destruction in the body of Christ.

"At the church I pastor, we hire staff members not by skill first, but by spirit - do they love God, are they filled with the Holy Spirit, can they minister and pray with others? This is a unity issue, because if you get a troublemaker, even if he

e or she is skillful, that one can pull down the whole house.

I tell anyone who is hired on our staff two things. First of all, we do not allow any "moods." If you come here in a bad mood, we will ask you to go home. Or you can tell the people around you, and they will have a prayer time until God lifts you up. But we will not allow bad moods because we have people we need to minister to, and we must be ready and in a good mood. We are doing the Lord's work and representing Him. Doesn't He deserve this?

Secondly, if we ever find out that you have talked about another staff member when that person was not present, it could be grounds for dismissal; there will be no warning. We are fighting the devil and trying to make inroads into the lives of people who are going through so much. If you are going to break trust and cause division among us, you will not be able to work here. If I have a problem with you, I am not going to tell another staff member, I am going to come to you. And if you have a problem with me, come to me, and if I offended you, I will apologize. But we will never permit a staff member to talk about another one behind his/her back.

This is only right. Does not the Lord deserve that kind of integrity in the way we work? Why grieve the Spirit with gossip, backbiting and division?

Edited from a workshop at the 2004 Heart-Cry for Revival Conference. Used by permission.