

Introduction

Remember that we are involved in spiritual warfare. The enemy is fierce and God equips us to gain victory in the battle. See Eph. 6.

Division

Definition: Division is personal alienation between Christians (especially workers*) caused by sinful attitudes. It is rooted in attitudes like envy, pride, and selfish ambition (Jas. 3:14-16), and it manifests itself in relationships broken by unresolved anger, personal resentment, malice, bitterness, etc. (Eph. 4:26,27,31). This is what causes "demonic" disorder and "gives the devil opportunity" to set Christians against one another and ravage the church . . .

* A worker is a Christian who is committed to advancing God's kingdom by sharing their faith with people who don't know Christ, by cooperating with God as He transforms their character, and by helping other believers move forward in their relationship with God.

Scripture emphasizes unity **among coworkers** rather than organizational unity between denominations or functional cooperation between local churches.

Purpose: "Divide and conquer" - Satan understands better than we do the importance of the church in spiritual warfare. As long as we are united, we will be effective (Roman Maniple; John 17:20-21; Matt. 12:25; Eph. 4:1-3; Col. 2:5 - "ordered array"). But if he can get the workers filled with suspicion, selfish ambition and negativity toward each other, or if he can discredit leaders, he can have a heyday (**Home church failures' common factor, 1993 Xenos Division** - up to 1200 people lost).

Results of division:

If you have ever been through a nasty division (like the one we experienced in 1992-1994), then you know how destructive it is.

- *It destroys effective outreach, because a key to our witness is the love that we show toward each other* (Jn. 13:34; 17:23). If people see the same kind of alienation between Christians that they see elsewhere, why should they listen to our message?
- *It demoralizes and demotivates all who are involved in it.* It is terrifically draining to be in an environment of suspicion, resentment and hostility (LIKE A DIVORCE). Some often drop out of fellowship altogether, and then become isolated and neutralized. Even seasoned workers who persevere through it flag in their zeal, and may become unwilling to risk getting close to people again.
- *It prevents effective leadership.* If a significant group becomes divided from the leadership of the church, or worse if the leadership itself becomes divided, the work of the church comes to a halt. Leaders must supply clear direction for the church, and the people must trust and respond to their leadership--or we are a rabble.

Avenues:

Passive division: Workers are disengaged, not initiating consistent encouragement and appropriate admonition. There are no outward problems, but there is no desire to relate. The unity has already been weakened so that the group is ripe for the outbreak of active division.

Active division: Workers are openly alienated from each other.

Issue-oriented conflict (e.g., doctrine and methods). Issue-oriented conflict is good, it's normal, and even important because it produces positive change.

Luke records an example of this kind of conflict between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41 (read).

They disagreed over an important strategic issue—personnel on a hazardous mission.

The word "sharp disagreement" (paroxusmos) means a vigorous debate! Is this a terrible defeat? There is no hint in Luke's narrative that it was. They couldn't agree on personnel, so they split into two mission teams, divided the mission, and went on. In his letters, Paul speaks favorably of both Barnabas and Mark in his later letters.

We have issues-oriented conflicts in this church. We have lots of committed leaders and workers who sometimes strongly disagree on how to best accomplish the work God has given us.

Sometimes we have to defer to those in leadership over us.

Sometimes we need to give each other some elbow room to work in our chosen way.

Sometimes we even need to go to another church that is better suited to what we are called to do.

All of these things can happen without being divided in the biblical sense.

But when issues never seem to get resolved, or new issues emerge as rapidly as old ones are resolved, this usually signals that the real problem is...

Affective Conflict: suspicion, negativity, bitterness, etc. (Jas. 3:13-18). See Ken Sandy, *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, Second Edition, Baker Books, 1997, p. 24-26,71.

(James 3: 13-18) Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. (14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. (15) This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. (16) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. (17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. (18) And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

Christians often deny that they are engaged in affective conflict. They may realize that sustained affective conflict is wrong and consciously or unconsciously connect their bad feelings to an issue.

Consider the following tip-offs:

- **A clear memory of offenses committed against you by them.** When you aren't resentful, you remember that the situation was a bummer, but you tend to forget the details.
- **A focus on the negative aspects of the person.** When you aren't resentful, your perspective is "He has a few irritating idiosyncrasies, BUT he is basically a great guy, etc." When you are resentful, this perspective is exactly reversed.
- **A habit of mentally rehearsing telling the other person off.** This may be about specific hurts received, or about other unrelated issues. This is simply the punitive desire being expressed.
- **An aversion to being around the person,** especially in situations that are one-on-one or personal.
- **Being angry/unable to rejoice when he has good fortune,** succeeds or is honored, and being (secretly) glad when he has bad fortune, fails, or is criticized.
- **Using "humor" to express your negative feelings.** (Prov. 26:18,19)
- **Gossiping about the other person.**

Countermeasures:

Think of division as a spiritual cancer. We overcome it in much the same way we fight against cancer in our own bodies--in three ways (WHICH APPLY TO MARITAL UNITY ALSO):

1. Prevention:

"The best defense is a good offense." Good nutrition, exercise, etc. make us much less likely to develop cancer in the first place. In the same way, there are spiritual things we can do make us much less likely to become divided from one another.

- *You can consistently initiate love toward your Christian friends* (Heb. 10:24,25). Division is almost always preceded by relational passivity and disengagement. It is difficult for the enemy to sow division between people who are consistently and consciously praying for, encouraging, and having fun with one another. How are

you doing here? Are you making time for this? Are you focusing on initiating it yourself and giving freely instead of on how well others are doing this with you?

- *You can work together on reaching outward to others* (Phil. 1:27; 2:2). When we are linking arms to reach out to those who don't know Christ and to help new Christians learn how to walk with Christ, we will be largely immune to division. But if we selfishly become a "holy huddle," it won't be long before we begin to get offended by one another's idiosyncrasies and minor offenses. Leaders, are you setting an outward direction and tone for your groups? Members, are you taking ownership to play your part in reaching out to other people?
- *You can maintain a proper attitude toward your leaders* (1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13 SEE LINKAGE B/W THIS ATTITUDE TOWARD LEADERS AND "LIVING IN PEACE" WITH ONE ANOTHER). Satan works especially hard to divide people from their spiritual leaders because he knows that if he can alienate the sheep from their shepherds, he can ravage the flock. This is why the New Testament, while holding high moral standards for leaders and circumscribing their legitimate sphere of authority, also calls on non-leaders to respect them, be prepared to follow them, and reject accusations against them unless they are objective and serious. Do you have this attitude toward your leaders--or do you indulge the freedom to resist them and sabotage them and suspect them?

The above preventative steps set the tone for the entire group.

2. Early Detection:

The statistics are overwhelming that early detection is often the difference between life and death. It is so much easier to "nip it in the bud" than to get rid of it once it has spread. The same thing is true with division in the church. Because our enemy is creatively active and because we are fallen, sinful people, we will not be able to prevent all division by the above steps. But we can nip it in the bud by taking the following steps:

- Like all sin, it always starts in our thought-lives--so *we need to develop the habit of monitoring our thoughts about others*. Satan will insidiously slander your Christian friends and leaders to you, drawing your attention to and exaggerating their flaws and weaknesses, interpreting their offenses against you in the worst possible light, and judging their motives (1 Cor. 4:5 - that they don't really care about you or are out hold you back or even to get you; they are committed to self rather than to Christ, etc.). Do you practice suspicion toward your suspicions by judging them and rejecting them? Or do you pour gasoline on the fire by indulging them and speaking them to others ("Don't say behind their backs what you'd be embarrassed to say to their faces.")? Once you do this, you give Satan more room to operate . . . Beware of taking up the offense of another (Prov. 26:17; 3:30). True Spirituality involves this practice, which no one sees, of being strict about your thought life...

- *We also need to help one another in this area.* When we see evidence that they are tolerating these kinds of groundless, slanderous thoughts, we need to speak an objective, corrective word and call on them to get before God about this! This is a really key ministry for all of us! In a disengaged church, this is not seen or practiced.

3. Aggressive Treatment

Once cancer has begun to grow and spread, it is life threatening. Only immediate and aggressive treatment can catch it before it rages out of control. In the same way, the New Testament gives us strong directives to take aggressive action when division actually breaks out. This is not a formula, but the Holy Spirit will guide you on how to apply these directives.

- *You should try to talk out personal conflicts as soon as you become aware of them* (Matt. 5:23,24). If you know you are divided from another Christian, don't withdraw and slander him to others--go and talk it out, and be ready to listen to his response instead of being dogmatic about your interpretation. What if you hear that he is divided from you? Sure, he should be coming to you--but there is a higher priority here than conflict etiquette! Go and ask what you have done to offend him.
- *You should apologize where appropriate--even if not reciprocated* (Matt. 7:3-5). Instead of being defensive, ask God to show you your fault. And if he shows you, acknowledge it and ask forgiveness. If you have slandered him, go and correct it. What is more important to you--preserving unity or your own pride?
- *You should be willing to forbear and forgive--even if he does not reciprocate* (Col. 3:13). Division thrives and grows when both parties are unwilling to do this. But when even one party chooses to do this, the damage is usually greatly reduced. This means committing yourself to pray for them and do good to them as the Lord shows you how to do this. Are you doing this--or are you reserving the right to withdraw and retaliate until they respond the way you insist on?
Are you willing to call upon your friends to do these things? To demand that in a certain amount of time...

SOMETIMES THESE ADDITIONAL MEASURES ARE NECESSARY:

- You should ask for help from others if necessary (Phil. 4:2,3). Sometimes we need the objectivity and wisdom of another mature Christian in order to resolve our issues and hurt feelings. I've seen stalemated parties break down in humility and tears and get reconciled when they have been willing to get this kind of help. Is this what you need to do (HOME GROUP WORKERS; COUNSELORS; HOME GROUP OVERSEERS; ARBITRATION BOARD).
- Formal church discipline is appropriate for unrepentant divisive members (2 Tim. 2:26; Titus 3:10). In those few cases in which someone insists on spreading discord in the church, God calls on us to correct him, warn him, publicly expose his rumors--and even to remove him until he repents. Are you willing to practice this "tough love."

Remember: You'll never stop all divisive conflict in the church.

The key is to promote and model unity, and go about dealing with it in a godly way. If you do this, God will protect you from being destroyed by division. Instead, he will use it to polarize the group so that the righteous and evil people are evident. (***Xenos Today: greater unity, agreement about our mission, financial support, etc. after persisting through a division.*** 1 Cor 11:18,19). Ken Sande's book, "The Peacemaker" provides excellent practical guidance in helping us to resolve conflict before division even becomes an issue.

Persecution

Definition: attacks on Christians (individually and corporately) to wear them down and/or intimidate them into backing off from radical commitment to Christ

Note- This is not the same as persecution discussed under overt attack, because in this case, Satan is using human agents rather than directly attacking.

Avenues:

- **Secular society:** (Rev. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:8 in context) >> ***bad press; community rumors; members threatened; mocking and/or mistreatment on the job*** (Rev. 2:10) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested . . .
- **Religious community:** (Jesus and apostles with Jewish leaders; Anabaptists; Wesleyan Movement) >> ***Today we find persecution in many Islamic, Hindu, and Marxist nations.***
- **Family and Friends**

Countermeasures:

1. Make sure you aren't guilty of wrongdoing! (1 Pet. 4:15)

Beware of the immature tendency to cry "Persecution!" when you are only receiving the consequences for your poor choices. If you are guilty, clean it up! Only when we have done this can we expect the Lord's protection; otherwise, we are under God's discipline (***1982,1983 problems***).

(1 Pet. 4:15) By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler;

2. Don't be surprised.

Because Satan is the ruler of the world, we can expect persecution. The majority of Christians have always suffered persecution. The relative absence of persecution for American Christians is the exception, not the rule—and this situation may well change for the worse.

(1 Pet. 4:12) Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;

(John 15:18-20) If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave is not greater than his master." If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

(2 Tim. 3:12) And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

(Luke 6:26) Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.

3. Rejoice, because this is the proof that you are being effective.

Bombers get lots of anti-aircraft fire when they are flying over strategically important targets. Likewise, persecution usually signals that we are inflicting enough damage on the enemy that he feels it necessary to mount a counterattack. Stated conversely, what does it mean if we are never persecuted?

(1 Pet. 4:14) If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you . . . but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.

(Matt. 5:11,12) Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. (12) Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Phil. 1:29) For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake . . .

4. Determine to continue serving Christ (especially evangelism) no matter what the cost.

(Acts 4:19,20) But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; (20) for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."

(Acts 5:40-42) And they took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them. (41) So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

(1 Pet. 5:10) And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.

(Rev. 2:10) Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

(Rev. 12:11) And they overcame him because . . . they did not love their life even to death.

5. Stand with other Christians who are undergoing persecution. (Contrast Heb. 13:3, Matt 25:35,36, and 1 Peter 5:9 with 2 Tim 4:16ff)

Opposition

Definition: specific actions designed to hinder Christian ministry

Avenues:

- **Circumstantial barriers:**

(1 Thess. 2:18) For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan thwarted us.

Examples: car breakdowns on the way to minister; circumstances preventing new people from coming; distractions when preparing to teach (fight with spouse)

- **Agents:**

(2 Tim. 2:25,26) . . . those who are in opposition . . . (26)... having been held captive by (the devil) to do his will.

Acts: Simon Magus (8); Elymas (13); Fortuneteller (16)

Examples: Meeting disrupters; new attendees who sabotage evangelism and follow-up with sex, materialism, etc.

Countermeasures:

- **Countermeasures for circumstantial barriers:**

We can't eliminate opposition, but we can anticipate and eliminate where possible. Educate people to expect them and how to overcome. Pray for protection.

- **Countermeasures for agents:**

(2 Thes. 3:2) . . . and (**pray**) that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.

(2 Tim. 2:25,26). . . . with gentleness **correcting** those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, (26) and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

(1 Tim. 1:20) Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have **delivered over to Satan**, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.

Delivered over to Satan is probably a reference to church discipline taken against Hymenaeus and Alexander for false teaching. For another example of church discipline, see 1 Cor. 5:2,5.

Satanology: Overt Tactics

Definition: Overt tactics are obvious manifestations of Satan's attacks.

A. Demon-Possession

Symptoms: Mk. 5:2-13 (* signifies symptoms unexplainable psychologically)
Someone who is possessed may have some, but not all of these qualities. It would be important to see some of the * symptoms to conclude that one is demon possessed.

1. **Supernatural strength*** (vs. 4); Acts 19:16

2. **Paroxysms** (vs. 5); Mk. 9:20 Not to be confused with epilepsy. See Matt. 4:23 And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. 24 And the news about Him went out into all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

3. **Self-destruction** (vs. 5); Mk. 9:22

4. **Personality split** (vs. 6-10); Acts 19:15 Contemporary work in this area suggests this may be manifest with multiple voices.

5. **Special knowledge*** (vs. 7); Mk. 1:24

6. **Resistance*** (vs. 7); Mk. 1:24 Unique and intense resistance to spiritual input that might include falling asleep, outbursts of rage, inappropriate laughter, fleeing a spiritual conversation, intense distracting thoughts, and possibly hearing voices. **QUALIFICATION:** All fallen people have some resistance to spiritual things and psychotic people may have delusions (hearing voices, etc.).

7. **Transference*** (vs. 13) The shift of demon presence from one being to another.

Note: The biblical incidence of demon possession appears to be concentrated around the ministry of Jesus and (to a lesser degree) the apostles. It is significant that the epistles do not mention demon possession or teach Christians how to exorcise.

Can Christians be possessed? The Bible seems to answer "no."

- 1 Cor. 6:19 says **Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and belong to Jesus.**
- 1 Jn. 4:4* stresses that **Jesus who is "in" us is greater than Satan who is "in" the world.**

However, scripture clearly teaches that Christians can be adversely affected by Satan if we allow his influence into our lives (see below).

B. Subjection

Definition: Strong influence of Satan on a Christian. 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Acts 5:1-10

Symptoms: Many of these have been consistently observed by Christian workers, but we have no specific Biblical examples. Symptoms are similar to those listed above, but less pronounced:

1. **Resistance to Christ and spiritual truth** (difficulty in conversion and growth) **is observed.**
2. **Character evidences excessive immorality or blasphemy without control.**
3. **Strong depression after conversion, with no previous history of such depression.**
4. **Medium and/or occult powers** (visions, telepathy, astral projection, divination) **are present.**

Reasons for subjection or possession?

- **Family practice and power are sometimes handed down by inheritance or transference.**
- **Involvement (past or present) with occult** (charmed, mediums, occult practices, etc.—see Deut. 18:9-13**). These can include: tarot cards, ouija, new age channellers, spirit guides, etc.
- **Open and blasphemous sin** (especially for those previously involved in the occult). See Eph. 4:26,27 where we see ongoing sin connected to giving the devil an opportunity.

C. Individual Persecution

Not connected with occultic activity per se, but often because of progress being made in your walk with the Lord that Satan sees as a threat to his purposes. Again this is not a biblical category, but supported by Christian experience.

Symptoms:

- **Severe depression, especially when there is no apparent reason to be depressed.**
- **Nightmares and night terrors, especially preceding teaching or other spiritual activity.**
- **Voices, visitations, etc.**

All Christians may experience demonic persecution—especially those who are committed to ministry.

Deliverance from Overt satanic attacks

Victory Is Ours In Christ

While the New Testament has much material about the destructive power and activity of Satan, it emphasizes Christ authority and victory over him and the believer's consequent spiritual freedom.

Christ's victory over Satan

- **I Jn. 3:8**
- **Col. 2:15**
- **Jn. 12:31**

Christian's freedom from Satan

- **Col. 1:13**
- **1 Jn. 4:4*** You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.
- **Rom. 8:38,39**

Deliverance is possible only through Christ and only if the person will turn to him.

Renunciation:

(Acts 19:18,19*) Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.

(19) And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

- **Confession of all known involvement.**
- **Renunciation of involvement, including destruction of occult objects and breaking of occultic contacts.**
- **Commitment to Christ** (Matt. 12:43-45; Lk. 11:24-26)

Counselor's Work:

- **Prayer and fasting (Mk. 9:29) with other Christians.**
- **Binding through persistent prayer and commanding spirits (Luke 10:17) if there is resistance.**

Binding Satan is not an incantation but a principle in Matt.12:29. There doesn't seem to be much biblical support for the efficacy of saying, "Satan I bind you in the name of Christ." However, it does seem that warring with Satan involves prayer (c.f. Ephesians 6:18) and this would seem to be the proper means of restraining him.

Christ, Christ's disciples (Mark 6:7; Lk.10:17) and even one who was not his disciple (Mark 9:38-40) commanded spirits to leave people. The latter two categories did so in the name of Christ (c.f. Jude 1:9). There seem to be adequate examples in the gospels & Acts for us to do the same thing.

- **After renunciation and/or conversion, announce forgiveness and instruct on security and position in Christ.** Passages like Rev. 12:10; Col. 2:15; I Jn. 4:4 are especially helpful.
- **Stress the necessity of the means of growth** (especially Body-life).

Memory Verses

Deut. 18:9-12** - occultic practices forbidden

Acts 19:18,19* - renunciation of occultic involvement

1 Jn. 4:4* - Christians need not be afraid of demons because of Christ