

Splintered...

“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.
If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”

Jesus, in Mark 3:24–25

Sadly this is so often true of countries, schools, families, ...

- Common strategies in stress: blame & divide
- One of the most effective means to conquer a powerful foe: divide them to make them weaker

So what might Satan want to do to the Church or to a church?

- Conflict and separation

What has God done about it? What is He doing about it?

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Peace, not D/i/v/i/s/i/o/n

Ephesians 2:11-22

bib.ly/Eph2.NIV
tiny.cc/cmchandouts



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Sin separates...

- **Sin separates people from God**

- “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

But your iniquities have **separated**
you from your God;

iniquities, sins=
immorality & disloyalty to God

your sins have hidden his face from you,
so that he will not hear.” *Isaiah 59:1-2*

- **Sin separates people from each other**

- The first brothers: Cain killed Abel

- The divisions have not stopped!

- What is the most powerful tool to unite people?

- Shared enemies → division, being jointly repelled

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We live in a splintered world

- The Church has always struggled with divisions...

- “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be **no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united** in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’; another, ‘I follow Cephas’; still another, ‘I follow Christ.’ Is Christ divided?” *1 Corinthians 1:10-13a*

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God’s purpose in Jesus

- God’s purpose : “to bring **unity** to all things in heaven and on earth **under Christ.**” *Ephesians 1:10*
- “Make **every effort** to keep the **unity** of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were called to **one** hope when you were called; **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism; **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” *Ephesians 4:4-6*

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The Divisions in the Church

- The early church: especially Jews and Gentiles
 - There was “the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility”
 - Culture, language, religious heritage, politics, power, ...
 - Initially: Jewish people were the most powerful
 - They defined what was “normal”
- Ephesus was a new situation for the church
 - Gentiles were the majority
 - We learn from God’s message to them in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesian church

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Remember how far away from God you were

Therefore, **remember** that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” [the Jewish people] (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were **separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants** of the promise, **without hope and without God** in the world.

Ephesians 2:11-12

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Remember how far away from God you were
Jesus' death brought Gentiles and Jews together

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For **he himself is our peace**, who has **made the two groups one** and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations.

Ephesians 2:13-15a

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Remember how far away from God you were
Jesus' death brought Gentiles and Jews together
Jesus' purpose: one new humanity, reconciled to God

His purpose was to create in himself **one new humanity** out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to **reconcile both of them to God** through the cross, **by which he put to death their hostility**. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father **by one Spirit**.

Ephesians 2:15b-18

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Remember how far away from God you were
 Jesus' death brought Gentiles and Jews together
 Jesus' purpose: one new humanity, reconciled to God
One house for God to live in

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but **fellow citizens** with God's people and also **members of his household**, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become **a holy temple in the Lord**. And in him you too are being built together to become **a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit**.

Ephesians 2:19-22

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For this purpose: To show God's creative wisdom

His intent was that now, *through the church*, **the manifold wisdom of God** should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to **his eternal purpose** that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 3:10-11

"Insofar as the church exists as a spiritually united multiethnic community, it accomplishes this task." *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*

The **unity and diversity** of the church are essential for showing God's power and wisdom → for His purpose

manifold = different in lots ways

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The Big Idea

**Jesus Christ is our peace
that unites diverse people
into one family
with great variety
where God lives and loves**

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*Strategies that **don't** show the creative wisdom of God...*

“Separate but equal churches”

- Individually homogeneous and collectively diverse
- Like gathering all the eyes in one place, and all the hands in another place, and all the academics or artists or...

Conformity to a single variation

- Melting pot or stew

Proximity without loving engagement

- Salad bowl

Rather: a single organism with distinct of parts, with one head and one heart, living in common vision & purpose, where the parts are enriched by each others' differences

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Application

Praise God for His great vision and manifold wisdom!

- His **eternal purpose**: show His creative glory
- **Promised fulfillment**: “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” *Revelation 7:9*
- His **presence** in the journey
 - It can be challenging...

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Application

Praise God for His great vision and manifold wisdom!

Joyfully pursue God's vision for us

- Joyful diversity should be at home in the church
 - Varieties of people, living and loving together, helping to shape each other, **without sacrificing our diversity**
 - Love each other in what **we have in common**
 - Love each other in what **makes us different**, and **being expanded** by those differences
 - **Without any group taking priority → 1 new humanity**
 - Beyond “colorblindness”, we want to see our many colors!

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Application

Praise God for His great vision and manifold wisdom!

Joyfully pursue God's vision for us

- We have...
 - God's purpose and design
 - show the manifold wisdom of God
 - a realistic understanding of the challenge:
 - human weaknesses and limitations
 - sin & Satan
 - the means to be successful:
 - sharing the one Spirit of God
 - individually & together

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Application

Praise God for this great vision and manifold wisdom!

Joyfully pursue God's vision for us

- Which requires walking together when we see and experience many things very differently
 - Politics, values, perspectives, experiences, ...
- Yet we are united in Christ
 - We all have flaws of various kinds
 - We all find forgiveness in Christ's sacrifice alone
 - We share the one Spirit of God who empowers us to forgive and love each other as Christ has forgiven and loved us

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Application

Praise God for this great vision and manifold wisdom!

Joyfully pursue God's vision for us

Continue to develop relationships across differences

- Listen and learn and love
- With deep humility
- Valuing who I am, and who you are, in what we share and what makes us different, and being shaped by each other
- Seeing Christ and His creative wisdom in each of us
- To show everyone the creative wisdom of God

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The Big Idea

**Jesus Christ is our peace
that unites diverse people
into one family
with great variety
where God lives and loves
through us**