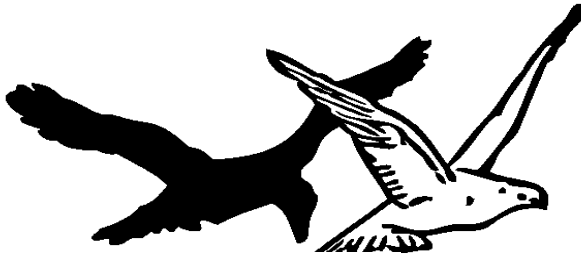


DIVINE DIVISION



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INTRODUCTION

DIVINE DIVISION

Divine division: The two words appear to be an oxymoron--an expressed idea in which there seems to be completely contradictory terms.

"Divine" means that something is of God or emanates from Him. "Division" is the act of dividing, separating into two parts, or forming a boundary between.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was called the prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). On the occasion of Christ's birth, the angels pronounced peace on earth (Luke 2:14) and the Prophet Zacharias, under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, declared that Jesus would guide our feet into the way of peace (Luke 1:67 and 79).

Prior to His return to heaven, Jesus gave the gift of peace to His followers, promising *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"* (John 14:27).

The Apostle Paul speaks of a peace through Jesus that surpasses human understanding and keeps the hearts and minds of believers secure in Christ (Philippians 4:7).

So how can we possibly coin a phrase like "divine division"? The word "division" brings to mind problems and conflicts, not peace and unity. This concept of divine division, however, is found in the Bible in words spoken by Jesus Himself who declared:

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.
(Luke 12:51-53)

How could someone with the name "prince of peace" and who left His followers with the gift of supernatural peace possibly make such a declaration as, "I came to bring division?"

It is because Jesus spoke of a division whose source is not evil, but which comes from God Himself and accomplishes His divine purposes.

If we accept that God is a divine divider, then that raises some important questions that must be considered. How many times, in the divisions we personally encounter, is it God actually at work in our lives instead of Satan?

We usually credit broken relationships, church splits, and other divisions as the work of Satan. But is that always true? Are some divisions instituted by God to accomplish His purposes? Is there really such a thing as divine division?

CHAPTER ONE

THE DIVINE DIVIDER

From the beginning of time, God is pictured as a divider. No-- He is not the author of the confusion that divides families, nations, and organizations. The Bible clearly states that “...*God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints*” (1 Corinthians 14:33).

The division that causes envy, strife, confusion, and results in evil clearly does not come from God:

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.
(James 3:14-18)

Whenever division arises from envy, strife, confusion, and evil--whether through your conduct or that of others--its source is satanic. There should be no such divisions in the Body of Christ.

Jude cautioned that “...*there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.*” (Jude 18-19)

The Power Of Unity

The Bible reveals the importance of unity:

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 for evermore. (Psalm 133:1-3)

There--where believers are in unity--the anointing of God commands His blessings.

When believers worship in unity, the presence of God is ushered into their midst. At the dedication of the temple built by King Solomon...

It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God. (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).

On the day of Pentecost, when believers were all in one accord in the upper room prayer meeting, the gift of the Holy Spirit was bestowed upon them and the power of God manifested in a miraculous way (Acts 2).

The Apostle Paul admonished believers...

... by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

He instructed two feuding women, to make peace and be of the same mind in the Lord (Philippians 4:2).

Paul spoke of "*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the body of peace*" (Ephesians 4:3). He also explained that a major purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is to bring believers into "*...the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13).

Unity among believers is constantly emphasized in the Word of God. So how can we declare that God--who repeatedly emphasizes unity--is also a divine divider? Is there such a thing as divine division and could there be anything positive about the divisions we experience in our lives?

To answer these questions, we must go back to the beginning of biblical history.

The First Divine Division

The first recorded divine division occurred when God expelled Satan and his followers from Heaven because of their rebellion:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15)

Jesus declared, "*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*" (Luke 10:18). First Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 adds to this passage that the angels who joined Satan in his rebellion were also separated from God's presence.

This first divine division established a spiritual separation between good and evil that has passed down through time and will extend into eternity.

In The Beginning

In Genesis chapter one, in our first revelation of God, He is at work in the universe through both creating and dividing. God separated the light from darkness (verse 4); the waters under the firmament from those above (verse 7); dry land from the waters (verse 9); and He created lights to separate day from night (verses 14-18).

When God surveyed the results of these divisive acts, He declared them to be good (verse 31). God declared concerning Himself, "*But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared...*" (Isaiah 51:15).

Genesis chapter two records the division of male and female:

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (Genesis 2:21-23)

In God's initial acts of creation, we see Him at work supernaturally creating and dividing to accomplish His specific purposes. From the inception of time as we know it, God has been a divine divider and His divisions are always in line with His express purposes.

Spiritual Division

In the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden, God established a fundamental spiritual division:

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:15-17)

This spiritual division between good and evil gave mankind the power of choice: He would either rebel against God or choose to obey Him. It established the premise that the laws of God always involve separation, yet they are given not to unfairly restrict you, but to enable you to live a happy and fulfilled life.

What a great life Adam and Eve would have enjoyed if they had made different choices. Unfortunately, Genesis chapter three recounts the sad story of their fall into sin through his rejection of God's divine separation:

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. (Genesis 3:1-7)

The first sin of mankind was to ignore the separation established by God. The division between good and evil was instituted for their welfare, but Adam and Eve ignored this line of separation, partook of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and sin entered their perfect environment. Through their transgressions, they created a man-made chasm, a gulf between themselves and their Creator.

In response to their sin, God again divided, separating Adam and Eve from the beautiful garden of Eden:

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24)

The expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden was actually an act of God's mercy, for if they had eaten of the tree of life after they sinned, they would have existed forever in their lost condition of separation from God.

Breaching The Great Divide

God did not create the chasm between Himself and His creations. Sin caused the division between mankind and God:

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

This great divide created by sin could only be breached through a blood sacrifice, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22). So God made the first blood sacrifice for sin. Then He clothed Adam and Eve with the skin of the slain animal which was symbolic of being covered by righteousness secured through the blood.

From that time on, Old Testament believers were saved by looking forward to the cross through the blood sacrifice of animals. We are saved by looking back on the cross and accepting the blood sacrifice of our Savior, Jesus Christ:

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:11-15)

The sinful division resulting from man's disobedience was not instituted by God, but it was one remedied by Him when He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins:

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Romans 5:6-11)

The great gulf of separation between God and man was bridged once and for all by Jesus Christ when He died on the cross for the sins of all mankind:

*For he (Jesus) is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 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; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.
(Ephesians 2:14-18)*

The sin that separates you from a loving God was eliminated by the death of Jesus on the cross. The division between you and God is eliminated when you believe and act upon this great truth by accepting Christ as your personal Savior.

God has given you the choice of living in the spiritual darkness of sin or in the light of new life. The choice is yours:

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

Jesus declared, "... I came into this world for judgment [as a Separator, in order that there may be separation between those who believe on Me and those who reject Me], to make the sightless see and to make those who see become blind." (John 9:39, AMP) One of Christ's divine purposes was to separate--to make a division--between those who believe and those who reject Him.

Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the

one, and despise the other"...(Mathew 6:24). You cannot be spiritually neutral.

There are two ways to build your life, either on Jesus Christ or on the shifting sands of the world (Matthew 7:24-27). There are two spiritual paths and two gates that lay before you, divine divisions that lead either to destruction or life. Jesus said:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

You enter into the narrow way that leads to life by choosing to go God's way. God has set before you this divine division, the choice of spiritual life or death:

I call heaven and earth to witness this day...that I have set before you life and death, the blessings and the curses; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live and may love the Lord your God, obey His voice, and cling to Him. For He is your life and the length of your days...(Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

If you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, you choose life. If you reject Him, you choose death:

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:11-12)

The choice is simple. Choose life.

If you are not a born-again believer, stop right now--before you continue with this book. Confess your sin, acknowledge Jesus Christ as your Savior, and eliminate the division between you and God. This gap must be closed before you can truly understand the remainder of this book because the divine divisions of God are only grasped with a spiritual mind.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL DIVISIONS

In the previous chapter, you discovered how God was at work supernaturally dividing through creative acts. You studied about the divine division between good and evil that occurred in heaven and in the Garden of Eden. You learned about the great gulf between God and mankind resulting from the wrong choices made by Adam and Eve and how Jesus bridged that separation through His sacrifice on the cross.

God is not willing that any should perish, and so you will constantly see Him at work in the world appealing to sinful mankind to choose life and make peace with Him.

But as you are learning, God is also a divider. Let's look at some of the early divisions recorded in the Bible and the supernatural purposes God accomplished through them.

Cain And Abel

One of the major divine divisions recorded in the Old Testament is that between Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your

door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."
(Genesis 4:3-7, NIV)

Cain brought the fruit of the ground as an offering to God, while Abel sacrificed the firstborn of his flock. God accepted Abel's offering, and rejected Cain's. The remainder of Genesis chapter four tells how Cain was so angry that he killed his brother and was punished by God for his sin. Abel's offering was made in obedience to the requirement for the blood sacrifice instituted by God, but Cain's was not. His offering was a substitute offering of the fruit of his labors which symbolized self-effort.

The divine division in this example is clear: If you do what is right then you will be accepted, but if you do not do what is right then sin is waiting at your door and will overcome you. God made a divine division between right and wrong. You can either surrender to it or master it. It is your choice.

The Division Of Nations

A divine division that affected the destiny of the entire world occurred at a place called Babel:

And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one

language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1-9)

What would have happened had these people continued to congregate and consummate their prideful venture? God Himself gives the answer: He declared that "*...nothing they have imagined they can do will be impossible for them*" (Genesis 11:6, AMP).

So again--at God's Word and in order to accomplish His divine purposes--God made a divine division. He confounded their language and, as a result, the project ceased, the people scattered, and nations eventually formed. Their evil plans were averted by God's act of divine division.

One Man And The World

Next, we are introduced to a man named Noah. Take time to read his story in Genesis chapters 6-8.

Evil was so rampant on earth during Noah's time that God decided He must destroy His creation. When the Lord sent a flood to destroy the entire earth, only Noah, his family, and the animals God commanded him to take into the ark with him were spared.

Once again, God made a divine division between good and evil. All who were in the ark--which is a spiritual type of being in Christ Jesus--were spared from God's wrath.

Leaving Lot

Another divine division occurred when God appeared to a man named Abram--later to be renamed Abraham by God. The Lord said to Abraham, "*...Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee...*" (Genesis 12:1).

Note that Abraham was to leave his kindred behind. Yet, in Genesis 12:4 we read, "*So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him.*" A short statement, but one with a depth of meaning. Abraham took Lot with him when he left Haran, and Lot's problems became Abraham's problems.

Lot and his family turned out to be nothing but trouble for Abraham. Problems first arose when the land could not support both of the men and their livestock, resulting in strife between their herdsmen. Genesis 13, records how Abraham gave Lot the opportunity to choose land and separate from him. Instead of selecting property somewhere in Canaan, Lot chose to live near Sodom and Gomorrah. It was a beautiful and fertile place, but the cities were filled with sinful, idolatrous people. Sometimes things that look good on the surface are not so good when you take a closer look through eyes of faith. Why didn't Lot choose land in Canaan? The Promised Land was expansive and well-able to support both him and Abraham.

Genesis 14 records how Abraham had to rescue Lot when he was taken captive by the enemy. Genesis 19 records the final

judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah and how Abraham had to intercede in order to save Lot.

When an angel came to rescue Lot and his family from destruction in Sodom, Lot tried to persuade his sons-in-law to go with them, but they refused and even mocked him. During the evacuation, Lot's wife looked back in violation of God's instructions and she died. Lot's daughters later committed incest with him because their husbands had perished in Sodom. Are you beginning to see why God told Abraham to leave his kindred behind?

As you travel towards your own spiritual destiny, you, too, may be required to part with family or friends. Some partings may be simply the result of your need to move on to the next part of your spiritual journey. But there may be times when God commands you to separate from someone, and if and when He does, you must do it! If you do not obey and you remain attached to that person, their problems will become your problems.

It was only after separating from Lot that God spoke to Abraham once again.. *"And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him..." (Genesis 13:14).* Abraham was about to receive the details of his divine destiny, and it happened after his separation from Lot.

Has God shown you someone or something from which you must separate? You may not receive a revelation of the next step in your journey towards destiny until you do so. What has God told you to leave behind? What divine division has He asked you to make but you have ignored? What difficulties are you experiencing because you didn't make a total separation? What is pulling you back to the old life?

The Division Of A Nation

Several other divine divisions occurred in the saga of the birthing of the nation of Israel.

Isaac from Ishmael. Ishmael was a child birthed by the flesh from a relationship between Abraham and a servant girl. Isaac was birthed as the promised child of God. There came a point when God required Ishmael (the flesh) to be separated from Isaac (the child of promise). This will be discussed in detail in chapter nine of this study on "*The Division Of Flesh And Spirit*".

Jacob from Esau. From birth, there was a supernatural division between Isaac's sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau was the oldest and should have received the birthright and the blessing, but Jacob seized these and then fled from his brother's wrath. Jacob had a divine destiny and endured many separations in order for God's purposes to be accomplished in his life.

Joseph from his brethren. Jacob's son, Joseph, is another example of divine division at work. Betrayed by his own brothers, Joseph was separated from his family and the life he knew in order to save God's people and the then-known world from famine. You will learn more about the divisions that occurred in his life in chapter six of this study on "*The Division Of Vision*." The Bible indicates God's supernatural blessing rested upon Joseph who was described as being "...*separate from his brethren*" (*Deuteronomy 33:16*).

Israel from Egypt. One of the greatest divisions in Old Testament times occurred when God brought His people, Israel, out of Egyptian bondage. After the death of Joseph, a new ruler came to power in Egypt. Feeling threatened by the

rapid multiplication and blessing of the Israelites in their midst, this new Pharaoh enslaved God's people.

For 400 years, the Israelites endured the cruel bondage of slavery. Finally, a man named Moses brought Israel the good news of God's plan of deliverance:

*Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord. And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.
(Exodus 6:6-9)*

God wanted to deliver Israel and had sent a deliverer to them, yet they were so distraught that they didn't even hear the message. Is God wanting to bring you out of something, to separate you from the slavery of bondage through divine division? Are you listening to His message, or are you so anguished that you are missing the Word of God to you that it is time to come forth out of captivity to a person, a problem, an emotion or a sin?

Because Pharaoh repeatedly refused to release Israel from slavery, God sent a series of ten terrible plagues upon Egypt. God made a division between the Egyptians and spared the Israelites as these plagues came upon the land. God said,

"... I will put a division between my people and thy people" (Exodus 8:23). This division came because of the Word of the Lord and Pharaoh's refusal to obey it--the same reason for many divine divisions that occur in the life of a believer.

After nine plagues, the Lord declared *"Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether" (Exodus 11:1).*

The final plague on Egypt was the death of all the first-born sons. In order to be protected from this terrible judgment, the Israelites were commanded to mark the doorposts of their homes with the blood of a slain lamb (Exodus 12). God declared:

I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:12-13)

The blood of the lamb marked the difference between Israel and the Egyptians (Exodus 11:7). From this historical event comes the observance of the Jewish Passover and the prophetic foreshadowing of the slain Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

Your life is marked by the blood of the Lamb of God when you accept Christ as your personal Savior. This blood divides you from the unsaved people of the world and spares you from God's wrath and judgment for sin.

Beware Of Mixed Multitudes

When the people of Israel were finally delivered from Egypt, the Bible notes that a mixed multitude went with them (Exodus 12:38). Commentators speculate that this mixed multitude may have been composed of other people who had been taken captive by Egypt or perhaps some Egyptians who had lost everything in the plagues and were disgruntled with their nation. For sure, we know that they were not Israelites.

This group of people--the mixed multitude--became a hindrance to God's people:

And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.

(Numbers 11:4-6)

God's original call to Moses was to deliver Israel out of Egypt. They were to spoil the Egyptians--strip them of their wealth--and depart, not take them along on their journey! The lusts of the mixed multitude led Israel into sin, God sent divine judgment, and many people died (Numbers 11).

If the Israelites had only heeded the divine division established by God and left the mixed multitude behind when they left Egypt, they would have saved themselves from many difficulties during their wilderness journey.

Are you trying to advance in your spiritual journey with a mixed multitude hanging on--people who are not truly committed to the destiny God has for your life? What relationships do you have that are tainted by spiritual Egypt--sin, the flesh, bondage, and unbelief? Do not try to travel spiritually with a mixed multitude and take Egypt along with you.

Reasons God Divides

We have only examined a portion of the first few books in the Bible, and we are beginning to see an underlying theme of divine division. God divides to create. He divides to protect His people from judgment. He has established a division between good and evil, spiritual light and darkness, truth and error. God divides to frustrate evil plans, He divides in order to deliver His people from bondage, and He divides men and nations and calls them forth to fulfill their divine destinies.

In your personal life as a believer, you will repeatedly encounter divisions. There may be separations from friends and loved ones. There may be divisions in your church or ministry. Sometimes you may be forced to relocate geographically.

While we know that there are many separations caused by Satan and divisions that are due to our own sinful natures--could it be that some divisions we encounter in our lives are actually planned by God? And could it be that--as in the examples of Adam and Eve and their sons, the rebels at Babel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, the Israelites and others--these divisions are instituted by God for our correction or protection?

Could some divisions you experience be God at work accomplishing His divine purposes in your life?

CHAPTER THREE

THE SWORD THAT DIVIDES

In the biblical records of divine division examined in the previous chapter, there was one powerful force operative behind each separation: In every instance, God spoke and division resulted. The examples cited were not ungodly divisions, but were supernatural separations established to accomplish divine purposes:

-God spoke, and division occurred in creation, creating positive forces to govern the natural world.

-God spoke, and the spiritual divisions of good and evil were instituted.

-God declared that Adam and Eve were to be expelled from the garden--a separation of divine mercy to prevent their eternal existence in a sinful condition.

-God spoke, and men were either saved or judged depending upon their response to His Word.

-God declared--"Let us confound their language"--and He aborted the sinful plans of the builders at Babel.

-God spoke, and men and nations were separated to accomplish His divine purposes.

-God spoke, and the blood of the lamb divided and delivered His people from Egypt--a symbolic type of the sinful people of the world.

The supernatural force behind each of these divisions and the power behind every divine division we experience is the Word of God. We are not speaking of sinful divisions resulting from greed, envy, anger, or other evils. The Bible clearly teaches forgiveness and advocates that we love our enemies and not alienate ourselves from them. Sin divides in a negative way, but the Bible also confirms that God's Word has tremendous, positive divisive power:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

We cannot divide soul and spirit or the joints and marrow, but God's Word can. Neither can we know the thoughts and intents of our own hearts or the hearts of others, but God easily discerns these.

It is the Word of God that creates divine divisions. The entire world is divided because of the Word of God. Society is composed of believers and unbelievers and the acts of men are divided into categories of good or evil. You are either part of God's Kingdom as a true believer or you are part of Satan's kingdom as an unbeliever. You are either embracing the spirit of truth or the spirit of error:

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. (1 John 4:6)

You are either living in spiritual darkness or light, based on your response to God's Word:

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light...Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. (Ephesians 5:8-11)

Good and evil, light and darkness, truth and error--the sharp spiritual sword of God's Word is definitely divisive. Divine division always occurs when truth encounters error and spiritual darkness encounters spiritual light.

An Understanding Of Divine Division

The concept of divine division became clear to me after years of striving to have a positive relationship with my mother. For most of my life, my mother was an unbeliever and was abusive of those around her. She had three failed marriages and my sister and I both left home at the earliest opportunity.

Thanks to the influence of a godly grandmother and my Dad, I accepted the Lord as my personal Savior at age ten. This act seemed to further alienate my Mom, as I could do nothing right in her eyes. We didn't connect on any level, and especially not spiritually due to my conversion.

For years, I struggled with this extremely negative relationship and did everything I could to breach the gulf between us. At first I desperately sought to develop a mother and daughter relationship. Finally realizing that would probably never be, I decided that I would be content with even a civil relationship where we could interact without the torrent of verbal abuse which was always forthcoming from her.

I continually struggled with our relationship and could not understand why we could never relate positively to each other until one day when the Lord dropped this verse into my spirit. They were the words of Jesus who said:

*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; **the mother against the daughter**, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.*
(Luke 12:51-53)

Suddenly, I understood the reason for my failed relationship with my mother. Over the years, I had constantly struggled to make the relationship work, but despite my best efforts it never did. What I hadn't realized was that I was struggling against a divine separation God Himself had set in place.

God showed me that the separation in our relationship was a divine division orchestrated by God for my spiritual protection. At a young age, I had elected to go God's way and the chasm this caused in our relationship had actually protected me and kept me on track with God. If I had developed a close relationship with my mother, I might have gone her way spiritually. That was what Jesus was saying when He declared, "*the mother shall be against the daughter.*"

The Amplified Version phrases a similar passage this way:

Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to part asunder a man from his father, and a

daughter from her mother, and a newly married wife from her mother-in-law-- And a man's foes will be they of his own household. He who loves [and takes more pleasure in] father or mother more than [in] Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves [and takes more pleasure in] son or daughter more than [in] Me is not worthy of Me; And he who does not take up his cross and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conforming wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying also] is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his [lower] life will lose it [the higher life], and whoever loses his [lower] life on My account will find it [the higher life].
(Matthew 10:34-39, AMP)

The division with my Mom--the parting asunder--was because I decided at a young age to follow Jesus Christ. When this revelation came, I could finally cease struggling to make the relationship work.

This does not mean I abandoned my Mother. I never stopped praying for her and I never stopped showing her love. I called her, did errands for her, took her to the doctor, and was with her during her illnesses. But the division was always there.

Our relationship never truly worked until one day, at age 83 and just a few weeks before her death, my Mom accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior. For the first time in my life that I could remember, she told me, "I love you." In the remaining weeks of her life, her entire personality changed. Several weeks later, she slipped quietly into the presence of the Lord.

The Call To Follow

The call to follow Jesus Christ as a true disciple requires a divine division. Jesus declared:

*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his [own] father and mother [in the sense of indifference to or relative disregard for them in comparison with his attitude toward God] and [likewise] his wife and children and brothers and sisters--[yes] and even his own life also--he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not persevere and carry his own cross and come after (follow) Me cannot be My disciple.
(Luke 14:26-27, AMP)*

What relationships have you been trying to make work that might be a divine division set in order by God for your protection? Again, we are not talking about your anger, hatred, or lack of forgiveness that causes a breach with someone. We are talking about a divine division resulting from the Word of God at work in your life and separating you for the cause of Christ:

And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. (Luke 21:16-17)

Jesus made this divine division clear when He declared:

*...I came into this world for judgment [as a Separator, in order that there may be separation between those who believe on Me and those who reject Me].
(John 9:39, AMP)*

Don't spend time mourning over these lost relationships. Jesus declared:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12)

To further clarify, Jesus explained:

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you...If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me. (Portions of John 15:19-21)

The reason behind such divine divisions? The world does not know Him!

Prior to his conversion to Christ, the Apostle Paul persecuted believers, thinking he was doing the work of God. He recalls how at the time of his conversion experience on the Damascus Road he...

...heard a voice in the Hebrew tongue saying to me, Saul, Saul, why do you continue to persecute Me [to harass and trouble and molest Me]? It is dangerous and turns out badly for you to keep kicking against the goads [to keep offering vain and perilous resistance]. (Acts 26:14, AMP)

It is perilous to resist separations that God sets in place. When you try repeatedly to make a relationship, a plan, or an

idea work and it doesn't, did you ever stop to think that maybe--just maybe--it is a boundary set in place by God Himself?

Proverbs warns *"Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul"* (Proverbs 22:24-25). You pick up the spirit--the attitudes and conduct--of those with whom you closely associate. A transference of spirits occurs.

An example of the transference of a good spirit is found in Numbers 11:16-17:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: And I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone. (Numbers 11:16-17)

The powerful anointing of God upon Moses was transferred from him to these selected elders. They came under the influence of Moses, meaning that their spirits were in unity with and submission to his.

An example of the transference of a bad spirit is recorded in Numbers 13:17-14:39. Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land promised by God to Israel. Ten of these spies returned with a negative report. They told of great walled cities and powerful enemy forces that were in the land. They transferred a spirit of fear and unbelief to God's people saying:

...We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. (Numbers 13:31, 33)

But two of the spies had a different spirit:

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes; And they spake unto the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. (Numbers 14:6-8)

Here were two different spirits seeking to convince the people. One was the spirit of unbelief. The other was the spirit of belief:

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. (Numbers 13:30)

Look how the negative spirit of the ten spies affected the people:

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? Were it not

better for us to return into Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. (Numbers 14:1-4)

There were spirits of despair, murmuring, and rebellion transferred to God's people by the ten spies. Israel was not kept out of the Promised Land because of an inferior army. They were kept out because of a wrong spirit. God declared:

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land where into he went; and his seed shall possess it. (Numbers 14:24)

Why were the people affected by negative attitudes instead of the good? Because of the basic sin nature, people tend to immediately believe an evil report. There is also a tendency to "follow the crowd" and accept the decision of the majority as the will of God. Also, if Israel had accepted the positive report, it would have meant putting their lives on the line. They would have had to expose themselves to great danger. Our human nature always wants to take the easy way out.

This powerful strategy of transference of spirits accounts for many of the spiritual battles encountered by believers today. We are not talking about demonic possession, but about wrong spirits that can be picked up through your close association with those who have bad attitudes and life styles. This accounts for the abrupt changes from positive to negative behavior which we often witness in those around us.

When you maintain close association and come under the influence of a person with a spirit more powerful than yours, you are influenced by that spirit and you pick up the same actions and attitudes. That is why the Apostle Paul advised

separating from those who continuously walk contrary to the ways of God:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. (2 Thessalonians 3:6)

When God Blocks The Way

In the case of an Old Testament prophet named Balaam, a donkey was used by God to protect him from crossing a dividing line set in place by God.

Balaam had been requested by the enemy to put a curse upon God's people, Israel. God warned him not to go with the princes of Moab who had come to get him for this purpose and yet...

...Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab. And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again. And the angel of the Lord went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam:

and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam , What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times? And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam , Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam , and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me: And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive. (Numbers 22:21-23)

Had the Prophet Balaam proceeded the way he was going, he would have died right there in the middle of the road.

There are some paths you intend to take that God supernaturally blocks. He creates a divine division. On one side of the line there is life. On the other side, there is death. Do not try to cross over a line set in place by God. Learn from Balaam's donkey!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DIVISION OF DIVORCE

This will be a difficult chapter, but perhaps one of the most important in this book and one that may be misunderstood if you do not study it thoroughly. Please read this chapter prayerfully and meditate on it in its entirety. It concerns the subject of divorce.

Old Testament laws of marriage were given by God to separate His people from the world. These laws of division were designed to preserve the distinctiveness of the covenant people of Israel and to protect them against the sin of idolatry of the heathen nations around them. In the New Testament, the principle is similar: Marriage should be only between believers--a man and a woman--for a similar reason: To protect their spiritual heritage (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Unfortunately, both Israel and New Testament believers have refused to follow God's plan and divorce is often a result of such spiritual compromise.

From the inception, let us establish that the Word of God is clear that divorce was not part of God's original plan. When questioned by religious leaders about divorce, Jesus explained:

And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again. And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him. And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to

write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Mark 10:1-9)

Because of the hardness of the hearts of mankind, divorce was permitted, but God's original plan was one man, one wife, for life.

Divorces are difficult spiritually, mentally, materially, and are especially hard on the children. Believe me, I know, for as a young person I lived through my Mom's three divorces.

But we live in a sinful world, and in some cases, a marriage simply cannot be repaired because of the hardness of the heart of one or both partners. (Personally, I have been blessed with a good marriage and have not experienced a divorce, so this is not written from any sort of personal bias.)

In some cases, a marriage should not be repaired unless drastic changes are made in the relationship. Consider the case of Ann*, a young woman who remained with her abusive husband trying to keep their marriage together. One day while at work, Ann received a call that her husband had brought their son to the hospital emergency room with injuries consistent with a beating. The child died and she

* Names used in this chapter are changed to protect privacy.

and her husband were both arrested. He claimed she injured the child before she left for work, and she claimed that he did it after she left. They went on trial together and the jury couldn't decide which one of them did the terrible deed. It was a "he said" and "she said" dilemma, so they gave them both 15 years to life in prison.

Later on, attorneys from the innocence project took up Ann's case, got to the truth of the incident, and she was freed from prison. If only Ann had taken her child and left the abusive relationship, her son's life would have been spared and she would never have gone to prison.

There are some relationships that cannot be fixed. How often, in our many years of prison ministry, have we seen inmates come to the Lord, be released, and then return to their old sinful lifestyle because they didn't heed the divine divisions set in place by God. If that unbelieving, drug-using, abusive, alcoholic mate has left you, release them to God. You can pray for them, but don't go back and live with them until they experience true change through conversion to Jesus Christ.

The abuser, the alcoholic, the drug addict--they all promise they won't do it again, but they will not change without a true born-again experience. The adulterer and fornicator that comes and goes in and out of your marriage bed may leave you with an incurable sexually transmitted disease that could cost your life. Perhaps this is one reason why fornication and adultery--sexual relationships outside of marriage--were specifically mentioned as scriptural causes for divorce (Matthew 5:32).

Again, this is not advocating divorce, but confirming that sometimes there is a divine division that must occur for your own protection. If one person is saved from death or abuse by someone embracing this truth, it is worth running the risk

of being misunderstood in the concepts presented in this chapter.

A Spiritual Parallel

In both the Old and New Testaments, the marriage relationship is used as a natural example of the spiritual relationship between God and His people. Yet, at one point in Israel's history, God divorced His own people spiritually because of their sin:

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. (Jeremiah 3:8)

God declared concerning Israel, "...*she is not my wife and I am not her husband*" (*Hosea 2:2, AMP*). The One who hates divorce actually separated from His own people for a time. Not until Israel repented and demonstrated true change did God restore His intimate relationship with them.

Over our years in prison ministry, we have worked with inmates who have committed the most horrible crimes imaginable. We know that God can supernaturally change lives, but until true change comes in a person's life through the born-again experience and the manifested power of the Gospel, you might need to consider separation. Some people are so hard of heart, so bound in drugs, alcohol, and violence that a relationship simply cannot work without a supernatural change in their lives. In these cases, you must walk away.

Just because you must leave your marriage does not mean God will not continue to deal with your spouse, nor does it mean God cannot put the relationship back together again in

the future. It also does not mean you must legally divorce your mate. What it does mean is that, for the present time, a divine division exists that you best heed. It may save your life or the lives of your children or other loved ones.

Again, this is not advocating divorcing someone because of petty issues of incompatibility, because you are tired of a relationship, or because you are not committed enough to make it through the tough times. It is not saying that God cannot heal your marriage. One couple we knew was separated for over twenty years, and then God did an amazing spiritual work in their lives and put their marriage back together. What this chapter is addressing is divine divisions that must be made for the mental, spiritual, and physical protection of you and your children.

The Biblical Perspective

Jesus indicated that divorce was originally allowed because of the hardness of men's hearts (Mark 10:1-9). In Matthew 5:31-32, He said that divorce is permissible for fornication, which of course includes adultery. Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that if an unbeliever leaves a marriage, their mate is not under bondage to their marriage vows (1 Corinthians 7:15).

As part of His teaching on marriage in Mark 10, the Lord said, *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"* (Mark 10:1-9).

This passage is often used to discourage divorce. But one must ask, did God really join you together with that drug addict, the abuser, and the unrepentant alcoholic or was it a

sinful mistake on your part? Did you even pray about it? Did you refuse to heed the biblical warning:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 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. (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

When God puts a couple together in marriage, the bond is spiritual and is intended to bring forth godly seed:

And did not God make [you and your wife] one [flesh]? Did not one make you and preserve your spirit alive? And why [did God make you two] one? Because He sought a godly offspring [from your union]. Therefore take heed to yourselves, and let no one deal treacherously and be faithless to the wife of his youth. (Malachi 2:15, AMP)

"Godly seed" refers to both natural children and those you birth spiritually, as Paul did, through sharing the Gospel. How can you bring forth any kind of godly seed if your spouse is an unsaved alcoholic, abusive, addicted to drugs, and bound by pornography or other sinful behaviors?

If you are a born-again believer, you should not marry an unsaved person. If you do so, don't be surprised when such a union fails because Jesus said that, a house divided against itself is destined to fall (Luke 11:17). A similar passage in the Amplified Version says, "...no city or house divided

against itself will last or continue to stand" (Matthew 12:25, AMP).

If you are a believer, you should not be dating an unsaved person. Why? Because you usually don't marry someone that you don't date. It is really that simple. Don't date unbelievers and you won't be tempted to marry one.

Repeatedly, I have had people ask me to pray about whether it was God's will for them to marry a certain person. My first question is always, "Are you a believer?" If the answer is yes, then my next question is, "Is your prospective mate a believer?" If the answer is no, I tell them, "No, I will not pray about this because God has already revealed His will in His Word. You are not to be yoked together with an unbeliever." Never put a question mark where God has put a period--meaning there is no need to pray about issues where His will is already made clear in the Word of God.

The Prophet Amos declared, under the inspiration of God, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" (Amos 3:3). Spiritual agreement is more vital than agreement in any other area of marriage because it affects your eternal destiny and that of your children.

To those who are considering being unequally yoked, God declares:

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God,

and they will be my people." "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18, NIV)

You are either a child of God or a child of the devil (1 John 3:10). If you are a child of God, He is your Father. If you are a child of the devil, then Satan is your spiritual father. It has been said that if you, as a child of God, marry an unbeliever then spiritually you are marrying into the devil's family. So don't be surprised when you have problems with your spiritual "father-in-law"!

To Leave Or Not To Leave

This does not mean that everyone married to an unbeliever should leave them. The Apostle Paul makes this clear:

*But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.
(1 Corinthians 7:12-15)*

We have witnessed many situations over the years where a person would come to Christ, remain in their marriage, faithfully live out their faith, continue to pray for their unbelieving mate, and eventually see that loved one accept the Lord as Savior.

But in other cases the relationship cannot be salvaged, and in some cases--especially in situations where there is abuse--the relationship should not be saved.

If a divine division has occurred in your marriage, stop trying to fix it. Accept it as being from God and trust that if it is His will for it to work, He will put it back together.

Life After Divorce

Divorce is no greater than any other transgression. Mass murderers have been born-again and had their lives changed, including the infamous Ted Bundy who reportedly killed over 100 women in the United States. Rapists and child molesters are frequently given another chance by society. There are rehabilitated drug addicts and ex-convicts filling our pulpits and doing great works for God. Yet often, those who have been divorced are treated like they are lepers in the Christian community.

If you made the mistake of marrying an unbeliever, if you have done everything possible to save your marriage and it still failed, if your mate has departed, or if you are in an abusive situation and you need to depart for your own safety--then recognize it as a divine division. There is nothing more you can do to try to make it work. If you are a believer and have done all that you can, then rest in that fact: You did all you could. Leave the relationship in the hands of God.

Divorce is not the unpardonable sin. Ask God for forgiveness for your part in it just as you would for any other sin. Accept His forgiveness, forgive yourself, and then get on with your life.

There is life after divorce. Consider the case of Daniel* who had a calling to serve God as a minister. His wife opposed

that call and began to go to bars and have affairs with other men. Daniel prayed and fasted for his marriage. He and his wife went to a Christian counselor, but in the middle of the session she stormed out. Sometime later, she filed for divorce, left him, and remarried an unbeliever.

Although Daniel was devastated by the divorce, he continued to serve God and a few years later a Christian woman came into his life. They were eventually married, and through this couple God established an international Christian ministry that impacted multitudes around the world. By the grace of God, there is life after divorce.

Others who have experienced similar situations have been delighted when God puts their relationship back together again. Consider Lee*, whose husband left her and their three children for another woman. Sadly, her husband was a professing Christian and an assistant pastor in a church.

Lee continued to faithfully serve God and went to work for a Christian organization. Sometime later, her repentant husband returned and eventually the couple were reunited and became successful pastors of a great church. There is life after divorce.

If you failed in your marriage--even if it was your fault--know that God is the God of a second chance. Consider Jonah, David, Moses, and Peter. God accomplished His purposes in the lives of each of these men, despite their failures. If you have failed in marriage and you are divorced, it is time to....

Arise [from the depression and prostration in which circumstances have kept you--rise to a new life]! Shine (be radiant with the glory of the Lord), for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you! (Isaiah 60:1)

Notice in this verse that if you want a new life, there is something you must do. You must arise. Like a defeated athlete, you must get up and get back into the game!

Let go of the hurt and bitterness. Stop dwelling on the "what ifs". Stop rehearsing the past. If you are in an abusive situation, stop trying to make it work. If your mate has abandoned you, release them to God. If God puts the relationship back together in the future, then it will function properly. If not, consider it a divine division, abandon the past, and look to the future.

As long as you are living in the past, you will never have a future. Divine division involves releasing the losses and separations of yesterday in order to embrace tomorrow.

Ponder the words of the Apostle Paul who declared:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching

forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:7-14)

Forget what is behind--both the good and the bad--and look to those things that are ahead.

Embracing Your Loss

The division of divorce is a great loss, but like other tragic losses it is part of the pattern of the broken strands of our lives that somehow God weaves together for good:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

We all have difficulties. We all are broken people, because we all have sinned. Yet somehow, God takes every strand of our brokenness and weaves them all together for His glory.

In the Kingdom of God, there are many paradoxes. You become a servant in order to be great. You give to receive. And your losses? They are actually gains:

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; (Philippians 3:8-10)

God can use even the division of divorce to deepen your relationship with Him. Embrace your loss as a spiritual gain.

God works in the tragic circumstances of your life when you remain focused on the eternal benefits of suffering instead of the present difficulties:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

Did you catch it? Your afflictions in every area of life--even the pain of divorce--"*works for your eternal benefits while you look not at the things that are seen, but at the things not seen.*" If negative circumstances are to work in your behalf, then you must keep your focus on God instead of your troubles.

Are you focused on the Lord, or is your attention on the pain of your circumstances? Is your focus on what God will do in you and through you in the future, or are you dwelling on the past? Are you looking at the challenges you see in the present rather than looking by faith to the future?

In Christ, there is forgiveness. There is restoration. There is a new beginning. And there is life after the tragic division of divorce.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DYNAMICS OF DIVISION

In the human body, cells divide in order to grow. One cell divides to make two cells. These two cells each divide to make additional cells, and so the process continues. Human cells multiply by dividing.

Growth in God's Kingdom is similar. Multiplication takes place by division. Divine division is a primary means of growth in the spiritual world. God divides in order to multiply. Sometimes, if we do not voluntarily choose to divide and multiply, God may allow circumstances to cause division so we can grow and mature spiritually. Let's consider some New Testament examples.

The Early Church

People can disagree without having conflict, but conflict often results from disagreements that are not resolved properly. It is not differences of opinion that hurt and destroy our relationships, but the failure to continue to function in love when we have them.

Any time a church, organization, or work of God is launched, it goes through certain stages of development. Look at the first church in Jerusalem:

- | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------|
| -Acts 1 | God chose certain men. |
| -Acts 2 | He gave these men a ministry. |
| -Acts 3 | There was great multiplication. |
| -Acts 4 | A great church was birthed. |
| -Acts 5-6 | Conflicts arose. |

In Acts 1-4 we see how a work of God is birthed. Then in Acts 6:1, it records that conflict arises with the church as there is a dispute over the distribution of supplies. The disciples could have just silenced the complaints by saying, "If you were spiritual you would not be complaining."

They also could have said, "Do not challenge the leadership God has appointed." Instead, they demonstrated the qualities of good leadership. They said, "We hear you have a problem. Let us see if together, with God's help, we can solve it" (Acts 6:2-7).

The Church also experienced conflicts from without in the form of persecution of the men and women who were preaching the gospel, as recorded in Acts chapters 5,7, 8,12, and 16.

Most ministries will experience a similar pattern. There will be conflicts from without and within because Satan wants to destroy the work of the ministry. Be aware that a person who is being led by the Spirit will always come into conflict with others who are being led (at least for a time) by the flesh.

The Bible reveals the true reasons behind carnal conflicts between believers:

From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? (James 4:1.)

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and division, are ye not carnal...? (1 Corinthians 3:3)

Conflicts arise because spiritually immature and carnal Christians are motivated by Satan, the flesh, and pride.

Divisions result, but these are not divine divisions ordained by God. The Bible is clear that when there are personal problems between believers, they should follow the principles of Matthew 18:15-17. These types of conflicts should always be dealt with by seeking to restore rather than sever relationships.

These divisions, although not instituted by the Lord, can result in spiritual growth if they are handled properly according to the principles of God's Word. God can take all things--even division resulting from our own issues--and work them together for good.

Believers At Jerusalem

Our Lord's last message to His followers was to *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). Yet we find the early believers multiplying and congregating in Jerusalem:

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.
(Acts 6:7)

Because of tremendous growth, the Jerusalem church became busy collecting funds to provide care for the needy and solving other issues--good causes. But we do not see them going into all the world as Jesus commanded--that is until persecution arises:

And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria....Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. (Acts 8:1 and 4)

Acts chapter 8 tells of a great persecution that arose against Christians at Jerusalem which forced them to flee the city to live in other areas. As these believers left Jerusalem, they "*went everywhere preaching the Word*" (Acts 8:4). The persecution at Jerusalem resulted in a divine division that caused believers to fulfill Christ's mandate to take the Gospel to the nations.

Paul And Barnabas

When disagreements arise and they are handled properly it can be beneficial spiritually. Consider the example of Paul and Barnabas who had a disagreement over a young man named Mark:

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. (Acts 15:36-41)

This disagreement created strong contention, but it did not result in hostility and hatred between Paul and Barnabas. The men apparently agreed to disagree and solved the problem by forming a second evangelistic team. This solution actually advanced the work of the ministry as two teams were now spreading the Gospel and encouraging the churches.

Paul and Barnabas did not get angry at each other, stop speaking, or have nothing more to do with one another. Neither one dropped out of Christian service because "someone had hurt them." They both continued to serve the Lord. Their disagreement resulted in a divine division that actually advanced the spread of the Gospel. It also raised up a valuable Christian worker--young John Mark--whom Paul referred to sometime later saying, "*Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry*" (2 Timothy 4:11).

A Present Day Example

The church at Jerusalem, the first believers, and Paul and Barnabas all experienced divisions. In the natural world we add in order to multiply. God's math--like most every Kingdom principle--differs. He divides to multiply. Let's think about this in terms of what we call church splits. Could it be that in some cases it is not the work of the enemy but that God orchestrates it because we haven't multiplied properly?

Often church splits result from people who have ideas that differ from those of the leadership. These people may actually be called to plant a new church, but instead of going out to fulfill this call, they create havoc in the church they are attending by trying to make it what they think it should be. Conversely, a pastor may try to discourage someone who has a true calling to plant a church, fearing they will leave and take some of his members with them.

Did you ever stop to consider that maybe God is wanting that church to divide and for another church to be planted? And that perhaps instead of a split there could be harmony in such a transition?

Consider these two modern-day examples:

-In one church there was a young man who felt called to start a new congregation. The senior pastor asked for people who would commit to go with this young man and support him for a year to help his vision become a reality. One hundred people committed to attend, provide support for a year, and enable a new congregation to be planted in another area.

-In another church, a young man called of God to pastor created problems, split the church, took some members, and started another church. Eventually, this young man asked forgiveness and God blessed both churches immensely--but how much better it would have been if an agreement could have been reached to expand properly.

If you are feeling the call of God to launch a ministry, don't create havoc where you are. Recognize your dissatisfaction as divine division at work in your life. Depart, but do so peacefully and go out to fulfill the ministry to which you are called. Leave where you are as you came: At the leading of the Lord. Do not split the church and do not influence others to leave with you.

If you are a pastor and someone in your congregation is being called to ministry, then send them forth with your blessing and support.

When divisions are instituted by God and are resolved in godly ways, the Kingdom of God always benefits. When divisions are caused by selfishness, confusion, strife, anger, and unforgiveness, then you can be certain they are not from God.

Divine divisions always result in multiplication and blessing. They also birth new spiritual visions, which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DIVISION OF VISION

The word "division" actually means "a separating of vision." Divine division often occurs because of a difference in vision between you and others with whom you are relating. It is not a separation caused by sin or carnality. It is a separation that occurs because of differing spiritual goals, objectives, and destinies.

The word "vision", as used in this chapter, is not referring to a revelation seen in a trance or with your natural eyesight. It is defined as a sense of spiritual purpose that focuses on accomplishing God's plans and purposes for your life.

Spiritual vision involves seeing beyond the natural world into the spiritual world. It is understanding the divine purpose of God and recognizing your part in His plan. Spiritual vision provides a clear image of what God wants you to do and then directs every step of your life towards achieving that goal.

In order to fulfill your vision, however, divine divisions are often necessary.

The Vision Of The Apostle Paul

At the time of Paul's conversion, God declared:

...Rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which though hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee. To open their eyes, and to

turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:16-18)

When Ananias was delegated by God to go and minister to the newly converted Paul, the Lord said, *"Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16)*. Paul was chosen, set apart, and given a spiritual vision. Paul declared that he was separated from his mother's womb for divine purpose (Galatians 1:15).

This heavenly vision was the compelling force in Paul's life. It called for separation—a divine division—from his old life-style. Do you think his old Pharisee friends hung out with him much after he embraced the Gospel? Some of Paul's former friends may have been among those who tried to stone him to death and from whom he had to escape in a basket thrown over the wall.

To give birth to spiritual vision requires change. It requires courage to step from the known into the unknown. You must allow God to separate you from all that would hinder the fulfillment of your vision.

For Paul, it meant abandoning his Pharisee friends, rejecting the traditions of men, embracing a radical change in beliefs, and forming new relationships with those he previously persecuted. It involved traveling and sharing the Gospel to the ends of the then-known world. Paul responded obediently and nearing the end of his life, he was able to declare, *"I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19)*.

The Vision Of Joseph

In the book of Genesis, there is a story of a young man who experienced several divine divisions because of his spiritual vision. Take time to read the story of Joseph in Genesis 30-50 before you continue with this chapter.

Joseph's home environment was quite dysfunctional. His father, Jacob, had a history of deception. His mother, Rachel, was continually in conflict with Jacob's other wife, Leah. There was partiality in the home, which created rivalry and jealousy. Jacob preferred Rachel to Leah, and he favored Joseph over his other sons. The special coat of many colors given to Joseph by his father was more than just a beautiful garment. Because it wasn't a work garment like shepherds wore, it set Joseph apart as the favored child, one who would not have to labor as his brothers did. Joseph lived in a family dominated by deceit, immorality, manipulation, partiality, envy, and hatred.

While still quite young, Joseph received dreams from God that gave him a vision of his future, but when he shared these revelations with his family his brothers hated him for it (Genesis 37:8). They could not even speak peaceably to him (Genesis 37:4). In Genesis 37, we learn how Joseph's angry brothers stripped him of his special coat and threw him into a pit. Then they sat down, cold and uncaring, their ears deaf to his cries.

Can you identify with this? Have you been crying for help, with no answer from those around you? Do you feel abandoned and alone? Little did Joseph think that he would someday look back on this tragedy as the most significant event in God's plan for his life. The same may be true for you. The division you are experiencing may be the pathway

to the fulfillment of your vision. In Joseph's life, this divine division would eventually lead him from a pit to a palace!

When an Egyptian caravan passed by, Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. In Genesis 39, Joseph suffered another separation when he was removed from Potiphar's house and sent to prison after being falsely accused of immorality. But in every separation--every loss and divine division in his life--the Lord was with Joseph and caused him to prosper (Genesis 39:3). The Bible indicates God's blessing rested upon Joseph who was *"...separate from his brethren"* (Deuteronomy 33:16).

God has been with you also in that dysfunctional family, in your heartbreak, and in the tragic experiences of your past. He has not abandoned you. He has a future for you, a destiny and a hope. If you have been set apart or abandoned, could such a division be for divine purpose? Has God separated you from all that was near and dear because of your spiritual vision? Are you different from others because He has something unusual for you to do?

In Genesis 39-40, we learn that Joseph was placed in a position of responsibility in the prison and ministered to a butler and baker who were confined with him, both of whom promptly forgot him, despite their promises.

Humanly speaking, Joseph had every right to develop a negative attitude. Family and friends failed him, he was falsely accused, and forgotten by people to whom he had ministered. But little did he know that every separation was bringing him nearer his God-given destiny. This is what God is doing in your life also. Every divine division--every event in your painful past and in your turbulent present--is being used by God to accomplish His divine purposes.

Eventually, the butler to whom Joseph had ministered remembered him, told the officials about him, and Joseph was asked to interpret Pharaoh's dreams when no one else was able to do so. Because of this God-given revelation, Joseph was released from prison, became second in command in Egypt, and saved the then-known world from death through famine.

When Joseph married, the names he gave his two children were symbolic of his past experiences (Genesis 41:51-52). The first child was named Manasseh, meaning "God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." Joseph didn't forget his father's house, but he forgot the pain associated with the events. Joseph's second son was named Ephraim, meaning, "God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." The names of his sons reflect how the divine divisions in his past--those from his family, his home, and freedom--were used by God to make Joseph's vision a reality. The names also reflect a tremendous spiritual principle: In order to be fruitful in the present and future, you must forget the pain of the past.

When Joseph's brothers stood before him in Egypt, they didn't even recognize him. Joseph declared:

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a

father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. (Genesis 45:4-8)

Joseph realized that the painful events of his past were not just “tough luck” or “unfortunate circumstances.” He declared, *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20)*. As a child, Joseph had dreams and visions of being in a place of responsibility and authority. All through the long difficult years of adversity, Joseph held on to those dreams. When at last he stood in the place of his God-appointed destiny, he remembered the dream: *“And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed” (Genesis 42:9)*.

Joseph went through many difficulties and separations, but God used them all. Joseph was being prepared to save a nation. What great thing does God have planned for you? How will He use the divisions and separations of your past to prepare you to achieve your vision?

Separated For Divine Vision

If you have felt rejected, abandoned, and isolated, know that you are not alone. Many godly men and women have had to separate from friends, family, houses, and homelands because of their spiritual vision:

-Abraham was called alone to be the father of nations (Isaiah 51:2).

-Jacob received his life-changing vision when he was left alone (Genesis 32:2).

-It was alone in exile in the desert that Moses received his call at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-2).

-Moses came into God's presence alone while the people stood afar off (Exodus 24:2).

-Aaron was separated unto God to function as the high priest (Exodus 28:1).

-David had many sons, but only Solomon was chosen to serve as king and to build the temple (1 Chronicles 28:5).

-The Prophet Jeremiah sat alone because the hand of God was upon him (Jeremiah 15:17).

-The Prophet Ezekiel was in exile when he saw the glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 1:3). He was told by the Holy Spirit... *"Go, shut thyself within thine house...thou shalt not go out among them..."* (Ezekiel 3:24-25).

-The Prophet Daniel was in exile when he received his vision of the end-times (Daniel 10:8).

-Simeon and Anna had separated themselves to serve God in the temple, and were among the first to receive the revelation of their Messiah (Luke 2:25-38).

-The Holy Spirit directed that Barnabas and Saul be separated for the work to which they were called (Acts 13:2).

-Peter received the vision of Gentile nations while he was alone on a roof top (Acts 10).

-Philip was taken from a great work in the city to what seemed to be a lesser one in the desert. But it was a divine division that opened all of Africa to the Gospel (Acts 8).

-The Apostle John was alone on Patmos when he received the greatest vision ever given of the end-times (Revelation 1).

-Jesus Christ was rejected by His own Jewish people (John 1:11) and His own brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5). It was prophesied that Jesus would be... "*despised and rejected of men*" (*Isaiah 53:3*). Everyone abandoned Him and He suffered and died alone (Matthew 26:56). Fulfilling His destiny also required a temporary separation from God as He bore the sins of the world (Mark 15:34).

...And Then There Is You

What about you? Are you willing to go it alone in order to achieve your vision? What separations and divisions are you willing to endure in order to fulfill your God-given vision?

-If you are called as a missionary or evangelist, you may have to leave home, family, or your own nation in order to fulfill your call.

-Are you called to preach or teach the Gospel? Then you must set aside many hours alone in order to prepare properly.

-If you are called to write Christian materials, it will require long hours alone immersing yourself in God's Word in order to communicate His message through the printed page.

-If you are called to serve God in government, you may have to stand alone against the evil political powers of these last days.

Perhaps like Philip, who left a tremendous revival in Samaria, you may be called by God to leave a great church to work in

a smaller ministry--all because of the vision He has planned for you.

Jim Elliott, a great missionary, put it this way: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." In Elliott's case, it cost his life as he was martyred for the cause of Christ. His death, however, eventually led to the conversion of the Auca Indians he had tried to reach with the Gospel. It also challenged hundreds of young people to rise up and answer the call to missions.

Your vision is vital because it will ultimately lead you to your destiny which, by the way, will involve more divine divisions. Destiny is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DIVISION OF DESTINY

Many divine divisions experienced by people in the Bible occurred because of the destiny God planned for them. God has a unique purpose for every believer, and to achieve it will always require some sort of division. Something, someone, a place, a way of life--there will always be a separation required to in order to achieve your destiny.

Let's look at some biblical examples.

Abraham was directed by God to step out in faith and separate from everyone and everything in order to fulfill his destiny:

*Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.
(Genesis 12:1-2)*

Abraham was told to leave behind all that he knew--his country and his kindred--and go to a promised land that he had never seen. Note that God did not map out the details for him. Abraham was to depart for a destination that God would show him as he responded in obedience by taking the first step of the journey. His destination became his destiny.

If you are waiting for God to show you His entire plan for your life, you may be waiting a long time because it usually doesn't happen that way. You must walk in obedience to God's directives one day at a time and one decision at a time

in order to walk in His will for a life-time. And--as in the case of Abraham--the journey usually begins with some sort of divine division.

Moses was tending sheep when he received the revelation of the burning bush and was dispatched to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. He left behind both the riches of Egypt and the quiet, pastoral life in order to save an entire nation:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. (Hebrews 11:24-27)

Joshua's journey to his destiny started when he separated himself from others to humbly serve Moses and his God (Exodus 24:13). Even when Moses returned to the camp from conversing with the Lord, "... his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle" (Exodus 33:11). Joshua separated himself to seek God. The book of Joshua details this man's destiny as he led the Israelites to claim their Promised Land. Numbers 13 describes how Joshua and his friend, Caleb, were supportive of Israel entering the land at God's command and, because of their stand, they were the only two of their generation to enter Canaan 40 years later. Separation is costly, but in the end it yields great spiritual dividends.

Esther was called by God to leave the only home she had ever known and separate from the uncle she loved to become the wife of a foreign king. In so doing, she saved the entire

nation of Israel. Her story is recorded in the book that bears her name, the book of Esther.

Ruth, was one of two young widowed Moabite women-- Ruth and her sister-in-law, Orpha. When their mother-in-law decided to return to Bethlehem after the death of her sons, Orpha returned to her idolatrous family. But Ruth abandoned her homeland, her religion, and all that was familiar to her in order to remain with her godly mother-in-law, Naomi.

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.
(Ruth 1:14-18)

We never again hear of Orpah, but as a result of Ruth's commitment to separate from her past, she became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ruth 4:13-22). Ruth left it all and in the end gained it all as she fulfilled her divine destiny.

David was set apart from his brothers and anointed by Samuel to be the future king of Israel (1 Samuel 16). Of his calling and anointing David wrote, "*But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts*" (Psalm 22:9). David's destiny set

him apart from the time of his birth and it would lead to many divine divisions throughout his life.

One of the most poignant separations in the Bible was the division that occurred between David and his dear friend Jonathan. David knew from the time of his anointing by the Prophet Samuel that he was to someday be the king of Israel. But due to the increasing jealousy and hostility of the reigning King Saul, David had to go into hiding until it was time for his destiny to be fulfilled. This meant separation from his dear friend, Jonathan:

...David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they (David and Jonathan) kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city. (1 Samuel 20:41-42)

By rights, Jonathan should have inherited the throne from his father, Saul. But Jonathan understood and supported David's destiny. Their relationship was not sinful nor turbulent--that is not why they had to separate. It was David's destiny that resulted in the separation of these two good friends. As you rise up to embrace your own destiny, you may experience similar separations from friends and loved ones.

The three Hebrews stood alone against pagan idolatry. In Daniel chapter 3, we find King Nebuchadnezzar setting up an idol and requiring everyone to worship it. When all the people bowed before the idol, three young Hebrew men refused to do so. Thousands around them bowed low to the ground, while they stood alone amidst the masses. For their

faithfulness, they were rewarded with deliverance from a fiery furnace and promotion in the kingdom.

The Old Testament prophets experienced many divine divisions in order to embrace their destinies.

The Prophet Samuel was set apart from childhood for the service of the Lord. How difficult it must have been for his mother, Hannah, to accept this separation, but she willingly did so and an entire nation was impacted.

Elisha was a farmer when the call to destiny came to him. The prophet Elijah passed by and threw his mantle over him as a symbol of his prophetic calling. Elisha responded immediately and even killed the oxen with which he was plowing so he would not be tempted to return to his former occupation. Elisha served Elijah for years and then received a double portion of the prophet's anointing in his own ministry.

The prophet Daniel was left alone when his companions fled because of their fear of the revelation he was receiving (Daniel 10:7).

The Prophet Amos was not trained in prophet's school. He was a herdsman and a fruit-gatherer. He said: *"... I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel"* (Amos 7:14-15). Being a prophet was not part of Amos's life plan for himself, but it was God's plan for him. What personal plans must you abandon in order to achieve your spiritual destiny?

John the Baptist lived in the desert, was separated from his peers, and dressed and ate a bit oddly--but he was mightily used of God to prepare the way for the Messiah.

An elderly priest named Simeon and a widow named Anna were separated unto God for service in the Temple. Then one day, the prophetic word for which they had waited so long was fulfilled when Jesus was brought into the temple by His parents. Thereafter, they spoke of His plan of redemption to all who would listen.

The disciples--Peter, James, Andrew John--were fishermen and Matthew worked as a tax collector. Each of these men had families, lives, and jobs--all of which they abandoned when Jesus simply said, "Follow me." Separation. Division. New direction. It all led to their divine destinies. What will you do when Jesus calls you to follow?

Philip was conducting a great revival in the city of Samaria when the Holy Spirit told him to go to the desert:

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. (Acts 8:5-8)

Right in the middle of this wonderful outpouring of the power of God, "... *the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert*" (Acts 8:26). Why leave a great revival to go to the desert? Because there, in the middle of that barren land, Philip would encounter an Ethiopian man who would eventually open all of Africa to the Gospel.

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. (Acts 8:35-38)

Are you willing to be divided from the masses to minister to one? Are you willing to leave a good work for a greater one? Are you willing to leave the crowds of Samaria for ministry to one person in the desert? Will you follow the example of Jesus, who remained behind to reach one desperate woman by the well?

Zacchaeus's story is recorded in Luke 19:1-10. Zacchaeus was a dishonest tax collector, but there was something within him that knew Jesus had a better future planned for him. It was the hour of his divine destiny when Jesus passed through the town where he lived. But there were two major obstacles he had to overcome: One was the crowd around him. The other was his stature--he was a short man.

The same two obstacles can block your way spiritually. If you are to embrace your destiny, you must separate yourself from those who would hinder you. You must come out of the crowd. You must realize that, like Zacchaeus, you also fall short, because the Bible says we all fall short of God's intended purpose for us (Romans 3:23).

Zacchaeus needed a tree to get to the Savior, and so do you. Your tree is the tree of Calvary where Jesus died for your sin.

This tree is the dividing line between your past and your future. It is the rallying point of your spiritual destiny.

In order to reach his destiny, Zacchaeus shed his dignity. He was a well-known tax collector, chief among the publicans, and rich. Yet, he laid aside his wealth, position, and education. He left it all and climbed a tree! Talk about a divine division!

Just how committed are you to fulfill your destiny? Will you do whatever God asks of you even if it seems strange? Zacchaeus ran. Zacchaeus climbed. He didn't care how ridiculous he looked to others. He did whatever necessary to fulfill his destiny.

Blind Bartimaeus was a blind beggar and when he heard that Jesus was coming his way, he decided he wanted his life to change. He believed there was a better destiny for him than being a blind beggar (Mark 10:46-52).

You may have lived in poverty all of your life or been trapped in a bad relationship. Your destiny will only change when you have the faith to believe that things can be different and you are willing to separate yourself and embrace that change. You may have accepted your negative circumstances as your ultimate destiny, but a divine division is about to occur!

Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus because he believed his future could be changed. He did not let the crowd around discourage him, despite the fact they told him to keep quiet. People will tell you why you can't achieve your purpose and they may even put up roadblocks to your destiny. But even if--like Bartimaeus--you were "born that way" or you have lived in terrible circumstances for years, your destiny can change the instant you cry out to God and are willing to take the first step of obedience.

The first step Bartimaeus took was to cast aside the garment which identified him as a blind beggar. He cast his garment aside because it tied him to the past. He wouldn't need it any more. He made no provision for failure--no plan to return to the old way of life. It was a total commitment to a divine, supernatural division that set him on the road to his destiny, restored his natural vision, and gave him a new life purpose.

If you really want deliverance from drugs, get rid of the drugs. If you want to be free from nicotine, throw away the cigarettes. If you are an alcoholic, pour out the liquor you have stashed away. If you are bound by pornography, get rid of the magazines, sinful, photos, and disconnect from the Internet. Don't make any provisions for failure. Separate yourself from everything that would chain you to your past.

Jesus Christ--His destiny was not understood or embraced by even His closest followers. When Jesus shared how He would suffer and die for the sins of the world...

...Then Peter took Him aside to speak to Him privately and began to reprove and charge Him sharply, saying, God forbid, Lord! This must never happen to You! But Jesus turned away from Peter and said to him, Get behind Me, Satan! You are in My way [an offense and a hindrance and a snare to Me]; for you are minding what partakes not of the nature and quality of God, but of men. Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself [disregard, lose sight of, and forget himself and his own interests] and take up his cross and follow Me [cleave steadfastly to Me, conform wholly to My example in living and, if need be, in dying, also]. For whoever is bent on saving his [temporal] life [his comfort and security here] shall lose it [eternal life]; and whoever loses his life [his comfort

and security here] for My sake shall find it [life everlasting]. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life [his blessed life in the kingdom of God]? Or what would a man give as an exchange for his [blessed] life [in the kingdom of God]? (Matthew 16:23-26, AMP)

Sometimes even your dearest friends will try to prevent you from achieving your destiny. In the end, Jesus went to the cross alone to bear the sins of the world and fulfill the plan of salvation. He fulfilled His divine destiny. Alone.

The Apostle John was given a great revelation of the end-times while isolated on a desert island, a prisoner exiled for his faith.

The Isle of Patmos to which John was exiled lies about thirty-seven miles west-southwest of Miletus in the Mediterranean Sea. It is about ten miles long and six miles wide at the north end, and consists mainly of volcanic hills and rocky ground. It was a lonely, deserted, barren place, but it was here that John received a revelation that would dramatically transform his own life, impact generations to come, and affect the destiny of the entire world. As John was in the Spirit on this Lord's day, he received...

...The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John. (Revelation 1:1-2)

When the doors opened into heaven, John said, "*at once I came*" (Revelation 4:1-2, AMP). When the doors to your destiny open, what will you do? It may require a divine division--a separation to isolation and loneliness like John

experienced. When the door is opened, will you "come at once"?

The First Step To Destiny

You may miss your destiny if you are not willing to take the first step--and sometimes that step is scary. It may involve stepping way out of your comfort zone. For sure, it will always require some sort of divine division.

For me, it involved a big step out of my comfort zone when I went behind prison bars to minister. I had accepted the Lord when I was ten years old, and always had a sense of God's divine purpose in my life. I had served the Lord for years in Christian organizations, traveling to many nations, and working in various aspects of full-time ministry. Then one day, the warden of a new women's prison called and asked me if I would come into the facility and teach Bible studies to the inmates.

At that time there was no formal training program for volunteers (there is now). I had never even been in a prison to visit someone. I didn't know anything about drugs, alcohol, and gangs. I never experimented with any of these substances and never ran with a fast crowd. Prison ministry was new to me and it was way outside of my comfort zone, but I felt the Lord prompting me to take that first step.

I will never forget when I passed through the prison gate for the first time and heard it shut behind me. "I've made a terrible mistake," I thought. Four more gates would clang loudly behind me before I reached my destination at the prison chapel. With each loud crash of metal, I became more apprehensive. I also found out I was a bit claustrophobic!

When the inmates began arriving for the service, it wasn't long until one of them said to me, "You haven't been in a prison before, have you?" How she knew this, I do not know. Maybe it was the pale white face and the beads of sweat on my forehead? "Oh great," I thought. "It shows!"

Before the meeting started, I remember promising God if He would get me out of this situation safely, I would never put myself in this position again!

But when I called the inmates to order and opened the class that night, there was a divine mantle of God's anointing that descended upon me that I will never forget. I knew in that moment that I was divinely set aside to do prison ministry and I knew that reaching prison inmates was part of my divine destiny.

That special anointing still rests upon me today after several decades of prison ministry. From that first experience grew a world-wide prison ministry and a training program for prison volunteers. I have ministered in prisons around the United States, in foreign prisons, and trained others in prison ministry. Over the years I have worked with some of the toughest criminals including high profile cases, repeat offenders, and death row inmates. I have been so blessed to witness the amazing, transforming work of the power of God in their lives!

I often think, "What if I hadn't taken that first step? What if I had turned around and returned to my comfort zone?" You can probably think of a thousand reasons why you can't take that first step towards your destiny. I sure did. I didn't know anything about substance abuse or gangs. I had never been trained for prison work. I didn't like being locked up in closed spaces.

I'm sure the Prophet Jeremiah had similar feelings when he responded to God's call by saying...

*... Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.
(Jeremiah 1:7)*

Gideon, when called to deliver God's people, protested saying "*Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house*" (Judges 6:15).

Moses had a whole inventory of excuses: "Who am I? Who will I say sent me? What will I say? What if they don't believe me?" (Exodus chapter 3).

Despite these issues, each of these men responded in obedience by taking the first step toward their destinies. They allowed God to set them apart to accomplish His purposes. They realized God was not looking at who they were, but He was seeing them as who they would become when they were empowered by His supernatural anointing. These men embraced whatever divisions necessary--from family, friends, occupations, and even freedom--in order to achieve God's purposes.

Your first step--like mine that night so long ago in that dismal prison--might be stepping out of your comfort zone to walk through a new door of ministry. Your first step might involve separating yourself from certain relationships, a geographic location, or a chosen occupation.

What will be the first step to your destiny? What divine division must occur in your life in order for you to take that step?

It takes many small steps to reach a great destiny. Why don't you take your first step today?

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DIVISION THAT EMPOWERS MINISTRY

After Christ's resurrection and before His return to heaven, He gave His disciples what has become known as the Great Commission:

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

To enable His followers to accomplish this tremendous task, Jesus told them:

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)

Acts 2 records the promised coming of the Holy Spirit, the supernatural power which would dwell in believers and equip them to fulfill their divine mandate. There appeared cloven tongues like fire which were divided among them, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they all spoke in different tongues (Acts 2:1-4). Talk about divine division!

An important ministry of the Holy Spirit was to divide among believers various spiritual gifts that would equip them to do the work of the ministry. The word "spiritual", as used in the Bible, means "characterized or controlled by the Holy Spirit." A "gift" is something freely given from one person to another.

So a spiritual gift is a supernatural ability given by the Holy Spirit to a believer to enable him to minister effectively as part of the Body of Christ:

And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. (Mark 16:20)

The main passages identifying spiritual gifts are Romans 12:1-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, Ephesians 4:1-16, and 1 Peter 4:7-11. (For a detailed study of these gifts, see the Harvestime International Network course entitled "*The Ministry Of The Holy Spirit.*")

The purposes of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are listed in Ephesians 4:12-15:

*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.
(Ephesians 4:12-15)*

According to this passage, the purposes of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to:

- Perfect the saints.
- Promote the work of the ministry.
- Edify Christ and the Church.

The objectives or goals of spiritual gifts are that we will:

- Become united in the faith.

- Develop our knowledge of Christ.
- Develop in perfection, with Christ as our model.
- Become stable, not deceived by false doctrines.
- Mature spiritually in Christ.

The Bible indicates there are many gifts which come from one source. It is the Holy Spirit who bestows and operates these gifts in the lives of believers:

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. (1Corinthians 12:4-7)

There is one source of spiritual gifts. but there are many different gifts:

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; Or he that exhorteth on exhortation: he that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)

You are only a steward of the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit. A steward is someone who does not own that with which he is entrusted. He uses something given to him by another person and labors in behalf of the person who gave it to him. As a steward, you will be judged on the basis of your faithfulness to use the gifts you have been given: "*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Jesus told an important parable that illustrates this principle:

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have

received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.
(Matthew 25:14-29)

The man traveling to a far country is symbolic of Jesus, who delivered to believers His goods--His supernatural power, spiritual gifts, and other resources--prior to returning to the Heavenly Father. As good stewards, we are to take this power, these spiritual gifts, our natural talents, and the financial resources that He has placed into our hands and multiply them by using them for the Kingdom of God.

The parable we have just examined begins with a divine division--with a master dividing his gifts among his servants. It ends with tragic separation of those who did not use their resources losing what they had.

God has invested in you the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. The Holy Spirit has given you all that is necessary to accomplish your Great Commission. When you really grasp the meaning of this supernatural division, your life will never be the same. You will rise up in new power, authority, and anointing to use the special gifts that have been divided to you by the Holy Spirit.

These gifts will also enable you to separate from the world and live life in the Spirit instead of living a life of fleshly indulgence--which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DIVISION OF FLESH AND SPIRIT

One of the greatest separations in the Bible is that between the flesh and the spirit. To thoroughly understand this important separation, we must go back to Old Testament times to learn about the sons of Abraham. The story of Ishmael and Isaac illustrates why some relationships will never work--because of the division between the flesh and the spirit. It also illustrates the great spiritual division between your own flesh and that of the Holy Spirit within you, of which you must be continually cognizant.

Ishmael And Isaac

As you learned previously in this study, God promised to make Abraham the father of a great nation:

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. (Genesis 17:1-6)

As Abraham and his wife, Sarah, continued to age with no child forthcoming, the couple became increasingly concerned. Finally, Abraham agreed to Sarah's suggestion for him to conceive with her servant girl, Hagar:

*Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.
(Genesis 16:1-3)*

Like Abraham and Sarah, you can easily bring an Ishmael on the scene through your own efforts. Ishmael represents your plans and methods--the works of the flesh in your life. Some of the relationships you are striving to make work right now may be ungodly. They may be alliances that will lead you into bitterness, anger, drugs, alcohol, immorality, and other sinful conduct. Some of the projects you are involved in may not be God-ordained, but may just be someone else's worldly ideas.

Scripture has no record of God speaking to Abraham for the next thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael. Not until it was humanly impossible for Abraham to have a child did God speak again:

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I

establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. (Genesis 17:18-21)

Abraham wanted the Lord to bless his plans and methods, but God had a different agenda. At the appointed time, Isaac was born and after his birth, Ishmael--representing the efforts of the flesh--had to be cast out:

And the child (Isaac) grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. (Genesis 21:8-13)

In order for Isaac (representative of God's Spirit and His plan) to prevail in your life, Ishmael (representative of your own plans and the sinful works of your flesh) must be cast out.

In order for this to occur, there must be a divine, supernatural division. This means you cannot maintain sinful relationships from your past. It may mean that some people you love will reject you. There may be some relationships you can't fix. The relationship between Ishmael and Isaac could not be fixed. It still can't be fixed. We see problems manifested yet today in the turmoil in the Middle East that can be traced back through their descendants to these men.

It is a painful experience--this divine division--but it is a separation resulting from the Word of God at work in your life. Divine divisions are for your spiritual protection and preservation and they fulfill God's expressed purposes, as confirmed by this example of Ishmael and Isaac.

God is saying to you, as He did to Abraham, don't grieve for the things that are being taken from you. Don't fret over that failed relationship or that lost friendship. If you are at fault, then by all means make it right. But if it is a division that you did not cause through your own sinful actions or emotions, then recognize that it may be a divine division set in order by God.

Instead of fretting over the loss of such relationships, rejoice! When you are separated because of the cause of Christ and your commitment to God and His Word, be thankful! Divine divisions means that God is actively and purposefully at work in your life!

A Great Spiritual Division

This account of the separation between Ishmael and Isaac is a type of a great spiritual division that must occur in the lives of all believers. The Bible describes the flesh, as typified by Ishmael, as the manifestations of the old life apart from Christ:

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:5-8)

As a new creature in Christ, however, you are now operating in the Holy Spirit--which is symbolized by Isaac. Therefore...

...ye are not in the flesh , but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you... For if ye live after the flesh , ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Portions of Romans 8:9-14)

You are called to cleanse yourself from the filthiness of the flesh (2 Corinthians 7:1). You are to walk in the Spirit consistently so you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16):

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

The flesh (your sinful, proud, self-willed way of doing things) will always war against the Spirit--God's way, His plans, and His purposes (Galatians 5:17). There will always be a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Those who are

led by their own fleshly appetites will always rise up against those led by the Spirit:

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. (Galatians 4:28-29)

What spiritual "Ishmael" have you birthed that needs to be eliminated from your life? Do not delay. Do not resist. Do not grieve over it. Let God do His work of divine division in your fleshly spirit so that you can walk in the renewed life of the Holy Spirit.

Paul comments regarding this divine division:

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Romans 8:12-14, NIV)

You are a child of God. In order to be led by His Spirit, you must allow God to separate you from the sinful works of the flesh. It is an ongoing process of division that will continue until the day that you enter into the presence of God.

CHAPTER TEN

THE DIVISION OF DIVINE PROVISION

Do you have a desperate need? Whether financial, material, or spiritual--this chapter is for you.

When God divides, it is always in order to accomplish His divine purposes. In His economy, divine division always results in multiplication and provision. The account of the widow woman in 2 Kings 4 illustrates this:

Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the Lord: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her; and she poured out. And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest. (2 Kings 4:1-7)

In this account, a widow woman faced a desperate situation. Her husband died and she had no source of income—no possible way to meet the needs of her family. She was in debt, and the creditor had come to take her two sons as slaves in payment of the debt, which was a legal custom of that time.

If ever anyone needed a miracle, it was this woman. She had already lost her husband and now she faced the possibility of losing her sons. In her desperation, she cried out to the Prophet Elisha for help. Elisha answered her appeal asking, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” The woman answered that she had nothing except a jar of oil.

Elisha told her to borrow as many vessels as possible from her neighbors—not a few, but as many as possible. Then she was to go into her house, shut the door, and begin to divide the oil by pouring it into the vessels she had collected.

The widow acted upon the word of the Lord’s prophet. She collected the vessels, entered into her house, and shut the door. Then she took her bottle of oil and began to pour. As she poured, the oil began to multiply. The woman kept pouring until every empty vessel she had collected was filled to the brim. The prophet Elisha then directed her to sell the oil, pay her debt, and free her sons. God used what she had divided and multiplied it to meet her need.

You may think your resources are so little that you have nothing to offer God. Perhaps your education is lacking, your funds are depleted, and you think you have no special talents or abilities. God used a small supply of oil, divided among empty vessels, and multiplied it to meet this woman’s great need. Act upon God’s Word and begin to use what you have, no matter how small it may seem to you. Your “pot of oil”

may be a talent, money, or an idea that--when sanctified by God--will result in a miracle.

It is interesting to note in this account that the flow of oil only stopped when there were no more empty vessels. God wants you to take what you have, divide it, and begin to pour it into the empty vessels of hurting humanity. Pour out what you have--your limited financial resources, your talents, your time and abilities--into the empty lives of needy men, women, and children around you. As you divide what you have for the benefit of others, your own resources--your talents, abilities, finances, and anointing--will multiply supernaturally. As long as you are pouring your life into empty vessels, you will always have sufficient resources.

What do you possess in financial resources, special talents, abilities, or spiritual anointing that you can share with others? What do you have that can be divided in order to experience the dynamics of divine division and see it multiplied into a miracle?

Multiplied Resources

In John 6, we find a hungry multitude and a meager food supply:

After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him,

Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. (John 6:1-13)

Let the loaves and fish in this story represent your own limited resources. You may look at your financial or spiritual resources and think that they are insufficient to meet the needs you are facing now and in the future. You may look at your limited income and your small offerings for the work of God and wonder, "What can my gift do to meet such a great need as evangelizing the world?"

The little boy with some bread and fish gave what he had to Jesus. The Lord took these limited resources, praised God for His supernatural provision, divided the small lunch, and multiplied the food until there was an abundance. Not only was there enough for the multitude to eat and be satisfied, there were twelve baskets of food left!

When you invest your time, talent, financial, or spiritual resources in the Kingdom of God, He will take what you give, divide it, and multiply it back to you. God wants you to bring

your five loaves and two small fish--your limited resources--to Him. As you give what you have, He will divide it to a lost and dying world. He will then multiply it and you will literally be catapulted into a supernatural cycle of divine provision.

Dividing Your Income

Do you honor God with the firstfruits of your finances? Proverbs 3:9-10 declares, *"Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."*

What does it mean to honor God with your firstfruits? It means giving to God first--paying a tithe of 10% of your income. Giving God the firstfruits of your income causes the rest to be blessed. You will be blessed with less! When you honor Him with the tithe, His promise is that you will have plenty, not just enough to scrape by.

The Word declares, *"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land"* (*Isaiah 1:19*). If you want to eat of the good of the land, then you must be obedient to God's Word and that includes His Word regarding tithes and offerings. Tithing is a divine division that yields supernatural results. When you receive your next paycheck, sit down and divide it. First divide the tithe, then divide the remainder into categories to meet your material needs: Housing, utilities, food, transportation, savings, etc

One reason many of God's people are not receiving supernatural financial provision is because of failure in this area of firstfruits. God spoke through the Prophet Malachi:

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 3:8-12)

When you fail to set aside your tithes and offerings, you are robbing God and your finances are under a curse. When you faithfully give your offerings, then God opens the windows of heaven and pours out a blessing that you do not even have room to receive! The devourer--the enemy who would rob you of finances, health, and happiness--is rebuked and the work of your hands will be blessed.

God is not looking for people whose goal is to be wealthy in order to consume His blessings upon their own desires. God is looking for people who are willing to take what they have, separate their financial resources to be used for the advancement of the Gospel, and then watch a miracle occur as He divides it and multiplies it back.

If you want to experience division provision, then you must first learn the principle of divine division of your resources--your finances, talents, time, and spiritual gifts--shared with a needy world.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE DIVISION OF BROKENNESS

Normally, we think of something that is broken as no longer being useful. Broken things usually end up in the trash can. What is true in the natural world, however, is often not true in the spiritual world. This is because Kingdom principles are usually the opposite of those of the world. Here are some examples:

- You serve in order to become great.
- You give in order to receive.
- You lose in order to gain.
- You die to live.

So while in the natural world broken things may be useless, in the spiritual world, broken things are of great value. Brokenness is a spiritual division that can yield tremendous eternal benefits.

A Divine Example Of Brokenness

On the night of Christ's betrayal...

...He took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me. (Luke 22:19)

Jesus was preparing to fulfill His divine destiny, but in order to do so, He who had broken the bread to feed multitudes must also be broken. His body would be broken, even as the bread in His hands, so that you might be saved. Your salvation--upon which all else rests including healing, deliverance, provision, etc.--came through this division of the bread of His body.

Through the brokenness experienced by Jesus, sinful mankind gained access to a righteous God. The veil of the temple was split--a divine division which enables us to come boldly into God's presence:

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation.
(Ephesians 2:13-14)*

It is hard for us to see God as one who breaks, who Himself was broken, and who permits brokenness in our lives. Brokenness is one of the most difficult of all divine divisions, yet we all will experience it. This is why it is vital that we understand its benefits and how God view our brokenness.

Benefits Of Brokenness

What we are calling "brokenness" occurs through difficulties of life that seriously impact your material, spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Brokenness results when you experience circumstances like sickness, divorce, failure, financial loss, or the death of loved ones.

No matter the cause of your brokenness, the biblical record reveals that difficult times can result in important spiritual benefits if you understand the process and respond properly. Let's look at some of them.

Your flesh is crucified. The Old Testament patriarch, Jacob, lived in the flesh--meaning his own sinful way--most of his life. (Take time to read his story in Genesis chapters 25-32.) At birth, Jacob tried to grab his twin brother's heel so he could prevent him from being first born. Later, Jacob manipulated his brother out of his birthright and blessing which rightfully

went to the oldest son. Over the years, Jacob continued his manipulative, sinful behavior as he tried to outwit his Uncle Laban.

Jacob set his eyes on beautiful Rachel, whose family heritage was one of dishonesty and idolatry. Deceived by Uncle Laban, Jacob ended up with two wives—Leah and Rachel—and they caused continual conflict in his home. Eventually, after overhearing Laban’s disgruntled sons plotting against him, Jacob took his family and fled.

Jacob wanted to control his own life and he continually manipulated people and circumstances in order to accomplish this. For years, Jacob lived this way until he experienced a tremendous spiritual breakthrough at a place called Jabbok.

Forced to flee from Haran (Genesis 31), Jacob decided to return home to Canaan. On the way, he and his family camped at Jabbok which means "a place of passing over; a place of change, breakthrough, or sudden advancement". Here, Jacob finally realized that he needed God’s help. He declared:

...O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. (Genesis 32:9-10)

At Jabbok, Jacob was at the end of his natural resources. Behind him was an angry Laban and ahead of him was a

vengeful Esau. When you are between “a rock and hard place” and it seems you have no options in the natural world, that is when the breaking process begins in your life.

When Jacob came alone to Jabbok—the place of breakthrough—everything changed:

And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

(Genesis 32:22-32)

The Bible records that a spiritual being, presumed to be the incarnate Christ, wrestled with Jacob throughout the night. As dawn approached, He touched Jacob’s thigh and the sinew

shrank, leaving him with a permanent limp. All of his life, Jacob had run—from Esau, from Laban, from Canaan, and from Haran. Now, God crippled his greatest natural strength so he would be forced to rely upon Him instead of the flesh. It was symbolic of what was occurring in Jacob spiritually.

Through this brokenness--this divine division--the power of Jacob's sinful nature was finally conquered. Jacob was also given a new name. The name "Jacob" meant “he that supplants or undermines”. Every time someone called Jacob's name, it reflected his sinful nature. So God gave him a new name—Israel—which means a “prince with power with God and man.” From that point on, Jacob was different. He wasn't perfect, but brokenness had changed his life

The Prophet Hosea admonished, *"Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (Hosea 6:1)*. God tears and divides for divine purpose, and when you submit to the process He always heals and restores your brokenness.

Your life is purified. Let's take a field trip with the Prophet Jeremiah:

The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying: "Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear My words." Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something at the wheel. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to make. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the Lord. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel." (Jeremiah 18:2-6)

The first stage in making pottery is to prepare the clay. It cannot be worked effectively unless lumps and air pockets are eliminated. The clay must be made soft and pliable. Cutting, wedging, dividing, and kneading accomplish this process. As a believer, you are a spiritual work in progress. As part of this process, you experience brokenness and through dividing, cutting, kneading and dividing again, a new vessel emerges from your broken life.

In the natural world, the potter's tools include a knife, scraping and modeling tools, wooden beaters, and wire for cutting pots from the wheel. One thing these tools all have in common: They effect change in the clay. The same is true of the difficulties, problems, trials and painful brokenness in your life. Each of these circumstances are a tool in the hands of God.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

Have you asked to be used by God? Have you desired to be more like Jesus and prayed to be a chosen vessel for His use? God answers your prayer through brokenness in the fire of affliction. God said, "*Behold I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction*" (Isaiah 48:10). Clay vessels are baked in a hot oven called a kiln to complete their processing. If there are any impurities left in the clay, the vessel will shatter in the heat. How will you emerge from the furnace of affliction?

Positive qualities are amplified. When you deal properly with your brokenness, positive spiritual qualities will be developed in your life.

We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, resulting in the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts. (Romans 5:3-5)

...after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. (1 Peter 5:10)

Patience, experience, hope, love, stability, strength, and perfection--all of these positive qualities are benefits of brokenness.

Your resources are multiplied. As you permit the breaking process in your life, your resources are multiplied to help others. When a great crowd had been with Jesus for some time in the desert, they grew hungry and...

...when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. (Matthew 14:15-21)

Jesus could have performed a miracle and created food from nothing. Instead, He told His disciples. "Bring me what you

have and you give them something to eat." As they allowed what they had to be divided--broken and shared with the multitude--their resources were multiplied. They became part of a miracle

When Jesus took the loaves and broke them, the bread was multiplied to feed the multitude. How was it multiplied? By the act of breaking. When you are broken by difficult experiences in life, commit those painful circumstances to Jesus. Let Him take your brokenness and use it to help others.

If your life was broken by abuse, God may use you to help those who have been abused. If you have been addicted, He may call you to help other addicts. If you are an ex-convict, you may return behind prison walls to reach others who are incarcerated.

What breaking experience have you had that God might choose to use?

Your love is intensified. When you experience brokenness, your love for God will intensify.

And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. (Luke 7:37-39)

This woman didn't have to work up her spiritual passion. Her brokenness drove her to the feet of Jesus. She passionately worshiped the One she knew could make her whole again.

Jesus answered the criticism of her passionate worship by declaring, *"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven"* (Luke 7:47-48).

Once you are broken and you experience the One who can heal brokenness, your love for Him will intensify.

Your weakness is glorified. When your own resources and natural strength are broken, then God's strength is magnified.

The Apostle Paul repeatedly asked God to remove a "thorn in the flesh" that troubled him. Finally, God responded saying, *"...My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."* Paul then declared, *"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). It is in weakness--your brokenness--that God's power is perfected.

Paul wrote of his sufferings in Asia:

...In Asia we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead.
(2 Corinthians 1:8-9)

The reason Paul went through this was, he said, *"...that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us"* (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Your focus is clarified. Through brokenness, God changes your focus from the temporal to the eternal, from present difficulties to everlasting benefits. Paul declared:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

You will prosper from difficulties when you are focused on the eternal benefits rather than the temporal nature of your circumstances. The trials of life are not unusual or without purpose:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:12-13)

Ask God to give you a new perspective on the difficulties and the brokenness you experience. It is okay to say, "I don't understand this," but then you must yield your will and view the divine division of brokenness in terms of its eternal purposes. How can God use your negative circumstances for His glory?

Your relationship with God is solidified. Perhaps one of the greatest biblical examples of brokenness is Job, whose heart-wrenching account is recorded in the book bearing his name. Job lost his possessions, his children, his wealth, and his health through no fault of his own. Even his wife turned

against him and his friends were accusatory and uncompassionate. Talk about a divine division!

When Job finally emerged from his great trial, he declared *"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee"* (Job 42:5). Before his devastating circumstances, Job had head knowledge of God, but not heart knowledge. Before, He knew God intellectually. After his experience of suffering and brokenness, he knew Him in a different, greater, more passionate dimension.

King David echoed similar words after being broken by sin and God's chastisement. He said, *"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word"* (Psalm 119:67).

The Apostle Paul suffered much during his ministry. When Paul was first called to ministry, God told him he would suffer many things (Acts 9:16). Once, while ministering in Asia, Paul was so broken in spirit that he despaired of life itself (2 Corinthians 1:8). Despite Paul's continuous suffering, imprisonments, stoning, and narrow escapes, he out-wrote, out-preached, and out-traveled any other New Testament evangelist.

Paul's passionate desire was *"That I may know him , and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death"* (Philippians 3:10).

Paul realized that true knowledge of God comes not only by operating in the power of His resurrection--miracles, signs, and wonders--but also through intimate knowledge gained through the brokenness of suffering.

How God Views Brokenness

The world looks on brokenness as weakness. God views it differently. The Bible indicates the Lord is near to those with a broken heart (Psalms 34:18-19) and that *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, Oh God, thou will not despise"* (Psalms 51:17).

We began this chapter with the story of Jesus dividing the bread to His followers--a divine division symbolic of His body which was to be broken for the sins of all mankind. At the same meal, Jesus served a cup of wine which represented His blood, *"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves"* (Luke 22:17).

Jesus divided the bread Himself, since it represented the breaking of His own body. He broke it and freely gave it. In giving the cup, however, Jesus made His followers confront this issue of brokenness. They were told to divide the cup among themselves. He did not divide it for them. It was a matter of choice. Would they selfishly hoard its contents or would they divide it by sharing with one another?

By the giving of the cup, He who broke the bread and soon was to be broken commissioned His followers to continue this supernatural pattern of divine division by dividing the contents of the cup which He gave them to share.

And you--as one who has tasted of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ: The cup of His precious blood is in your hands. By allowing the breaking of the Holy Spirit to work in your life, will you fulfill the divine mandate and divide this cup of salvation with others?

After the crucifixion of Jesus, two of His sorrowing disciples were walking along the Emmaus Road when suddenly a

stranger joined them. When the stranger inquired regarding their sorrow, they explained the events of the past few days and recounted the death of their Lord.

Then their fellow-traveler began to expound the scriptures to the sorrowing disciples. But it was only when this man joined them for dinner, took the bread, and broke it that the disciples recognized their companion was Jesus Himself:

*And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?
(Luke 24:30-32)*

It was the act of breaking the bread that caused the disciples to recognize Jesus. Despite your sorrow and difficulties, can you not recognize His hand at work in your brokenness and through the divine divisions of your life?

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE DIVISION OF COMMITMENT

Commitment is a rare quality in our modern world. Many people promise to do something and then don't do it. Some couples enter marriage with the idea that they will simply bail out if it doesn't work. Friends seem committed to a relationship until things go wrong, then they abandon you.

This rare quality of commitment is what separates good relationships that remain for a lifetime from those that do not endure. It divides mediocrity from excellence. It is the difference between a great employee and a hired hand. It is the difference between a good friend and a casual acquaintance, a strong marriage and a turbulent one.

Jesus explained the concept of commitment through the analogy of the good shepherd:

I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd risks and lays down His [own] life for the sheep. But the hired servant (he who merely serves for wages) who is neither the shepherd nor the owner of the sheep, when he sees the wolf coming, deserts the flock and runs away. And the wolf chases and snatches them and scatters [the flock]. Now the hireling flees because he merely serves for wages and is not himself concerned about the sheep [cares nothing for them]. (John 10:11-13, AMP)

The committed shepherd remains with the flock, despite times of difficulty and danger. The hired hand deserts the sheep when trouble comes because he does not really care for them. Lack of commitment results from lack of caring.

The supreme example of commitment, of course, is our Lord Jesus Christ who in His darkest hour right before His death said:

Now My soul is troubled and distressed, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour [of trial and agony]? But it was for this very purpose that I have come to this hour [that I might undergo it]. [Rather, I will say,] Father, glorify (honor and extol) Your [own] name! (John 12:7-28, AMP)

Christ was committed unto death because He wanted to see God's name glorified and His divine destiny fulfilled. The committed and the uncommitted. Another divine division. The question is, to which group do you belong?

Going All The Way

One of the greatest examples of commitment is demonstrated in the life of a young man named Elisha who became the protégé of the Prophet Elijah. Elisha left behind all he had, all those he loved, and followed Elijah all the way--literally walking himself right into a double-portion anointing (1 Kings 19).

When we first encounter Elisha, he was not just sitting around doing nothing. He was busy working on the family farm, despite the fact that he probably came from a wealthy family. Plowing with so many oxen represented being in the upper class. Despite this, he was not irresponsible or lazy. He was hard at work in the field with the rest of the workers (1 Kings 19:19-21).

God often calls busy men and women--committed people, not the lazy and slothful--to do His work. He knows you are busy, but He wants you to be willing to lay aside your plans for His

purposes. You may have an important job, a powerful position, or many possessions. But for the sake of the call, God may ask you to leave it all--to separate yourself. It will be a divine division that will enable you to be totally committed to His plans and purposes.

There is not much revealed about Elisha's background or training. He hadn't been to prophet's school. He was a farmer. God is not interested in your ability as much as He is in your availability, and Elisha was available.

One day, in the midst of Elisha's routine duties, Elijah walked by the field and threw his mantle over him. The most dramatic moves of God often come right in the middle of the normal routines of life. Don' be so busy with your own schedule that you ignore the significance of what is happening. Don't be so set in your own plans and purposes that you miss the call by thinking, "I must finish plowing my field first."

When the mantle of Elijah descended upon Elisha's shoulders, there was something so powerful and so tremendous about the encounter that he immediately left his family, his friends, and his farm. He even killed the oxen with which he had been plowing. Talk about a divine division! He eliminated everything that might tempt him to return to the old life.

Elisha is representative of believers who, in the plan of God, are being set apart to achieve great things for the Kingdom. When God speaks, there is no debate. They do not ask for a career path. There is no discussion of benefits, pros or cons. They simply respond in obedience, step out into the unknown to do God's will, separate themselves, and never look back.

God is calling forth a new generation, a new breed of people, who will leave the familiar and the comfortable, abandon

their own dreams and goals and commit to God's plan. Elisha left everything to follow Elijah in order to learn, serve, and prepare for his own God-given destiny.

There is always a divine division involved when you hear the call to greater commitment. There is always something you must leave behind, a separation that occurs. One of these defining moments of separation came in my own life when I had just graduated from university and was offered a teaching position in a secular college. I knew God was calling me to full-time ministry, and I remember standing in front of the library on that campus wrestling with the decision. Finally, I declined their offer.

As I walked to my car that day, voices in my head were saying, "Are you crazy? You are turning your back on a good job and a career path as a professor. Do you realize how many people would jump at an opportunity like this?" It was a moment of divine division. For some, this opportunity might be their destiny. For me, it was not and I knew it. I had a choice to make. I could choose the way that looked good at the time, or I could commit to going God's way.

I walked away from that college campus that day, and I have never looked back. God later blessed me with a Christian husband, a world-wide ministry, and gave me the ability to write materials that have impacted the lives of multitudes around the world. I am so glad I did not ignore that defining moment of divine division that determined my destiny and drew me to a new level of commitment.

What about you? What commitment is God asking you to make? What is He asking you to leave behind? You will have many defining moments of divine division along your spiritual journey and each one will call for a greater commitment. How will you respond?

A Defining Moment

For several years, Elijah mentored Elisha, preparing him to receive the mantle of the anointing that would be passed on to him. There were several schools of the prophets, and Elijah began visiting and teaching in them, accompanied by Elisha who ministered to Elijah in humble service, ever at his side, ever learning.

Many political changes occurred during the years that Elijah and Elisha walked together and during these tumultuous times, Elijah was a strong prophetic voice, rebuking evil and declaring God's judgment (2 Kings 1:15-16 and 21:17-23).

Finally, there came the day when Elijah knew it was time to pass the mantle of his ministry on to Elisha (2 Kings 2). There is much to learn as we retrace this final journey of Elijah and Elisha. There is prophetic meaning in each location they visited, and you must follow in their footsteps spiritually-speaking in order to reach your own destiny.

Gilgal. Elijah and Elisha journeyed first to a place called Gilgal which represents foundational truths.

And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said unto him, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. (2 Kings 2:1-2)

Gilgal was the site between Jordan and Jericho where Israel first encamped after crossing the Jordan River. It was here that Joshua laid the foundation of the 12 stones of remembrance, hence it is representative of spiritual foundations (Joshua 4:19-24). Your commitment to God's

plans and purposes must have the proper spiritual foundation. If you build your life and ministry on the shifting sands of worldly opinions and methods, it will collapse in turbulent times. If you build upon the Rock, Christ Jesus, you will endure despite the storms of life (Matthew 7:24-27).

You must have a firm grasp of the basics of the faith, but you cannot remain only at this foundational level. The Apostle Paul declared:

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. (Hebrews 6:1-3)

You cannot remain a milk-bottle believer, always up and down, continually struggling with the basic truths of the Gospel. You must move on to the meat of the Word which represents spiritual maturity:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:12-14)

Get the spiritual basics right and then build your superstructure. Many lives and ministries have collapsed during the storms of life because they did not get their foundation right. (For further study of spiritual foundations,

consult the Harvestime International Network publication entitled "*Foundations Of Faith*".)

Bethel. The next place Elijah and Elisha visited was Bethel, representative of divine revelation:

So they went down to Bethel. And the sons of the prophets that were at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the Lord hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. (2 Kings 2:3-4)

Bethel is first mentioned in the biblical record in Genesis 12:8 when God appeared to Abraham with the revelation that his seed would inherit the Promised Land. God will bring you to a place of revelation repeatedly, and each time He wants you to commit to a new spiritual level in your life. But you cannot remain there. You must act upon the revelations you receive--and that involves separation. If you tarry at the place of revelation, you will never see its manifestation.

Bethel is also a place of decision. It was from Bethel that Lot viewed the cities of the Jordan. He saw the fertile land, chose for himself, separated from the man of God, moved towards the world, and ended up sitting in the gates with ungodly elders and giving his daughters in marriage to evil men of Sodom. The commitment you make at your spiritual Bethel will determine the direction you take in life. Decisions determine destiny.

Bethel is also a place of renewal. After Abraham's tragic spiritual failure in Egypt, he knew where to go to make things right again. He returned to Bethel to renew his consecration

to God (Genesis 13:3-4). Repeatedly, you will be called to separate from Egypt--which represents the world--and renew your commitment to God.

Jericho. Gilgal. Bethel. Still, Elijah and Elisha traveled on. Their next stop was Jericho, an important city which guarded the fords of the Jordan River.

So they came to Jericho. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the Lord hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. (2 Kings 2:4-6)

Jericho represents the appeal of the world and the flesh. It was these cities which attracted Lot as he viewed them from Bethel. Can you pass through Jericho with all its attractions of power, wealth, and position and go on to ford the Jordan and follow God's plan? Many men and women of God have laid a proper spiritual foundation (Gilgal) and received a revelation from God (Bethel), only to succumb to the temptations of Jericho. Will you allow God to separate you from these? Just how great is your commitment?

Jordan. Jordan is symbolic of death. When Joshua and the people of Israel crossed the Jordan River, they were separating forever from the old life of Egypt and their wilderness wanderings. Elijah, too, must cross and Elisha must go through these waters with him. Even Jesus waded into the Jordan River, symbolic of death to the old life through water baptism.

And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.
(2 Kings 2:7-8)

Jordan was a barrier to reaching their destination and it is symbolic of barriers that will try to prevent you from entering into all God has for you. What is standing in your way? What is the "Jordan" that is preventing you from fulfilling God's plan for your life? You must press through it if you are to advance to a new level of commitment.

You will note that in 2 Kings 2:7 there were 50 prophets who followed Elijah and Elisha from Jericho to Jordan, but only one received the mantle of Elijah's anointing. The others merely watched from afar what God was doing. Do you want to be a spectator or a participator?

Choosing The Hard Way

There was an easier, more direct route to their destination, but Elijah took the circuitous, more difficult route. Some commentators say there were schools of the prophets in these locations, and that he was making a final visit. That may be true, but we have also seen that he was walking out the prophetic purpose of the calling that Elisha was to receive.

Elisha might have been thinking...

..."This doesn't make sense."

..."We are backtracking."

..."Does Elijah really know where he is going?"

..."I could arrive at the destination quicker by going my own way."

God's way often winds through difficult paths. His direction may involve difficult separations and divisions, but your destination is assured. It is your divine destiny.

At each location--Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and Jordan--Elijah tried to discourage Elisha from continuing on with him. He knew the commitment that was required in order to function in this anointing. But Elisha persevered and he and Elijah crossed Jordan together:

And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.
(1 Kings 2:9)

Elijah asked, "Before I leave, what is it you want?" Elisha did not ask for wealth, position, honor, or exemption from trouble. He simply asked to be qualified for service to God in order to reach his generation. He wanted a double-portion of the Spirit of God that rested upon his mentor.

"This is a hard thing you have asked," Elijah responded, "but if you remain with me, you will receive it." So the two friends continued on together, and suddenly...

...there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.
(1 Kings 2:11-12)

A supernatural, divine division. Elijah and Elisha were separated and as Elijah's mantle fluttered down, Elisha

picked it up. He knew this sacred piece of cloth was a token of his own divine mandate and symbolic of his authority to carry on the work Elijah had begun.

Elisha tore his clothes and cried out in grief. Then he picked up the mantle and held it in his hands. What will he do? His mentor is gone and his heart is broken. Will he go back to farming? Will he rise up to the new level of commitment to which God is calling him?

What will Elisha do? And even more importantly, what will you do when you are called by God to make a new commitment?

Taking Up The Mantle

(Elisha) took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not. And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not? (2 Kings 2:13-18)

Elisha took up the mantle, representing the double-portion anointing, and walked to the banks of the river. Like Elijah had done, he took the mantle and smote the water, crying out "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" It was not Elijah he wanted, but the Lord God of Elijah. It was not the works of God he sought, but God Himself.

When a divine division occurs and what you know and love is taken from you, it is time to pick up the mantle of the anointing and fulfill your destiny. Elijah struck the waters with the mantle, and they immediately parted as they had for his mentor.

And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. (2 Kings 2:15)

The fifty prophets of God watching from a distance on the other side of Jordan decided that, despite Elisha's protests, they would search for Elijah in the mountains. Surely he could not be gone:

And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. And when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not. And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not? (2 Kings 2:16-18)

The prophets who were standing at a distance never got it. They went searching for the anointed one instead of receiving the anointing that one had left behind. They sought the prophet with the "big name". After all, Elijah was known for his miracles and his amazing demonstration of power over the servants of Baal.

These men returned discouraged and sad because the mantle was not in Elijah. It is not in the "big name" ministries. The mantle of God's anointing is in the spirit and power of Elijah which is found only in Almighty God Himself.

Do you want to be among those that stand afar, who are merely spectators of the things of God, or do you want to be like Elisha--one who receives the double-portion anointing? If you want to reach your divine destiny, then you must be willing to follow Him all the way. You must leave your old life behind. You must cross over the "Jordans" of your life and conquer every barrier that is hindering your progress.

Committed Or Not?

There is a divine division in this world between the committed and the uncommitted. The committed will leave all to follow. They will separate from everything near and dear, all they have known and loved, for the sake of Christ. Like those who stood at a distance on the other side of Jordan, the uncommitted will only watch what God is doing in the world.

Luke recounts an incident involving a rich young ruler who came to Jesus asking...

Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is

good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. (Luke 18:18-23)

This man had already achieved a tremendous level of commitment when he approached Christ. He had kept the commandments from the time he was a youth. But on this day, Jesus called this man to a new level of commitment. He told the ruler to sell all he had, give it to the poor, and come and follow Him. The man went away sorrowing, for he was very rich and unwilling to make the commitment Jesus requested.

This story does not mean that in order to follow Jesus everyone must sell all they have and give it to the poor. The point is that in order to rise to new levels of commitment spiritually, more will be required of you. What is the one thing that is hindering your commitment to follow God to the next level?

The Amplified Version of this account with the young ruler says, "*But when the young man heard this, he went away sad (grieved and in much distress), for he had great possessions*" (Matthew 19:22, AMP). Could it be that some of the depression and distress you are experiencing is the result of your failure to commit to God's way?

Jesus said, "... *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*" (Matthew

16:24). "Taking up the cross" does not refer to the burdens of life. These are common to all men and are the afflictions, trials, and disappointments that occur because of living in a sinful world. The believer is not excluded from such burdens of life. He experiences illness, accidents, fire, and natural hazards because he lives in a world marred by sin. But these burdens are not "taking up the cross." Cross-bearing is voluntary, not something imposed by the burdens of life. It is a continuous daily choice to deny selfish desires in order to do God's will.

Jesus said, *"Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple."* Taking up the cross is not pleasing to the human nature because it involves self-denial. It must be done voluntarily for the sake of Christ. To take up the cross, you must empty your hands of the things of the world. If your heart is set on money and material things, then your hands are too full to take up the cross. If your time is consumed by worldly pursuits and things that please the flesh, your hands are too full to grasp the cross.

Matthew could have remained at the tax table and Peter at his fishing nets. They could have pursued their trades honestly and might have enjoyed great spiritual experiences. But if they wanted to fulfill their divine destinies, they had to leave the old and embrace the new. Matthew left the tax tables and Peter left his nets.

Commitment may require a change in lifestyle. In some cases it may also mean leaving homes, jobs, or loved ones for the sake of the Gospel. You must forsake all else to accept this call:

So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33)

On another occasion, Jesus said to a prospective disciple...

... Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:59-62)

This man refused the call. We do not know his name, and we never hear of him again. When your call to commitment comes, what will be your response?

How About You?

Divine division always requires a new level of commitment. Will you stand afar and only witness God's power, as did the young prophets of Elisha's time? Will you be a spectator or a participator?

Will you turn back from a greater commitment because of something from which you are unwilling to separate? Will you refuse to surrender something or someone to God?

Or will you take up the cross and follow, allowing God's process of divine division to work in your life, taking you from where you are to where you need to be?

God's Word to you is that of King Solomon to his people. He declared: "... *your hearts must be fully committed to the Lord our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time*" (1 Kings 8:61, NIV).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE DIVISION OF HOLINESS

One of the greatest divine divisions in the Bible is the separation between that which is clean and that which is unclean, that which is good and that which is evil. The biblical concept of this divine division is called holiness.

The root meaning of the Hebrew word for "holiness" lies in the word "separation." As we previously learned, the separation between good and evil began with Satan's sin. It extended to earth when God established boundaries between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

Repeatedly throughout the Old Testament record, we witness God making a separation between the clean and unclean and the holy and unholy. Words like "holiness, sanctify, consecrate, set apart, and separate" are used frequently in the biblical record. The book of Proverbs contrasts the wise and foolish, the wicked and righteous, and the virtuous and sinful. All of these involve a divine division of holiness set in place by God.

The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are filled with admonitions to sanctify, set apart, and consecrate. The nation of Israel, the Jewish tribes, land, special days, offerings, people, priests, utensils, and materials--all were set apart by God and sanctified for His purposes. The bottom line was that God's people were to *"...put a difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Leviticus 10:10).*

A total of 600 laws governed life in Old Testament times and by the time of Jesus, religious leaders had imposed numerous

others. But Jesus made it clear that true holiness was not just outward appearance and keeping regulations. He told the religious leaders:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, (Matthew 23:23-29)

Attempts at external holiness without true inward change are not only difficult, but they result in hypocrisy because true change has not really occurred. Our Lord warned against those who teach the commandments of men as doctrines:

He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such

like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. (Mark 7:6-9)

God has set the true standard for holiness in His Word. Do not allow others to impose their personal convictions on you.

It is what you are inside that affects your external behavior. Jesus said:

..That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Mark 7:20-23)

If you are holy in your heart, then you will be holy in word and deed.

What Is True Holiness?

So what, exactly, is true holiness?

True holiness is grounded in supernatural love rather than legalistic laws. Love must govern every aspect of your life, both vertically (your relationship with God) and horizontally (your relationship with others). Jesus summarized it by saying:

...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)

If you are in right relationship with God and others, then you will be able to live a holy life. God told Israel:

Now therefore, if you will obey My voice in truth and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own peculiar possession and treasure...And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation [consecrated, set apart to the worship of God]... (Exodus 19:5-6, AMP)

John admonished believers, "*Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God*" (3 John 11).

Peter declared:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

True holiness involves hearing and obeying God's Word and keeping His covenant instead of being governed by the traditions and doctrines of men. Holiness results from allowing God to uniquely set you apart to worship and serve Him. It requires you to allow God to do His work of divine division in your life, separating you from all that is displeasing to Him.

God has predestined that His followers walk in holiness (Ephesians 1:3-9). The Apostle Paul declared, "*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification*" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). The Amplified Version states it this way: "*For this is the will of God, that you should be consecrated (separated and set apart for pure and holy living)...*" The word "saints"

is used of believers to mean the "set apart ones" (Ephesians 1:18, AMP)

The One who called you into His Kingdom is holy and you are to be holy also:

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:15-16)

If believers are chosen, a royal priesthood, holy, and a peculiar people set apart to God, then why does Peter warn us a few verses later to "*abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul*" (1 Peter 2:11)? Because holiness is a continuous work which involves your cooperation in the process. You must abstain--separate yourself--from the lusts of the flesh--a divine division that you must choose to make.

Three Stages Of Holiness

Holiness is easier to understand if we view it in three stages.

Stage One: Initial Holiness. The Bible reveals that all have sinned and come short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). It is through confession of faith in Jesus Christ that your sins are forgiven:

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God...(Romans 3:24-25)

Stage one of holiness, then, is the initial separation from sin that occurs at the time of salvation when God remits your transgressions and declares you are righteous. It is something

God does for you when you confess your sins and accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

When you believe in your heart that Jesus Christ died for your sins and you confess Him as your Savior, then you become a new creature in Christ... "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). A divine division has occurred.

Your role in stage one of holiness is to confess your sins and accept Christ as your personal Savior. The work of salvation is accomplished totally through God's grace. There is nothing you can do to attain it:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Can a single decision such as accepting Christ change your entire life? Yes it can. In an instant--just as a decision to get married or the decision to birth a child impacts your life forever. Without this divine separation from sin which occurs in stage one, you will never progress on to the remaining stages of holiness.

Stage Two: Progressive Holiness. Stage two of holiness is progressive and occurs as you grow spiritually and learn to apply God's Word in your life. This process will continue as long as you are living here on earth. It is a cooperative work between you and the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Just because you receive Jesus as your Savior and your past sins are covered--forgiven and forgotten--it does not mean you will automatically live a holy life. Through salvation, you have transitioned from the kingdom of this world into the Kingdom of God and it is like moving to a new country in the natural world. There is a new language to learn in God's Kingdom where profanity is forbidden and words like redemption, justification, sanctification, etc., become part of your vocabulary. There is a new culture, as you are a new creature in Christ and you don't act the way you did in the past. You live differently. You treat others differently. You have a new set of standards because the Word of God now governs your life.

The Bible teaches that man is body, soul, and spirit. When you accept Christ as Savior, the change is a spiritual one—you experience a spiritual rebirth:

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.
(John 3:5-8)

It is your spirit that is born again. You do not experience a physical change when you receive Christ—you aren't taller, shorter, heavier, or leaner. Your physical body does not change. It is your spirit that changes when you are born again by the Spirit of God.

After your new spiritual birth, your soul—which is your mind, will, and emotions—must be supernaturally sanctified as you live out this new life. For years, your soul ruled your spirit and your flesh. Whatever you desired, you did—whether it be drugs, alcohol, pornography, immorality, etc. You did not exercise control over emotions such as anger, hatred, and bitterness. You went where you wanted to go and did what you wanted to do.

Repetition of sinful behavior leads to more of the same, until certain actions are so entrenched in our lives that we become enslaved to habitual sin and spiritual strongholds are erected. This is what the Apostle Paul struggled with after his conversion. He said:

For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.
(Romans 7:15-21)

You cannot change your soulish nature on your own. Self-effort will not rid you of habitual sin—Paul found that out. You must let God supernaturally change your soulish realm—your mind, will, and emotions. For years, your sinful soulish nature has controlled your body and your spirit. Now you must learn to let your redeemed spirit be in control. That is what progressive holiness is all about.

Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you" (John 15:3). The Greek word for "clean" means "free from impurities, without blemish, spotless." A pure heart is the work of Christ in your life and only through His power can you remain clean.

Progressive holiness is initiated when, as a believer, you present yourself willingly to God to work in your life. The Apostle Paul appeals:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)

The Amplified Version of the Bible translates this as follows:

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].

As we examine this passage in detail, the **first** thing we note is that the call to transformation is an appeal, not a commandment--"I beseech you", meaning Paul is appealing and begging believers to do what he asks. You cannot be forced into holiness. It cannot be commanded, delegated, or legislated into your life. You must make a personal decision to choose to live a holy, separated life.

The **second** thing we note is that this invitation to transformation is being given to true believers, those who are "brethren" in the family of God. It is not a challenge for someone to try to be a better person through their own works or self-effort. The world tells you that you have the ability to do it yourself through applying methods of self-help. Conversely, the Word says it is by presenting yourself willingly to God and allowing Him to do the work in you that true change occurs.

The **third** thing to consider is the command to "present" which means to bring and offer freely. The word relates to making an animal sacrifice in Old Testament times, a practice which cost a life. God is asking that you present your life as a sacrifice and die spiritually to your old way of life--your own plans, ideas, and dreams--in order to embrace His holiness.

When you are dead in Christ, you are no longer subject to the world and the traditions and doctrines of man:

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility,

and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. (Colossians 2:20-23)

This presentation of yourself to God is no heroic act. Paul calls it your "reasonable service." The exciting part is that when you willingly do this, you will no longer conform to the world, but you will be transformed by the renewing of your mind:

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:6-7)

True separation to live a holy life can only occur when your mind is supernaturally changed by the power of God. This process of presenting yourself to God as a living sacrifice results in your mind continuously being transformed by the Word of God. This gives you the ability to live out the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God for your life. It is not self-effort. You are supernaturally empowered to live a new life and experience a divine division from your old life of sin.

This process of holiness will continue as you develop habits of holiness. One important habit of holiness is studying and applying the Word of God to your life because:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

God's Word is profitable for teaching righteousness and results in perfection--spiritual maturity--when you apply it in your life:

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. (James 1:22-25)

The Word helps you deal with temptations. There are two key passages that explain temptation and how to deal with it:

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (James 1:12-15)

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:12-13)

Here are the basic truths about temptation as detailed in these verses:

-God does not tempt you.

-You are tempted when you are drawn away and enticed by your own lust.

-Temptation is common to all believers.

-Temptation is most dangerous when you think you cannot fall.

-God is faithful to limit temptations according to your ability to endure them.

-The duration of temptation will not be longer than you can bear.

-God will always make a way of escape--Find it. Take it!

-You are blessed when you successfully endure temptation and you will be rewarded with a crown of life.

-There is always a progression in the process temptation:

-Lust...

-Draws you away and...

-Entices you. Then...

-Lust conceives and gives birth to sin.

-Sin grows and when it is finished...

-Death results.

Prayer and meditation are important habits of holiness. Jesus said to pray that you do not enter into temptation (Luke 22:40). He made this request a part of the pattern for daily prayer--"*lead us not into temptation*" (Matthew 6:13). Part

of the daily prayer pattern, then, is to ask forgiveness for sin and extend forgiveness to others (Matthew 6:12).

When you confess your sins, God not only forgives the sins you have confessed, but He cleanses you from all unrighteousness--meaning He forgives sins you have not even recognized or acknowledged:

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.
(1 John 1:8-10)*

Don't let things build up. Confess your sins to God daily and forgive others. Mediate on God's Word and apply it. Practice the discipline of fasting. These are habits of holiness that will result in a lifetime of holy living.

As you do your part in presenting yourself to God, renewing your mind through His Word, praying, and consistently resisting temptation, the Holy Spirit will do His part as He manifests the supernatural fruit of the Spirit in your life:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

Stage Three: Ultimate Holiness. The third and final stage of holiness is ultimate perfection which will be achieved when these mortal bodies put on immortality:

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:51-57)

Stage three of holiness will be complete separation from sin and its accompanying penalty of spiritual death--a divine division you will experience when you enter eternity where you will forever dwell with God and "*...there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*" (Revelation 21:27).

Jesus Prayed For Your Sanctification

Did you know that Jesus prayed regarding your personal sanctification? He prayed this prayer for His followers:

*Sanctify them [purify, consecrate, separate them for Yourself, make them holy] by the Truth; Your Word is Truth... Neither for these alone do I pray [it is not for their sake only that I make this request], but also for all those who will ever come to believe in (trust in, cling to, rely on) Me through their word and teaching.
(Portions of John 17:17 and 20, AMP)*

Jesus prayed for your sanctification, your divine division from sin and your separation unto holiness. Don't you think that if you will obediently cooperate with the process that God will certainly answer His prayer?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE DANGER OF DELAYED DIVISION

There is grave danger in delayed obedience when God orchestrates a divine division in your life. A great biblical story that illustrates this comes from the account of Israel at the border of their Promised Land. When they arrived at Canaan, they found giants in the land:

*And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.
(Numbers 13:33)*

Spiritually speaking, "giants" stand for the difficulties you face in life. You will meet "giant" problems in your family, church, social life, ministry, job, and in your own heart.

When Israel was going forward they met giants. When they turned back into the wilderness, they found none. It is in the way of duty and destiny that you encounter giants. If you are meeting "giant" problems in your life and ministry, the good news is that you are most likely on the right pathway. You are on the way to your spiritual destiny and moving forward to claim the promises of God. Mobilized people always face giants.

God told Israel to totally separate themselves from the inhabitants of Canaan, including the giants, by destroying them. But Israel did not heed God's warning:

...but ye have not obeyed my voice...wherefore...they shall be as thorns in your sides and their gods shall be an snare unto you. (Judges 2:1-3)

Israel conquered much of Canaan, but they left just "a few giants" in three cities. When God orchestrates a divine division, then you had best take heed. If the giants of your life are not eliminated, they will become "snares and thorns" in your spiritual experience.

There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod there remained (a few of them). (Joshua 11:22)

The Anakims that Israel permitted to remain were giants and were among the Canaanites whom God had commanded to be destroyed. In Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, Israel allowed these "few giants" to remain. It is from these locations that much of Israel's trouble later came and from where we get a sad tale of three cities.

A Tale Of Three Cities

Let's look down through history and see what happened in the three areas where Israel did not eliminate the giants.

Gaza. Read Judges chapter 16. It is in Gaza that we find God's man, Samson, in trouble. In a city where the giants were spared, Samson finds Delilah and it destroys his ministry and eventually his life. No matter how strong you are in the Lord, if giants are allowed to remain unconquered, they have the capacity to destroy your life and ministry.

Ashdod. Read 1 Samuel 4-5 about the tragic loss of the Ark of the Covenant. Ashdod was one of the cities where the Philistines took the Ark, the symbol of God's presence, after seizing it from Israel. This is the same Ashdod where Israel left "a few giants." Unconquered giants will rob you of the glory of God's presence.

Gath. One bad thing about leaving giants in the land is that "giants beget giants." In 1 Samuel 17 God's people are being held hostage by a giant named Goliath. Goliath was from Gath, another city where Israel left "just a few giants."

If Israel had destroyed all of the giants as they had been commanded, they would not have been faced with this problem. But here we find the armies of Israel cowering in fear as day after day Goliath came out to taunt them. Israel was all set in battle array (1 Samuel 17:2). They had the armor for battle and the warfare training, but they were rendered immobile by the giant, held captive in dismay and fear (1 Samuel 17:11).

Unconquered giants in your life give birth to more giants. These giants will return to taunt you and eventually you will be held hostage by fear. How much better it is to obey when God says to separate yourself from something or someone. No matter what it costs. No matter what you must divide from--an organization, a location, a friendship. Delaying division from the things of the world, negative relationships, and even geographic locations from which God has asked you to separate--it never ends well if you do not obey.

Techniques Of Giant-Killing

Do you have some giants in your life that God told you to eliminate? Have these giants grown stronger and multiplied? Are you cowering in fear at the controlling hold they have over you?

It is time to face your giants! In Israel's case, God used a young man named David, upon whom His Spirit and anointing rested. The techniques of giant-killing used by David in his natural battle can be applied spiritually as you

face the giants in your own life, separate from them, and eliminate their hold over your life.

First: Prepare. In order to face the giants in life, you must prepare in the lesser battles you face. David recalls how he conquered a lion and bear who attacked the sheep for which he cared (1 Samuel 17:34-36). He knew he could face Goliath because he had prepared himself in the "little battles" of life.

When you determine to face your giant, get ready for attacks from others! Remember that those who walk by faith are always challenged by those who walk in fear. David was attacked by those closest to him, including his own family (1 Samuel 17:28). He was attacked by leadership (1 Samuel 17:33) and he was mocked by the giant himself (1 Samuel 17:44).

When you prepare to face the giants in your life, those closest to you, including your family and friends, may rise up against you. Leadership may say it is impossible. The giants themselves will rise up to mock you. But if you have prepared yourself spiritually in the lesser battles of life, you will be able to confidently say "I can conquer this giant"!

Second: Profess. David had the proper profession. He professed his confidence in God saying, "I know I can conquer this giant in the name of the Lord" (see 1 Samuel 17:26,32,37, and 45-46). David did not say, "I'm praying about it" or "I hope to kill the giant." In fact, he didn't even call him a giant. He called him an "uncircumcised Philistine."

Third: Prove. Read 1 Samuel 38-40. If you are to be successful in slaying giants, you must have had opportunity to prove your weapons. Saul tried to clothe David in his own armor, but David had not proven Saul's armor. You cannot

conquer giants on the basis of someone else's experience. You must put on the whole armor of God described in Ephesians 6 and prove it yourself. You "prove" the armor of God as you use it to face everyday problems and challenges of life. Then you are ready when you face the really big giants of life.

Fourth: Penetrate. Your preparation may be good, you may have proven your armor, and you can have a good profession of faith in God, but if you run from the giant, you will never conquer him:

And it came to pass when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. (1 Samuel 17:48)

David "ran" towards the giant. You must do the same if you are to conquer your enemy. You must penetrate the giant's territory. No victory is possible while you sit immobilized on the hillside rationalizing, compromising, or excusing your continued defeat. There will be no victory when you refuse to face the giant and retreat in fear.

When the 12 Israeli men returned from spying out Canaan, ten spoke fearful words regarding the enemy. Only two, Joshua and Caleb said of the giants, *"They are bread for us...we will eat them up."* In other words, they were saying, *"We will be stronger by overcoming them than if there had been no giants to overcome."* You will either face the giants, and eliminate them or else be rendered immobile in the wilderness. When you face your giant, you will be stronger than if there had been no giant to overcome.

Fifth: Proper Motive. When you face the giants of life, you must do so with the proper motive. David said:

This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.
(1 Samuel 17:46-47)

David's motive was not to gain fame or to demonstrate how strong he was. His motive was to bring glory to God.

Sixth: Perfect Pattern. God had a perfect pattern for David's victory. It was a sling shot and five smooth stones, the first of which hit its mark and toppled the giant. Your giant is God's enemy and you must fight according to His plan and with His weapons. Although the weapons described in Ephesians 6 seem as unlikely as five stones to conquer giants, they truly work! You cannot fight spiritual giants with natural, carnal weapons. You must follow God's perfect pattern and use the proper spiritual weapons.

Seventh: Prevail. You must prevail over the giant. This means you must totally destroy him. Eliminate him entirely. Divide yourself from every influence the giant has over your life. When the giant fell from the stone which David had slung, the young man then rushed forward, took the giant's own sword, and beheaded him. When you fight God's way, you will use the very thing that the enemy threatened you with to defeat him. It was facing this opposition that gave David the opportunity to reach his destiny. Defeating the giant led to his becoming the King of Israel.

Now Is The Time!

Do you have some giant situations that need conquering? Now is the time. No more delays. If you know that God has called you to separate yourself from sinful, negative situations, habits, emotions, or people--do it right now. Today!

Delay is costly and can be deadly because giants give birth to giants.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE FINAL DIVISIONS

There are two final divisions that will occur in the future that merit attention as we near the conclusion of this study. These two divisions will occur at the end of time as we know it and they will seal the eternal destiny of all mankind. These divine divisions are the rapture and final judgment.

The Rapture

The word "rapture" is actually not used in the original manuscripts of the Bible, but it is a term that is commonly applied to the return of Jesus Christ and the catching away of the true church from the earth.

The Bible teaches that the Lord will return to earth for believers in the same manner that He departed:

*And when he (Jesus) had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.
(Acts 1:9-11)*

Jesus promised His followers:

*...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.
(John 14:2-3)*

The Apostle Paul describes the return of Christ in detail:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

This passage indicates that Jesus will return (verse 16); there will be a resurrection from the grave of those who were believers when they died (verse 16); there will be a catching up--a rapture--of living believers from earth to meet Christ in the air (verse 17); and there will be a reunion between believers who have previously died, believers living at the time of His return, and the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 17).

The Bible teaches that no one knows the exact hour of the rapture, but we can tell when the time is close by observing prophetic signs which are described in Matthew 24. Some people believe the rapture will occur before the tribulation--a terrible time of judgment on earth--and that believers will not have to experience it. Some believe the rapture will occur midway through this period, while others believe the rapture will happen at the end of the tribulation.

The different views of the timing of the rapture result from various interpretations of the prophetic revelation given in Scripture and what you believe concerning this does not affect your eternal destiny. What is most important is to know you are a true believer and that you are ready to go with Jesus when this divine division occurs.

Jesus warned:

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.
(Matthew 24:37-44)

The important point is to be ready. Your eternal destiny at the time of Christ's return depends on the decision you make now regarding His atoning work at Calvary:

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come...Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as

*ye think not the Son of man cometh.
(Matthew 24:40-42,44)*

If you are a born-again believer, you will either leave this world through the rapture or through the divine division of death. If you die before the Lord's return and you are a believer, you will go immediately into the presence of the Lord:

*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.
(2 Corinthians 5:8-10)*

At the time of the final resurrection "...all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29).

Final Judgment

Whether a person dies or experiences the rapture, all will face the divine division of final judgment. The word "to judge" means "to separate or make a difference between". Eternal judgment is one of God's final acts of divine division.

The meaning of the word "judgment" includes holding a person accountable, examining evidence, determining guilt or innocence, and deciding penalties. Eternal judgment is the great and final division spoken of in the Bible which seals the eternal destiny of all souls.

God's desire is not to impose judgment, but rather that all men come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ:

For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. (John 3:17)

God's desire is that no one will perish in sin:

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

God's wants all men everywhere to repent because if they do not do so, they will experience judgment:

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent; Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness... (Acts 17:30-31)

Three Dimensions Of Judgment

The Bible indicates there is a past, present, and future dimension of judgment:

Past judgment. The Bible is a history of past judgment from God. From the time of Adam and Eve, the scriptures record God's judgment of nations and individuals.

The Bible also records two special past judgments that are important to believers. These are the judgments of Satan and the world. God has already passed judgment and set the

penalties for both. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God passed final judgment on Satan

*...the prince of this world [Satan] is judged.
(John 16:11, AMP).*

*And having spoiled principalities and powers [the forces of Satan] He [Jesus] made a show of them openly triumphing over them in it.
(Colossians 2:15, AMP)*

Satan has already been judged by God. Although he is allowed limited activity until he is cast into the lake of fire at the end of the world, he is already condemned as guilty. Satan's demons, who left their original position in Heaven as angels of God to join his rebellion, are also already condemned:

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (Jude 6)

Because it is ruined by the presence of sin, the physical world as we know it is condemned to be burned by fire:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (2 Peter 3:10)

There is a past judgment that occurred at the time of your conversion also. When you accepted Christ as Savior, all of your old sins were judged, forgiven, and forgotten. You will never give account of sins forgiven because God says, "I,

even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

Present judgment. All men are presently judged as either sinful or righteous before God. This judgment is made on the basis of whether or not a person is a true believer in Jesus Christ:

He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:18)

God's present judgment of believers is done in love. He corrects them when they do wrong:

...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him; For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth...But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. (Hebrews 12:5,6,8)

Just as a caring father corrects his children, God judges the behavior of His children. If they sin, God corrects them in love just as a father does his son, and all chastisement it is done to accomplish specific purposes:

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12:11)

Future judgment. Jesus said:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall

come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28-29)

There will be two divisions of people at the time of final judgment: Believers and unbelievers:

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every man may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Believers will be judged by how they have built their lives and ministries on the foundation of God's Word:

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved... (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)

In the natural world, wood, hay, and stubble all grow visibly above the ground. They burn easily. They are examples of works done by believers to be seen by man. Gold and silver are not destroyed by fire. In the natural world, these substances develop below the ground unseen by man. They are examples of works done with the right motive, not just to be seen and praised by man.

The judgment of true believers is not one of condemnation because the true believer cannot be condemned to eternal punishment. Through accepting Christ, he has already passed from spiritual death to eternal life:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

The works of true believers will be judged on the basis of obedience. The parables of the talents in Matthew 25 and the parable of the pounds in Luke 19 were told by Jesus to illustrate this truth. In both these parables, servants were evaluated on the basis of what they did with what they were given.

Unbelievers will be judged and punished for their sins. God keeps a record in which is listed the names of those who have repented, accepted Jesus Christ, and become true believers. Those who have rejected Him will be judged for sin and doomed to eternal punishment because their names are not in the book of life, *"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).*

The Judges

God has delegated to Jesus the authority to judge:

*...for He has given all judgment--the last judgment and the whole business of judging--entirely into the hands of the Son...And He has given Him authority and granted Him power to execute [exercise, practice] judgment, because He is a Son of man [very man].
(John 5:22,27, AMP)*

The Bible also reveals that true believers will help judge the world:

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that ye shall judge angels? (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)

The word "saints" in this verse means true believers. They will have part in this great and final act of divine division.

Reasons For Final Judgment

The Bible reveals that the judgment of unbelievers is necessary because of sin, ungodliness, unrighteousness, unbelief, trespasses, and evil deeds. Although these are different words, they are all words for sin:

-Sin against God's law: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...(Romans 3:23).*

-Ungodliness: *But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men (2 Peter 3:7).*

-Unrighteousness: *The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Peter 2:9).*

-Unbelief: *He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18).*

-Trespases: *By the offence [trespass] of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation... (Romans 5:18, AMP).*

-Evil deeds: *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19).*

The Standards For Judgment

Worldly principles of judgment vary from nation to nation. The standards of judgment may even vary from state to state within a nation and from city to city. These principles of judgment and punishment vary because people interpret certain acts in different ways. The same act interpreted as wrong in one culture may be acceptable in another. For example, killing a cow is viewed differently in America, where it is used for meat, than in India where the cow is considered sacred by some religions.

Man's judgment varies because the standards by which he judges vary. But the principles of God's judgment do not change. God judgment is by the following principles:

We will be judged on the basis of God's Word: God's law and the principles of judgment are fixed in His Word. The standard by which we all will be judged is the Word of God:

*And if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.
(John 12:47-48)*

It is not standards, creeds, or traditions of man by which we will be judged. It is not on the basis of rules dictated by organizations or denominations. The standard by which we will be judged is the fixed standard of the Word of God: "*Forever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven*" (Psalms 119:89).

We will be judged according to knowledge: Men and nations will be judged according to the spiritual knowledge which they received.

Jesus said some would be judged more severely than Sodom, Gomorrhah, Ninevah, Tyre, and Sidon. These were evil cities mentioned in the Old Testament which God judged and punished. The reason Jesus pronounced more severe judgment on some New Testament cities was because these cities had received more knowledge of God. Jesus Himself ministered in these regions and performed mighty works of healing and deliverance but still, the people would not repent. Jesus warned:

Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee. (Matthew 11:21-24)

Jesus also warned that...

The men of Ninevah shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold, a greater than Jonas is here. (Matthew 12:41)

We will be judged on the basis of general revelation: This general understanding of God given to all men through creation is the basic standard by which men will be judged:

For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that we are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

Those who receive additional revelation by hearing God's Word will be judged by a higher standard of knowledge.

We will be judged individually: Each person will be judged individually:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in this body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

A person won't be judged for the sins of others:

The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. (Ezekiel 18:20)

The assurance that true believers have regarding individual judgment is that...

He who believes in Him [who clings to, trusts in, relies on Him] is not judged [he who trusts in Him never comes up for judgment; for him there is no rejection, no condemnation--he incurs no damnation]; but he who does not believe (cleave to, rely on, trust in Him) is judged already [he has already been convicted and has already received his sentence] because he has not believed in and trusted in the name of the only begotten Son of God. [He is condemned for refusing to let his trust rest in Christ's name.] The [basis of the] judgment (indictment, the test by which men are judged, the ground for the sentence) lies in this: the Light has come into the world, and people have loved the darkness rather than and more than the Light, for their works (deeds) were evil. [Isa 5:20.] For every wrongdoer hates (loathes, detests) the Light, and will not come out into the Light but shrinks from it, lest his works (his deeds, his activities, his conduct) be exposed and reprovved. But he who practices truth [who does what is right] comes out into the Light; so that his works may be plainly shown to be what they are--wrought with God [divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him].
(John 3:18-21 AMP)

As a believer, your works--how you used the talents and abilities given to you--will be reviewed, but you will not experience the divine wrath of God's judgment for sin because you accepted Jesus as your Savior and He bore the penalties for you.

We will be judged righteously and without partiality: God's judgment will be without partiality, meaning without special favor. People will not be judged on the basis of their wealth, social position, nationality, or education. The Bible says, "*...the Father...without respect of persons judgeth*" (1 Peter

1:17). To have respect of persons means to be influenced in judgment by some external factor of appearance, relationship, position, wealth, etc. God's judgment is not influenced by any of these things.

*And He shall judge the world in righteousness; He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
(Psalms 9:8)*

...He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth. (Psalms 96:13)

God will judge on the basis of the truths revealed in His Word. It will be a righteous judgment, without partiality.

The Final Division

The book of Revelation details a final divine division of all mankind that will occur after the judgment.

The righteous are destined to eternal life in the presence of God in Heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:3). The Bible describes this life as one of holiness (Revelation 21:27); joy (Revelation 21:4); rewarding service (Revelation 7:15); worship (Revelation 5:14); light and glory (Revelation 21:23); where all things are new (Isaiah 65:17).

Hell is the eternal destiny of the unbeliever. Jesus warned of this final division:

So it will be at the close and consummation of the age. The angels will go forth and separate the wicked from the righteous (those who are upright and in right standing with God) And cast them [the wicked] into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and wailing and grinding of teeth. (Matthew 13:49-50, AMP)

Hell is a place of extreme suffering (Revelation 20:10); remorse (Luke 16:23,25); unsatisfied desire (Luke 16:24); wicked companionship (Revelation 21:8); and eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41).

Punishment for the wicked is eternal. The same word used for eternal life in the Bible (John 3:15) and the eternal God (1 Timothy 1:17) is used to describe eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:2). If one of these is temporary, then the other two would have to be temporary. There is no way to escape the conclusion that if God is everlasting and eternal life is everlasting, then so is punishment in Hell.

God does not send people to Hell. Man chooses to go there by rejecting Jesus Christ and living a sinful life. God has provided a way of escape from eternal punishment through the plan of salvation. God is not willing that any should perish. Your decision determines your destiny.

How Then Should You Live?

How should this revelation of the rapture and eternal judgment affect your life as a believer? There is a parable in Matthew chapter 25 that answers this question:

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their

lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:1-13)

Virgins are often used to refer to the Bride of Christ, also called the Church. In this passage they are divided into wise and foolish, not good and bad. They all were waiting for Christ's return. They all were filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, they all were sleeping when the bridegroom arrived. Only five had oil still remaining in their lamps and were prepared to meet him.

Actually, there is a third group in this parable. Someone was awake and relayed the message regarding the coming of the bridegroom. May we be in this group, not those who are slumbering but those who are awake spiritually and prepared to awaken others.

When writing on the subject of the rapture and future judgment, the Apostle Peter addressed the question as to how we should live in light of eternity:

Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness...Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, blameless. (2 Peter 3:11,14)

Final judgment--the separation of all men into believers and unbelievers destined for either heaven or hell--is one of God's last acts of divine division:

The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of offense [persons by whom others are drawn into error or sin] and all who do iniquity and act wickedly, And will cast them into the furnace of fire; there will be weeping and wailing and grinding of teeth. Then will the righteous (those who are upright and in right standing with God) shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let him who has ears [to hear] be listening, and let him consider and perceive and understand by hearing. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:41-43, 49-50, AMP)

On that great judgment day, the decision you make now regarding Jesus Christ will determine your destiny:

...Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation...But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:15-19)

After death, there is a great gulf between the saved and the lost (Luke 16:26). You must choose today who you will serve (Joshua 24:15). Your eternal destiny at the time of this final divine division will be determined by what you do with Jesus Christ. Don't delay. If you aren't ready for this great final division, get ready. Right now. Today.

Tarry for a moment at the foot of Mount Golgatha. Watch the two thieves hanging near the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. In their final moments, a divine division is about to occur. One man turns away from Christ, but the other cries out, "Lord, forgive me." To him, Jesus responds, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

This was a moment of divine division that determined the eternal destiny of two men. Every person on the planet faces a similar decision--including you.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

LET THE DIVISION BEGIN

You have a divine destiny--a supernatural purpose, a reason for being--and it is only as you permit the supernatural dividing power of God to work in your life that you will reach it.

Losing It All, Gaining it All

You can insist on your own way, hold on to what you think is yours, and lose everything in the end. Consider these examples:

-**Samson**, who gained the woman he wanted, but lost his reputation, his freedom, his strength, his ministry, his eyes, and his life.

-**King Saul**, who gained the kingdom but in selfishly grasping it never really realized that it was the Lord's. He ended his life as a tormented and suicidal man.

-**Ananias and Saphira**, who thought they could hold on to their gains and lied in order to do so, but in so doing lost their lives.

-**Demas**, who loved the present world so much that he turned back from his spiritual destiny.

-**Judas**, who gained finances and prestige with religious leaders but lost his life and his soul.

Now consider these biblical examples of those who lost everything and yet gained it all:

-Abraham, who by faith left his home, family, and nation. He became the father of nations and a patriarch in Israel.

-Joseph, who lost his relationship with his father and his brothers and was separated from his homeland, his freedom, his cherished coat, and his reputation. He became a great leader and saved the world from famine.

-Esther left the only way of life she knew and an uncle she loved in order to save the nation of Israel from extinction.

-John the Baptist, who lost his life for the sake of the gospel, prepared the way for the greatest revelation ever given: God in the flesh who came, lived among us, and died for the sins of the world.

-The Apostle Paul lost his religious status as a Pharisee when he turned to Christ. Over the years of his ministry he was stoned and left for dead, shipwrecked, imprisoned, thrown over walls, and suffered the loss of all things. Yet he outwrote, out-preached, and out-traveled any believer in New Testament times.

-Peter left the profession he loved--fishing--but was rewarded with men instead of fish. He became the spiritual father of the early church.

-The Apostle John, imprisoned on a lonely, deserted island, penned one of the greatest revelations of end-time events ever given.

These men and women of God experienced great losses, but God turned every negative situation around for good. He can do the same for you.

Ordained By God

When Jeremiah received his call to the prophetic ministry, God declared...

*...Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.
(Jeremiah 1:4-7)*

God had a plan for Jeremiah before he was formed in his mother's womb. He was known of God, ordained by God, and sanctified by God--set apart--as a prophet before his birth.

Jeremiah's call from God didn't occur until he was around 20 years old in the year of King Josiah's reign. When the call came to minister, Jeremiah had several excuses: "I am not a good speaker. Who am I?" Scripture records "but the Lord said"--and that is what made the difference. It was not what Jeremiah said about himself, but what God said about him.

God knew you, also, even before you were formed in your mother's womb. He formulated a special plan for your life:

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV)

You can probably come up with a lot of excuses, like Jeremiah did, as to why you cannot fulfill your destiny, but it is not what you say but what God has to say that is relevant. You were set apart by God before you were formed in the

womb. The question is, will you embrace this divine division?

This Is Your Purpose

When God delivered Israel from Egypt, He told them:

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. (Exodus 19:4-6)

God separated Israel from Egypt in order for them to be a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. To New Testament believers, the Apostle Peter declared:

...ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9)

You are ordained as part of a royal priesthood of believers, delivered from the darkness of sin, and set apart to reflect God to a lost and dying world. Christ's final commission to His followers was:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20)

The mandate for all believers is the same: Go into the world with the Gospel. Some will accomplish this divine mandate by raising up great churches, writing Christian books, or composing worship music. Others will achieve it through preaching or teaching the Word of God. Some will remain at home to minister, while others will travel to foreign nations, leaving all for the sake of the call.

The divisions you encounter on the way to your destiny are not without purpose. They are initiated by God for your protection, for spiritual advancement, for deliverance from sin, and to preserve you from improper relationships. They all are divinely ordained separations to enable you to fulfill this great mandate. Learn to recognize and joyfully embrace these divine divisions.

Step Into The Waters

When the nation of Israel stood at the banks of the Jordan River and surveyed their Promised Land on the other side, the raging torrent presented a formidable barrier to their destiny. God told Joshua to instruct the people:

And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very

far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan. (Joshua 3:13-17)

What if the priests had not taken those first steps? What if they had said, "The river is too deep! We don't see a way across. Let's just stay here and settle where we are." If they had responded in this manner, they would have lived the "settled" for life--the kind of life that doesn't require the divine division of raging waters.

But at God's command, the priests took that first step, bearing with them the manifested presence of God in the Ark of the Tabernacle. When you move forward at God's command accompanied by His presence, the raging waters of every negative circumstance will part before you. But you must take that first step and, when a divine division occurs in your life, you must receive it by faith and embrace it with confidence. It is the pathway to your destiny.

Forsaking All For The Sake Of The Call

Jesus said:

If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his [own] father and mother [in the sense of indifference to or relative disregard for them in comparison with his attitude toward God] and [likewise] his wife and children and brothers and sisters--[yes] and even his own life also--he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does

*not persevere and carry his own cross and come after (follow) Me cannot be My disciple.
(Luke 14:26-27, AMP)*

The call to follow is costly. The way you must take is narrow, and sometimes the road is difficult. For the sake of the call, you may have to forsake all. You may have to walk alone. You may be called take a different path from others around you.

As true believers, set apart for His purposes, may we cry out from the depths of our being, "Oh Lord, separate us from sin, the flesh, our homes and fortunes, friends, geographic locations--even our loved ones, whatever necessary in order to fulfill Your purposes."

Every divine division experienced on your spiritual journey--every painful parting or separation within the will of God--will be worth it. Jesus said:

... I say to you truly, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive in return many times more in this world and, in the coming age, eternal life. (Luke 18:29-30, AMP)

So with joy may we cry out, "Let the division begin!"

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