

Christ Came to Divide, Part 2

Luke 12:51-53

There is nowhere, we find spiritual division to be more painful, more distressing, more perplexing, than when we have to face it in the home. Because the consequence of division between believers and unbelievers is conflict, and who wants conflict in the home? Though it may be painful, though it creates stress and sadness, don't be alarmed by the conflict, but instead embrace it. Look again at verse 52, "for from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three." Remember that verb translated, will be divided, that's actually an English gloss, it's a perfect passive, so it's more literally translated, they will have been divided.

Again just to remind you the division is not something that will happen in the future. It's something that is right now. It has been, it's there whether you see it or not, whether it's apparent or not, sometimes it's masked over by a false religious profession. Sometimes it's masked over by a false profession of Christianity, but the division is there. God knows those who are his. They have the seal of God on them, the Holy Spirit living

in them, God can see who's his and who's not. He's not fooled by what's apparent, by what's on the outside. God sees not as man sees, man looks on the external appearance, but God looks at the what? The heart. So division is something that's present now, it's just maybe hidden. It's internal, but from now on the internal division that's already been there now it's being exposed and revealed, it's coming out. Which is what Jesus points to with a different verb tense in verse 53, here he says, "They will be divided." That is future tense.

So the internal reality of division that's present is being exposed and it will reveal itself in the future, in outward external visible conflicts, conflicts in the home. Jesus notes the lines of division in the home in verse 53:5, people and the conflicts they experience as a result of the division. Look there, "They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

The grammar shows us how the existent division results in conflict which is why the ESV and other translations use that word, *against*. Against father, against son, son against father, mother against daughter, and so on. So we're grammatically

justified here in assigning believing and unbelieving to one of the two parties in each of these scenarios and that's just gonna help us clarify them.

So, first there will be a conflict between the men in the home, and then the women in the home. So he talks about the conflict between the men in the home first. There's a conflict between the believing father and his unbelieving son on the one hand, and conflict between the believing son and the unbelieving father on the other hand. It's not too hard to imagine the details especially if you've lived through this in your own home.

When a believing father sees his unbelieving son make unbelieving decisions, the way he handles his life, his wife, his family, his work, when he sees his unbelieving son being an unbeliever, pursuing life in an unwise or an ungodly way, you know what the tension in the home increases. Why, because unbelieving priorities and believing priorities do not mix. It's like oil and water. And an unbelieving lifestyle coming in to a believing home creates chaos. The father is responsible to provide oversight, lead his home, make decisions informed by his faith, matters of righteousness weigh on his mind, govern his decisions, they restrict the desires of an unbelieving son,

hinder sinful or unwise ambitions, and he acts out. It's difficult.

On the other hand, if you have a believing son with an unbelieving father, he feels the tension of honoring his father and honoring his God. The father's expectations in particular can have an extremely strong hold on the consciences of children, even grown children. Boys and girls, young men, young women, and all too often doing what the father wants, an unbelieving father, doing what he wants is framed as a matter of honor or dishonor, respect or disrespect.

So you do what I say, you do what I've counseled, you do what I want, in order to respect me, in order to honor me. What's that child to do, when his conscience, her conscience, is caught between these loyalties? Honoring God certainly puts her in the position of displeasing, disappointing, her father. Perhaps significantly which is then interpreted as dishonor and even disdain.

Look, we know as believers you can honor somebody without doing what they've said, without obeying them. We can honor them even if we're not going to do what they say because what they say is actually a bad course of action. When it's unbelieving counsel, unregenerate counsel?

The next set of scenarios portrays conflict between women in the home. Just a quick grammar note here as we get to the women. A grammatical change in the text marks an escalation in the intensity with the women in the home and the conflict. One level of tension and conflict between the men, but the intensity of that conflict ratchets up when the women are involved. Godet says, "The grammar here indicates hostility with more energy. Religious hostility is here strengthened with previous natural animosity and even more when it comes to the in-law relationship." Prudence instructs me to make no further comment on that. I just needed to be faithful. I just needed to be faithful in pointing it out to you. Now that I've done that I'm going to move on.

There's the conflict between the men, but then secondly there's conflict with escalating intensity with women in the home. Jesus first notes the conflict between the women within the nuclear family, the mother and daughter, and then he notes the conflict with the mother and her daughter-in-law which is an additional tension. And here in the text the same woman is portrayed as a mother to her daughter and also a mother-in-law to her daughter-in-law.

There is no one size fits all way to explain the relationship between all mothers and all daughters but we can easily observe how natural maternal concern can create pressures and set expectations for their daughters. When both women are believers, mother and daughter, believer, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, believers, a mother's concern for her daughter or daughters-in-law to grow in holiness, to speak and behave with godly propriety, to build godly habits, to be devoted to husband and children, to embrace serving the family, to grow fruitful in, in good works. All that maternal pressure is a true gift of God.

But recognize when these two women are not operating from the same world view, there's a whole different ball game in play here. For one, the believer, the biblical portrayal of womanhood, that a woman is a helpmeet to her husband. She takes a roll of active thoughtful submission to her husband in the home. She serves her children and loves them. It's all informed by the growth in wisdom that's applied to her marriage and her family. For one of these women, the believing one, this is God's design and high ideal for women.

For the other, for the unbeliever, this is the very picture of patriarchy and oppression and all that is wrong in the world.

For the unbeliever, biblical womanhood is everything that's wrong in the world and she hates it to the core. The triumph of modern feminism, it's been aided, abetted, accelerated today by critical theory, intersectionality, the LGBTQ revolution, cultural hostility against biblical womanhood is at a fever pitch. What we teach, what we practice here in our church as a matter of course, as a matter of biblical fidelity, is anathema to the world. It is the very height of injustice, it's the very height of cruelty, hatred, severe oppression. It's everything that a woman should be freed from. What God says is good and wise and holy.

These vastly opposed values, which are sourced deeply in radically convicting worldviews, when they show up in the home, when they are joined to maternal feminine concern, when they're accelerated by feminine passion, you have all the elements in the home of a perfect storm, relationally speaking. All that to say, the natural consequence of division between believers and unbelievers in the home is conflict in the home. It's painful, it's distressing, it can cause deep sadness, but listen this is nothing new.

So I'm just telling you based on what Christ says here, do not be alarmed by the conflict. Expect it and embrace it. And

now that Jesus has reset our expectations, that there is a presence of spiritual division and the resulting consequence of that division is conflict in the home. What are we supposed to do about it? Let me give you some points of application here.

A few points of application, number one, first and most obvious, just simply this accept the reality of spiritual division by acknowledging that it can happen in your home. It can happen and probably will. It does not good whatsoever to anybody to pretend the spiritual division does not exist. Or that it won't or can't happen in your home. Jesus tells us spiritual division does exist. So if you deny that reality, you're denying the word's of Christ. Don't do that. Division does exist, it will exist, it will happen in your home as well.

For you who are parents and grandparents, for you this means you can't ignore the sins that have come to characterize your children or your grandchildren. That which characterizes the life is a far truer indication of the actual heart condition than any prayer that that child prayed in childhood, verses memorized, service rendered, mission trips that they went on all throughout junior high, and high school and into college. Don't look at that superficial stuff. You want to know what a person



believes, look at how they live. Don't just listen to what they say, look at how they live their life. That's what they believe.

It displeases Christ and it does our children and grandchildren no good at all when we refuse to think with discernment and understanding. For you believers who are in the son or daughter category. Realize that your faith, the truth that you by your conversion have brought into the home in your speech, in your witness, in your testimony, the witness of your lifestyle. That may be leading to some turmoil and conflict. You might not be doing anything wrong, but then again you might be, so be careful not to become self-righteous.

Don't think that all the opposition that you're facing in even your unbelieving home is simply due to your bold commitment to Christ. Realize, sanctification has had very little time to develop in your life. And now your sin is just covered over with spiritual words. To an unbelieving ear it can smack of hypocrisy, of Pharisaism. So be very quick to acknowledge your fault, to confess your sin, to ask unbelieving family members to forgive you for your sins. Humility and the admission of guilt, the confession, and forsaking of sin, goes a long, long way toward preventing the appearance of hypocrisy and a Pharisaic self-righteousness that so often accompanies young believers.

Alright so that's a first little point of application, just accept the spiritual reality of spiritual division. Acknowledge that it can happen in your home. It's a fact. Second point of application, embrace the reality of spiritual division by clinging to God. Cling closely to God and not to your physical offspring. Cling to God and don't try to cling to your flesh and blood family members. Don't try to hold everything together, don't try to keep the peace so you can avoid the tension. Cling to God. Jesus in being specific here in listing all the different kinds, different levels of relational tensions in the home in verse 51-53 here. Jesus had another reason for being specific about listing these tensions and these various relationships.

Turn back to Micah chapter 7 and verse 6 because that's what Jesus was quoting from in Luke 12:53. Micah 7:6, he was quoting almost directly, but starting in verse 5, Micah says there, "Put no trust in a neighbor, have no confidence in a friend," Micah 7:5. "Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms. For the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, a man's enemies are the men of his own house."

So listen, whether neighbor, friend, the wife of your youth, son, daughter, daughter-in-law, spiritual issues are the deepest issues. And the division of that deep level will be revealed in allegiances and loyalties. When we turn to Christ, we emerge from and grow apart from our unbelieving family members, and that may feel painful. That's going to hurt a bit. But look at what Micah says in verse 7. Having acknowledged the conflict and the division he says in verse 7, "But as for me I will look to the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me."

Listen, when conflicts arise, when family turns away from you, when family and friends, when they turn against us, when they marginalize us, when they don't want us around any longer, they don't even want to invite us to things, maybe they even start gossiping about us, and slandering and persecuting us, listen, we need to cling to the Lord. We need to wait on God as Micah says here. We need to keep on pouring out our hearts to him, cast all your cares upon the Lord because he cares for you. God is the kindest, most compassionate father.

Jesus Christ is the greatest, strongest, most able, most perfect brother. The Spirit is the closest, most capable, ever present, comforter and counselor. Will God not in our times of

pain and sadness over this spiritual division, will he not draw near to comfort and care for you? A child in his own family? The love of his heart? You who are the apple of his eye.

So acknowledge that spiritual division can be in your home, will be in your home when it shows up. Secondly, cling to God. And then third, third point of application, embrace the reality of spiritual division by preferring God's family over your physical family. This is where we have to apply this in priorities, decisions, lifestyle commitments, calendar appointments. All this is going to reveal the conflict that comes because of spiritual division.

Since God is your father, Christ is your Lord, by the Spirit you have a new family of brothers and sisters, listen the bible says you need to treat them with a greater preference than your own flesh and blood. Spiritual kinship is deeper, and spiritual kinship lasts for eternity. This is what Jesus wants his disciples to consider, and to consider very carefully. It's what he wants us all to consider. He is setting our expectations, so that we can be resolved about doing what's right. And we resolve that before we get into the thick of conflict.

The tension that comes from our commitment to Christ, which puts us into conflict a collision course with unbelieving family members and their priorities, their expectations, their commitments, their calendar schedule, well that's going to test our loyalties and our decisions in the end are going to reveal our hearts. Are we loyal to Christ or do we defer to the demands, preferences, sensitivities, feelings, priorities of unbelieving family members?

To test that, let me raise a few for instances with you which I hope will be helpful. You have family members who are clear cut unbelievers, or perhaps they profess to be Christians, but they don't live like it. And they believe that family events, birthdays, holidays, etcetera, all those events are higher priority than attending church and they say, "Look it's one Sunday, it's no big deal."

What do you think Christ wants you to do on the Lord's Day? What gives you a better testimony of your loyalty to Christ? To skip church for the sake of family, or to demonstrate through faithful church attendance that you have a higher Lord in your life. But family is a lesser priority than Christ and his church, it's not a no priority, you love them. But Christ is the highest priority. He's your greatest devotion. He died to save you from your sins. And you, the least you can do is live a life

of gratitude in submission, obedience, to his desire that you show up on the Lord's Day. That you give yourself to the local church. Feed on his word. Fellowship with the people for whom Christ died.

Another scenario is when you're unbelieving children are living through and experiencing the consequences of living by worldly priorities. And now they want your help in taking up the slack. In mitigating against the unpleasant effects of their lifestyles. You know how this works, they try to maintain a certain lifestyle so they insist on dual incomes in the home, or jobs that take them away from the home for many, many hours, and that means grandma is the daycare option. We need care for the kids, grandma needs time with the kids, this is a win-win for everybody right?

Look, but because grandma is exhausted, she misses church, she misses bible study, she misses our on soul edifying Christian fellowship. Not just edification she needs for herself but the edification that others need from her. She's too exhausted to give it, she has nothing left. She needs to be there obeying the one another commands of scripture, and to have other people obey the one another commands of scripture on her.

Beloved, Jesus' words, "Whoever loves Father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Beloved, Jesus' words should ring in our ears when family members make these requests. Requests that strike them as innocent and reasonable, but they're reasoning through an unregenerate mind. For us, their requests can introduce subtle temptations to compromise Christian conviction, priority, commitment, ministry. Jesus said in Luke 8:21, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

If we'll stand firm, lovingly, kindly, but listen, with no compromise. If we'll remain committed to the lordship of Christ. Preferring the spiritual eternal family of God over our physical temporal families, listen we will experience the presence and consequences of division in our home. But I'm going to be quick to add a fourth point of application. Just a brief word of encouragement. But don't let its brevity take away from its gravity, this is so vital.

We can rest in Christ's promise, Luke 12:8, that when we see the division, when we experience the conflict, and we prefer Christ over family, Jesus said Luke 12:8, "I tell you everyone who acknowledges me before men, the son of man also will

acknowledge before the angels of God.” To have his imprimatur on your life at that time, you’re not going to care about missing a few birthday parties.

You’re not going to care about prioritizing church over your offended family members. When he says “This one I acknowledge before you my Father, before the angels in heaven. This one passes into the membership of the saints.” All the pain, all the sorrow, all the sadness, all the conflict, it’s going to be cast into its proper perspective, isn’t it? And we’re going to realize that this life was so very momentary. The time so, so fleeting. “Fear not,” Jesus said, “Fear not little flock, it’s your father’s,” emphasis on father, you’re in a new family, “it’s your father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

So with that let’s just pray now. Ask God for a holy resolve, that we cling closer to Christ, follow him as lord and prefer his family. Our father what Jesus has said here, and we do acknowledge him as our savior and our lord. We’re so deeply grateful for him. But we acknowledge that what he says, it really does cut to the quick. It really does go down into the core of our identity and what we count as important, and who we count as precious to us. We love our family members. We love



them dearly. We want to see them saved and, and yet while we interact with them and they are unsaved and we're saved, they're unrepentant, we're repentant, they're unbelieving, we're believing.

We see the division. We feel the tension. We sometimes experience subtle conflict and sometimes experience grave conflict. And father we ask for the lives and the souls of our family members. We want to see them know Christ like we do. We want to see them as a part of your eternal family. We want to see them one day before the throne, bowing down, worshipping, and for all of eternity, joining in service and fellowship with you, and with your son Jesus Christ.

But we pray that we would not long for that so much that we compromise our commitment to Christ and our convictions about truth, about priority, about lifestyle. Father many of us feel so weak on this point. Many of us, we have compromised, we have given in to the demands of the unbelieving, because they're close to us, because we want to hold them close. We think that by compromising one more time maybe they'll listen to us. Father help us to not think about outcomes. Not think about results, but just help us to think about what does righteousness look like right now. Help us to do that. Help us to live for the

pleasure of Christ. Help us to fear you. And help us to leave the results to you by your Spirit and by your Word. We commit this to you father in the name of Christ and ask for your blessing to come upon us. As we deal with difficult, complex, situations in our homes, but we wouldn't have it any other way father because this means that we belong to you. So grateful to have our sin forgiven. So grateful to be covered in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It's in his name that we pray. Amen.