

“Lord, I’ve Got a Problem with My Brother”

I. Introduction

A. God envisioned the churches a place of...

1. Close brotherhood
2. unity
3. harmony
4. a shining light of righteousness in a world of darkness
5. Isa. 11:1-10
6. Jer. 31:27-34
7. John 17:20,21
8. Eph. 2:11-22

B. But then there is how things seem to be in this world

1. The problem isn’t with God
2. Problem is man
 - a) we rebel
 - b) we get at odds with each other
 - c) we think we know better than God
 - d) we get tempted, self-centered, proud, and rowdy
 - e) we offend
 - f) when offended, we do things we shouldn’t
 - g) And turn God’s perfect church into perfect chaos

C. I don’t intend to talk about all these problems tonight, but what I do want to address tonight and next Sunday is the problem, “Lord, I’ve got a problem with my brother.”

1. In part because I think it is an under-addressed problem
2. And God’s solution is way under-practiced
3. We tend to deal with interpersonal problems very similarly to how the world deals with them

II. Remember we’re a family forged by God Himself, bought by Christ’s blood

A. Forged by God

1. Eph. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,
2. 1Tim. 3:15 but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

B. Blood bought by Jesus

1. Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- a) ...brought near (v. 19) and of the "household of God"
- 2. 1Cor. 11:25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."
 - a) Covenant is about family
 - b) "Yeah, but He's talking about sort of a symbolic family thing, right, not a real family"
 - (1) Adopted family is real family
 - (2) Married family is real family

C. So, as with all families problems will happen...

- 1. But unity, love, and reconciliation must be maintained
- 2. Division is forbidden

III. Let love cover a multitude of sins

A. 1Pet. 4:8 — "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."

B. We all know (or should know) how that works

- 1. Everyone has their quirks
- 2. Everyone occasionally goes "clueless"
- 3. Give others "the benefit of the doubt"

IV. Let's talk about what we are NOT to do

A. Let me confess that I've looked for the verse in Scripture from front to back and can't find the verse that recommends that you just change congregations, or worse yet, churches

- 1. Tons of examples in the NT of divisions
 - a) Jew and Gentile
 - b) In Corinth...
 - (1) Who baptized you
 - (2) Rich or poor
 - (3) Wise or not
 - c) But never a single example of people just leaving
 - (1) starting a Gentile church
 - (2) starting a Peter, Apollos, or Paul congregation
 - (3) going to a more upscale congregation
 - (4) going to a more educated church
 - (5) rather, all these things were condemned
 - d) Some might point to Paul and Barnabas' sharp disagreement
 - (1) Reading too much into the text
 - (2) They compromised
 - (3) Remained colleagues in missionary work
 - (4) Mark, the cause of the disagreement, was to be

- (a) warmly welcomed (Col. 4:10)
- (b) because he was useful (2 Time. 4:11)
- (c) and a fellow worker (Philemon 24)
- e) Bottom line: Division was never Jesus' answer to disagreement
- 2. Changing congregations or churches usually comes from an attitude that
 - a) must have its way,
 - b) doesn't want to follow or compromise
 - c) often has a pride issue that will end in a spiritual fall
 - d) Diotrophes
- 3. By the way, I've seen — with great pain — leaders that have said, "If you don't like what we're doing, I can recommend a number of area churches for you." (In other words, don't let the screen door hit you on the way out.)
- 4. The only time such a "church divorce" should happen — scripturally — is in the case of a withdrawal of fellowship

B. But before we leave what we are forbidden to do, let's add to the list...

- 1. Gossip is forbidden
- 2. Grumbling
- 3. Revenge
- 4. Planning a coup / take over
- 5. Staying away

V. Conclusion

A.