

## Jesus Has Broken Down the Middle Wall

Ephesians 2:11-18, Quasimodogeniti Sunday

April 11, 2010

Beloved of the Lord.....Last Thursday the LCR pastors held their annual Spring Pastoral Conference. This Spring it was a great blessing to have at our conference three guests who had doctrinal questions for our fellowship. Near the end of the conference someone made the statement that in the synods, when there is a doctrinal question by individuals or congregations, the question is presented to the synod. Those officials "higher up" are asked to make an official statement. All there acknowledged the error of this approach. Namely when there is a doctrinal question does our Lord direct us to organizations, synods, pastors, professors or teachers, OR DOES THE LORD SAY, "Search the Scriptures" and "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." When we speak then of doctrine, God's divine teachings in the Bible which pertain to every man's personal salvation, what a terrible thing it is when instead of searching the Scriptures, many take the lazy and ignorant approach and defer the matter to pastors, officials, doctrinal commissions and such. Would you, dear Christian, want to put your own salvation into the hands of other more learned people? If you blindly follow your pastor, your synod, your fellowship, religious teachers, professors and just believe what they say, what if what they say is wrong and you believe the devil's lie? While it is not a sin for a fellowship to have a doctrinal commission, nor is it a sin to ask a pastor about doctrinal questions, your faith must be derived from God's Word alone, for one is your Master, and Christ alone is the head of the Church. We have no pope, nor do we need one to understand the Scriptures. Jesus our Master said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

But what does this have to do with our text today? Though the flesh divides, the Spirit through the Word unites people with different backgrounds into the one body of Christ. When Paul wrote the Ephesians, he was writing to primarily a Gentile congregation, but Jewish Christians were also there and the Jews and Gentiles despised one another by nature. By nature the Jews looked down upon the Gentiles as a lawless dogs, and by nature the Gentiles despised the Jews for their "holier than thou" attitude. The Gentiles in time past were called "Uncircumcision, by that which is called the Circumcision". While circumcision was indeed a Means of Grace in the Old Testament, a covenant of

the Gospel, many Jews wrongly viewed circumcision as a work of man. Paul rebuked such hypocrites who trusted their works, when he defined a true spiritual Jew of heart in Romans two saying, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter."

We then here gathered today are a congregation of spiritual Jews, but we are by nature Gentiles who were once afar off, but now are made nigh by the blood of Christ. By faith in His blood, His merits He has drawn us into His own body. Though each member of a congregation has different gifts, talents, and abilities, "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Like the Jews and the Gentiles then, in any Christian congregation there is a mixture of outwardly different people though inwardly there is no difference "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." While the Spirit through the Word then unites us in the common doctrine, faith, and hope of Jesus Christ, our sinful flesh within constantly seeks to divide us. Like the Jews and the Gentiles, some Christians outwardly have lived a more "pure" life, and such tend to look down upon those who have lived otherwise. In like manner those Christians who have lived less "pure" in the past might despise those who think too highly of themselves. Besides these, there are many other differences which often divide Christians. There is race, color, culture, higher education and no education. Some are more worldly and some are less. There are quick temper, no temper, and even tempered Christians. Some are rich, others poor. Some are heavily afflicted and others lightly afflicted. Some are but babes with a shallow understanding of sin and others have been rescued from the depths and are well grounded. There are naturally grumpy Christians and naturally happy Christians. Some have a good marriage and others not so good. Some are single, some divorced, some widowed. Some Christians are jealous of what others have and others are content with very little. The list goes on and on.

With such differences as these, it is very easy for Christians to have contentions and quarrel, even sinfully divide for reasons other than doctrine. James thus writes, "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door." While we presently enjoy a great peace in our congregation, we must always guard against our own sinful flesh which would rather quarrel than be at peace. While God does command us to mark and avoid, divide from those who teach contrary to His Word, when we speak

of adiaphora, those middle things which God neither commands nor forbids, God never permits division. When rightly used, Christian liberty will always agree with the Gospel and not act contrary to it. Galatians 5 says “ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”

How then are we to be united so that in the hour of trial we are not divided? We are to look to Christ, “He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.” Throughout the Old Testament it had always been the Ceremonial Law which separated the Jews from the Gentiles. Besides the Ten Commandments, the Jews were to keep these Mosaic laws with their many feasts, sacrifices and ceremonies. These particular laws for the Jews were like a wall of partition keeping out the Gentiles from the privileges of God’s people. Yet when Jesus came, God incarnate in the flesh, as a Jew Jesus kept the Ceremonial law for all Jews. But Jesus did far more than this. As a Man standing in the place of all men (Jew and Gentile alike), Jesus kept and perfectly fulfilled the Moral Law, which is the Ten Commandments. Thus He in His one body by love perfectly observed both sets of laws, and in this way He reconciled both parties, Jews and Gentiles alike unto God. “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.” Whereas the Ceremonial laws for the Jews were types and figures to prepare the Jewish people for Christ, once Christ came and fulfilled all, the Ceremonial law for the Jews was abolished. In a somewhat similar fashion, since Christ has by love kept and fulfilled the Ten Commandments for all men, there is not one commandment we must keep or fulfill for our own salvation, but faith alone in Him who has done all is necessary. Hence the Bible says, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to everyone that believeth.” The law then has no more dominion over us, for we through Christ daily live under the light of God’s grace.

Jesus then in His body has broken down the middle wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles. In, by, and through His body, there is nothing to separate or keep apart Jewish Christians from Gentile Christians for they through Christ are one. In like manner in, by, and through the body of Christ, outward differences between Christians in any congregation are of no importance. Jesus has reconciled God with man and Jesus by the Gospel has drawn us into His own

body, making us a part of His own flesh and blood. There is a beautiful picture of such unity of outwardly different Christians in Isaiah 11:6 which says, “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” Though the wolf, lamb, leopard and kid are by nature enemies, in God’s kingdom they become tame and peaceable friends. “The strong, the persecutors, and tyrants, the vicious, the bloodthirsty, are tamed by the Gospel and dwell in love and peace and harmony with the weak, and even bear their burdens” (K. Miller).

Just consider the apostle Paul who once persecuted and murdered Christians. After his own conversion this wolf became a lamb in the fold of the Good Shepherd. So in the True Church, the Communion of Saints, there is through Christ peace and harmony among Christians through the Spirit, though we by nature are sometimes quite different one from another. While the devil will always seek to divide us, God’s Spirit and our spirit will work together to keep the peace. If we have a quarrel with a brother, our love for Jesus will compel us to quickly reconcile and make peace. “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” Since he is my believing brother, I would never want to injure him by word or deed, and if he has injured me I will by faith happily forgive “till seventy times seven.” So the Bible says “Be ye kind to one another, tender hearted forgiving, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

Finally dear brethren, thanks be to God Jesus in His body and by His blood has purchased for you true forgiveness of sins. God therefore truly from His heart forgives you all your sins of quarrel and strife. Let us do likewise with our brother and repent when we have wronged him. For the same Holy Spirit which lives in our heart, also lives in the heart of our brother, and two become one in the one Body of Christ. “Now therefore ye are no more stranger and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” There is no fighting, but only peace in heaven. Amen.