

DIVIDED

— **BY** —

SIN

UNITED

— **BY** —

CHRIST

— A Study of 1 Corinthians by Pastor Joe Meyer —

**FOLLOW ALONG WITH THE
VIDEO FOR THIS STUDY!
SCAN BELOW:**



CHAPTER ONE

UNITY BECAUSE OF THE CROSS

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

In these opening verses Paul says something important about what it means to be a Christian. Note that Paul didn't decide to be an Apostle, but God called him to be one. Of course he is writing about his calling as an Apostle, but in doing so, he also reminds us of our own "call". Check 1Timothy 1:12-17 to see how Paul describes his calling and consider Acts 9:1-19 for the calling itself.

But, why is this such an important story and one that relates to our own lives as Christians? How would you answer that? See how Paul describes faith in Jesus in Titus 3:4-7. But also remind yourself of the truth of the Gospel found in Ephesians 2:1-10 and by reading 1Corinthians 1:4-9. How comforting is that to you?

Paul also writes this in verse two: ***"To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours..."*** Take note of the words underlined above...what do they say about our own calling in Christ? Consider Romans 4:1-8 and 2Corinthians 5:21 in that regard. Why is righteousness important?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

This gets at the heart and soul of this particular New Testament book, namely, unity found in Christ. Read Ephesians 4:1-6 which speaks of that unity.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

In this long segment, Paul is really doing two things:

1. Paul is reminding the Church at Corinth that if you really and seriously look at the cross, it can appear that Christ was weak and no Savior at all (see verse eighteen). After all, He did go-and-get Himself killed! Some people therefore see the cross as weakness or "foolishness" because indeed, how can a man dying on a cross...save us? Read Romans 5:6-10 for that. Also consider the amazing words of Jesus found in John 10:14-18.

2. Paul is also reminding the Church at Corinth then, that their salvation and calling wasn't given because they were so great, or smart, or important, but only because of grace of God at the Cross of Christ. How does that help when talking about healing divisions or keeping unity? See what is said in Romans 3:21-26.

CHAPTER TWO

UNITY THROUGH HUMILITY FROM CHRIST

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

The first two verses are very important as we consider what it is we do in the Church. Notice that Paul continues to focus away from himself and to the Lord Jesus and His crucifixion, a reminder that true Christian leaders do not point to themselves, they point to Jesus. Two reasons that should be the aim:

1. Jesus is the center of our faith: Remember that the Bible is about and all about Christ and not about us. See what is written in John 20:30,31 and Ephesians 2:11-22.
2. The Gospel (life, death and rez of Jesus) is the power of God unto salvation and as such, should be what we are all about as Christian people, not quarrels or arguments. See 1Timothy 6:2-5 alongside Romans 1:16,17 and add to that the beautiful words of Psalm 40:9,10.

One other important thought on this segment: Paul writes “***...so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men...but in the power of God***” **1 Corinthians 2:5**. Why is that statement especially pertinent in our day and time? Also read the admonition from the Apostle John in 1 John 4:1-6.

Read 1 Cortinthians 2:6-10a

Such an amazing set of verses here, particularly when Paul writes “***...none of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory!***” Those words bring up an important question, namely, why didn't the High Priests, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Teachers of the Law recognize Jesus as the Messiah? They had the Old Testament and good portions of it memorized...so why not?

Check John 10:22-33 for their disbelief but then consider Jesus words in John 18:33-40 and what He does for the disciples found in Luke 24:25-35. How does that speak to faith in general? Look at 1 Corinthians 2:14 alongside Romans 8:7,8.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:10b-16

Take note that in this section Paul says two important and connected things about faith in Jesus:

1. We have been given the Spirit of God: 1 Corinthians 2:12 ***“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.”*** See Galatians 4:4-6.
2. We have been given “the mind of Christ”: 1 Corinthians 2:16 ***“For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”*** Consider what Jesus says in John 15:15.
3. What do those two things mean for our lives lived not only in this world, but alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ? Look at Romans 12:9-21.

Note first of all that in saying that from God the Father Christians have both the *“Spirit who is from God”* and that *“...we have the mind of Christ,”* makes this an important Trinitarian reference. Now, the best Trinity verse is actually Matthew 28:16-20, particularly verse twenty. Why would I say that about the Great Commission and how does that verse impact your witness to Christ?

But also notice who the actor is when it comes to our faith in Jesus...none other than God. In other words, you did not choose Jesus, He chose you. Consider John 15:16; Ephesians 2:1-7; Colossians 2:11-15.

CHAPTER THREE

UNITY ON ACCOUNT OF THE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

This first section in chapter three could be written for today's church, no question. People often set up the servant of God known as "Pastor" in a position where they simply do not belong. Check 2Corinthians 4:1-7 for a reminder of who/what the pastor really is for us.

Now, that does not mean that pastors do not have a God-given authority in our lives. Check Ephesians 4:11-14. Why is that authority important and what's the caution for pastors?

While it's not exactly the topic at hand, in the midst of setting straight the role of the pastor, Paul also reminds us of a very important truth about bringing someone to faith in Jesus. Note that Paul wrote in verses six and seven: ***"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth."*** Often, a person who is brought to faith in Jesus has encountered many people bringing the Gospel to them but the Holy Spirit brings them to faith at a certain point in time...could be the first person to witness to them or the fifth...or fifty-fifth for that matter. Note though...the Holy Spirit brings them to faith: Check 1 Corinthians 12:3 for that. Also note the famous segment in Ephesians 2:1-7. *(Also remember Luther's Small Catechism on the role of the Holy Spirit from the explanation to the third article.)*

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Paul reminds us here of the central truth of Christianity saying: ***"...no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ"*** 1 Corinthians 3:11. One of the most important concepts in Christianity is the exclusivity of the Christian faith to save people from hell. Many people today believe "all roads lead to Rome" or that any and all religions will get you to heaven, but Jesus doesn't believe that. Check John 14:1-6 and then the Apostle's faith-filled testimony in Acts 4:5-12.

This segment is often applied to the individual Christian when in fact it appears to be about pastors "building" churches. Now, should Christians do good works

Now, should Christians do good works for Christ in “*gold, silver and precious stones*” ways? Yes. But this building metaphor does seem to be about Paul and all the other pastors and their good works as pastors instead.

1. So...in regards to your good works in this world: See Matthew 5:14-16 and 1 Peter 2:9-12.
2. In reference to pastors and their good works, remember these two texts: James 3:1 and Hebrews 13:17. Hence, “gold, silver and precious stones” is expected from them.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Verses sixteen and seventeen have erroneously been applied to someone committing suicide. By that I mean, since we are individually “God’s temple”, then “destroying” that temple as Paul writes here would bring God’s wrath. So...are you “God’s Temple”? Yes. Look at 1 Corinthians 6:19,20 and John 14:15-17. But this segment is talking about “God’s Temple” as in the collective, the whole, the Church. The words used for “you” here, are plurals. That’s important. This is referring to someone attempting to destroy the Church. Check 2 Timothy 4:9-18 for that.

Regarding wisdom, Paul brings up “*boasting in men*” in verse twenty-one. In other words, putting too much stock in another human being, though that can be applied personally too, aka, boasting in yourself. Unfortunately for us, “boasting” is a lifelong plague because it’s such an integral part of our sinful human nature. Now, you may not be one to aggrandize your life...but “boasting” can be a very quiet seeking of attention from others. We love to be noticed—we love to talk about ourselves. See what Jesus says about our life in Christ found in Matthew 6:1-4; Mark 12:38-40.

Why is it so important to avoid self-serving behavior? Consider our calling as Christians and the warning attached: Read Luke 14:7-11. If we all decidedly took this humble position, how do you think the world would react?

CHAPTER FOUR

UNITY THROUGH THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

Read 1Corinthians 4:1-5

Paul opens this segment by talking again about the pastoral role, saying, ***“This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”*** What is Paul talking about...what “mysteries?” Look at these sections that directly speak of some of them: 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Ephesians 3:1-13; Colossians 1:24-29; 1 Timothy 3:14-16. But along with those clear “mystery” passages...consider the biblical mysteries behind the Incarnation; God’s Word; Baptism; and Communion:

1. Incarnation: Isaiah 7:14 & 9:6,7; Luke 1:26-35; Colossians 2:8-10.
2. Word of God: Hebrews 4:12,13; 2Peter 1:16-21
3. Baptism: Acts 2:38,39; Romans 6:1-4.
4. Communion: 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 11:17-30.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6,7

Verse six is such an important verse for our day and time. Paul writes there: ***“...do not go beyond what is written.”*** In other words, don’t make up theology on your own, but only speak as far as God has spoken in His Word. This is a subject I hammer a lot because in our day and time, social media has become the proclaimer of a Christianity that is neither correct, nor biblical. “...do not go beyond what is written” keeps that from happening. Check 2 Timothy 3:10-17 for our understanding of what God has said to us.

Paul asks a very important question: *“For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”* The Corinthians had a issue with boastfulness because some were rich and some were poor, and in that day and time, as in ours, that created division. So, Paul is reminding them that God is the giver of all good gifts...including their faith. Read Deuteronomy 8 and apply that to faith in Jesus.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:8-21

Paul starts this section calling out “the rich” which was an issue in this church, but he’s doing that because he is establishing his right as an Apostle/Pastor to challenge and to discipline them. As you read through this segment it’s clear that Paul was, yes, very sarcastically...calling them out. Interestingly, the problem Paul had back then is a problem we have in the Church today. Many people do not accept the authority of the pastoral office...why do you think that is? Check 1Peter 5:1-5.

In verse twenty Paul writes: ***“For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power.”*** How do we reconcile what Paul says there with Zechariah 4:1-7? What is the “power” Paul is talking about here and why did he?

CHAPTER FIVE

UNITY THROUGH THE BODY OF CHRIST

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

When moving from four to five, it becomes obvious why Paul wrote what he did in chapter four. There’s not just a division problem, we’re coming to that, but there was also a moral problem...a man was sleeping with (presumably) his step-mother. As we talked about in the previous chapter, people often push back on what is called “church discipline” claiming *“It’s none of your business!”* Why is that not true? Check Acts 4:32-37 for the intimate-connectedness of Christians and then look at 1Corinthians 12:12-30.

Also look at Galatians 6:1-3 and Ephesians 4:15 for an important caution to pastors and lay folks alike. Also, what is the end game with church discipline? How does verse five speak into this? This is vitally important to remember...it’s not about “winning the argument” or “getting rid of the sinner”!

What does Paul mean in verses six to eight? What is “leaven” and what does “leaven” then represent in the Word of God? See Matthew 16:5-12. How does that impact what we do with openly sinful people?

Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

We've already covered some of this in the above segment as to why we discipline people in the church, but what about Paul's comments about "outsiders?" Is this how we normally act towards "insiders" and "outsiders"...or do we do the opposite of his counsel here...harsh with outsiders and nicey-nice with insiders? Check Paul's kind and thoughtful interaction with the non-Christian men of the Areopagus as recorded in Acts 17:16-34. What can we learn from that interaction as we interact with our own "men of the Areopagus?"

Paul says here ***"For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?"*** 1 Corinthians 5:12. Judging anyone just doesn't sound right, does it? For us, "Don't judge me!" has become a mantra of sorts. What do you do with what Paul said in verse twelve, particularly in light of Matthew 7:1-5? Check in with the caution of James 4:11,12.

CHAPTER SIX

UNITY THROUGH THE INDWELLING CHRIST

Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Paul begins this section with what can be not only a confusing passage, but a downright weird one. To begin with Paul reminds us that we're not to "air our dirty laundry" in court and among non-Christian people. See what Jesus said about our discipleship in John 13:31-35. How would Christians suing one another look to the world? I think you know. The Lord is calling us to work things out amongst ourselves. In fact, Paul also reminds us in verses seven and eight that the things of this world should not be that important to Christians. Check what Jesus says in Matthew 5:38-42.

The above discussion is hard to be sure, but far more unusual is Paul's discussion of "judgment" within this section. Prior to reading this segment, if I'd have asked you if you were one of the "heavenly judges," you'd have pushed back hard and said "Nope!" We just don't think like this...so what does this mean? Look at Daniel 7:15-22; Matthew 19:27-30; Revelation 20:4-6. (This is definitely one of those "not-so-clear" theology moments)

In verses nine through eleven Paul reminds us of the connection of unrepented sin and our standing before God. This is such a hard one because it can clearly cast doubt in our hearts about our salvation. Read Hebrews 3:7-14. Notice that the writer to the Hebrews connects open sinfulness with the possibility that you might “fall away from the Living God.” In other words, don’t go there! But remember that even repentance from sin is given to us by God: Acts 5:27-32.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

To begin with, Paul is reminding us of our completely intimate connection with Christ. The wording is intended to reflect that which is said about husbands and wives, namely, “the two shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). In Christ then, you are one with God...let that sit for a moment, right? Consider these other passages: John 17:20-26; Galatians 3:23-29; Romans 8:9-11.

Along the lines of being “one with God,” the Holy Spirit moved Paul to write in verse nineteen “**...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?**” Why is the “temple” brought up in regard to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? Consider Exodus 25:17-22 and Hebrews 9:1-5; Matthew 27:45-54.

All that said, remember that being one with God means not committing “adultery” against Him with anything of this world. Committing adultery against Him can be anything that draws us to seek or love something more than Him. Luther’s explanation to the First Commandment reads “*We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.*” So, Paul counsels against “leaving Him” by committing sexual immorality. Take note of these passages: Romans 13:11-14; Galatians 5:16-25; 1Thessalonians 4:1-8 and 1John 2:15-17.

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNITY THROUGH CONTENTMENT IN CHRIST

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-16

This is an interesting section for several reasons:

1. Paul was a Pharisee (Check Philippians 3:1-6 and Acts 26:1-8) That fact is pertinent because as a Pharisee he was likely required to be married but it sure sounds as if he was not married...perhaps a widower? We can't be sure. But we know that he puts his unmarried status up as an example of what's best for the Christian.
2. So...Paul speaks a hard truth here...remaining unmarried creates a *burden* but it also provides a *freedom*. The *burden* of not marrying is that we were designed by God to have a spouse, and with that spouse to procreate. In fact, marriage in the Bible = sex, which is not exactly a popular truth in our day...check 1 Corinthians 7:36 and Matthew 19:1-9 for that truth. The *freedom* he speaks of is obvious, but Paul writes about that in 1Corinthians 7:25-39 so jump ahead and read that section now.
3. Paul reminds us of the interdependency of husband and wife. While many would say that we are a male-centric religion where the woman has “no rights,” the Apostle destroys that argument by reminding us that the husband and the wife both “own” the body of the other. To that end then, notice the very important words about marriage found in Ephesians 5:21-33 and how they reflect Christian unity and interdependence.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

This section is very important but to be honest, it's little talked about in our churches. Really what Paul is getting at here could be summed up with one word, “contentment.” While in effect he got at that in the previous section, he definitely hammers it home here. Check also 1Timothy 6:2b-10. Do you think Christians in this day and time believe contentment is a good thing?

“Contentment” also helps explain Paul’s comments on being a “bondservant.” To us, the word “slavery” or even anything close to that is a dirty word...so why 12

would Paul seem to say that it's okay? (Make sure to note verses twenty-two and twenty-three) In fact, take note of what he writes in Philemon 1:8-21. How could Paul recommend that Onesimus go back to his earthly "master?" Contentment is the answer. Being content in whatever your circumstances because your life is not about the stuff of your life or the situational position of your life, but in Christ. Notice how Paul says that in Colossians 3:1-4. Do you think that way about your faith in Jesus?

CHAPTER EIGHT

UNITY THROUGH SERVING OTHERS IN CHRIST

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-6

Paul launches into a discussion of something that was likely becoming an issue in the church at Corinth, and that is, the eating of food offered to idols. He therefore reminds them of the truth about idols, namely, they are "nothing" so the food offered to them is no different than any other food. In doing so, he reminds us of the truth about our God, namely, He is the one and the only God! Why is that important for us? Look at Deuteronomy 4:32-40 alongside John 14:1-11; Acts 5:1-6.

He began the discussion with a very important truth: "*...knowledge puffs up but love builds up.*" This short sentence describes Christianity, namely, that we are not to be "puffed up" over against one another but instead, through God's love, we are to "build up" one another instead. Jump ahead to 1Corinthians 13:4-13 and 1Peter 4:7-11 for that truth.

Read 1 Corinthians 8:7-13

The previous section and the truth about Christian love, helps us to understand what Paul is getting at in this segment. Paul is reminding us that while we are free to eat "idol meat," we are not free to harm or hurt our brother or sister. Our freedom is to be used to serve others, not serve ourselves. Check Galatians 5:13-15. How does this apply to your life right now? In what ways are you able to serve others?

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