

What Man's Carnality Brings, Part 3 - 1 Corinthians 1:12-17 - February 23rd, 2014

- Today's teaching will be part three of a series titled, "What Man's Carnality Brings."
- Beginning in verses 3-9, we saw the things that God's grace brings, and back in verse 10, we saw the things that man's carnality brings.
- Because it's germane to our understanding of what we're about to see in today's text I'll set the table if you will with the first two we studied.

1. Divisions (Verse 10)

-v10 Paul appeals to them in the name of Jesus to all agree with one another so there's no divisions but instead to unite in mind and thought.

2. Arguments (Verse 11)

-v11 Paul gets more specific when he tells them that some from Chloe's household had informed him that there were quarrels among them.

3. Cliques (Verses 12-17)

-v12 Paul explains what he means saying some follow Paul, others say Apollos another Cephas, and still another say they follow only Christ.
-v13 He rhetorically asks them if Christ is divided, or if he himself had been crucified for them, or if they had been baptized into Paul's name.
-v14-17 He says he's glad he only baptized a few. Christ sent him to preach, not man's wisdom, lest the cross be emptied of its powerless.

- Couple of thoughts here before we sort through Paul's rebuke of their carnal cliques, the first of which is the progression of their carnality.
- Let me explain, their quarrelling amongst each other, progressed to forming cliques with each other, and the divisions against each other.
- This explains Paul's rhetoric and sanctified sarcasm. Paul had to confront their well-intentioned carnality before it destroyed God's church.

In his book "Well Intentioned Dragons," author Marshall Shelley offers an insightful explanation of divisive, and argumentative cliques within the church, "Within the church, they are often sincere, well-meaning saints, but they leave ulcers, strained relationships, and hard feelings in their wake. They don't consider themselves difficult people. They don't sit up nights thinking of ways to be nasty. Often they are pillars of the community - talented, strong personalities, deservedly respected - but for some reason, they undermine the ministry ...They are not naturally rebellious or pathological; they are loyal church members, convinced they're serving God, but they wind up doing more harm than good."

- Perhaps you'll indulge me briefly as I seek to identify what I see as four of the deadliest well intentioned cliques in the body of Christ today.
- The reason I refer to them in this way is that they cause so much harm to God's church under the banner of nobility and spiritual maturity.
- I'm of the belief it's for this very reason that these well-intentioned dragons leave ulcers, divisions and devastating destruction in their wake.

Charles Spurgeon - "Many of the Gentiles stood up for their own apostle: the Judaizers, on the other hand, cried up Peter; a third class were charmed by the eloquence of Apollos, and the fourth party separated from the other three under the professed object of following only Christ. These last appear to have been quite as censurable [culpable] as the others. Party making in the church of Christ is always evil."

- I would suggest Corinth had become so divided into cliques because, as one so aptly says it, Corinth had the "personality cult mentality."
- The personality cult mentality sets in when people are hungry for hero's and it's often birthed out of ones need for significance in their life.
- This is why they're attracted to and become a part of well-intentioned "us four and no more" carnality cliques that divide the body of Christ.

The story is told of an old, contentious Quaker who went from one church to another, never finding the "true" church. Someone once said to him, "Well, what church are you in now?" He said, "I am in the true church at last." "How many belong to it?" "Just my wife and myself, and I am not sure about her sometimes."

- What follows are the us four and no more cliques, starting with those who were saying that they would only follow the Apostle Paul himself.
- I'll call this click, "the powerful Paul people." This group thinks the only true way is to be strong and blunt with the tenacity of a bulldog.
- You'll find this group amongst those who believe unless you're only in your face hellfire and brimstone you've watered down God's Word.

- This brings us to the second "us four and no more" click in verse 12, which are those who were saying that they would only follow Apollos.
- I'll call this click, "the I never fall asleep people." This group thinks the only way is to grab and keep peoples attention by being charismatic.
- You'll find this group amongst those who believe unless you're cool and hip people will never want to darken the door of an uncool church.

- Then there's our third "us four and no more" click in verse 12, which are those who were saying that they would only follow Cephas/Peter.
- I'll call this click, "the old school old fashioned people." This group thinks the only way is to go back to being like it was in the early church.
- You'll find this group amongst those who believe unless you're traditionally "traditional," you're irreverent and must not have a fear of God.

- Finally, there's this most interesting fourth "us four and no more" click in verse 12, which are those who said they'd only follow Jesus Christ.
- I'll call this click, "the lonely only people." This group thinks the only way is to only read the words of Jesus and not any other words of man.
- You'll find this group amongst those who believe only the KJV Bible is God's Word and or it's only the words in red letters that Jesus spoke.

- These 4 "us four and no more" cliques beg the question of which one of them is the true and only one? Answer, it's all four and even more.
- You'll forgive the play on words, but we're all different parts of the same body and as such we have a diversity that appeals to everyone.
- This is why Paul exhorts them to be in unity even though there was such a diversity, which is where we get our English word University.

Charles Spurgeon - "I bless God that there are so many denominations. If there were not men who differed a little in their creeds, we should never get as much gospel as we do. God has sent different men to defend different kinds of truth; but Christ defended and preached all.

Pastor Chuck Smith - "Had Paul been writing to the church today concerning the divisions among it, I'm sure he would say, "But some of you say I'm a Baptist, and some of you say I'm a Presbyterian, and others say I'm an Episcopalian, and then others say, well I'm a Nazarene, and there are those who would say well, we're of the Church of Christ." Again he'd say "Is Christ divided?" and he would urge toward unity within the body to realize that we are all of Jesus Christ. Paul was sent to preach the gospel, not with the wisdom of words, something that they were very familiar with there in Corinth."