

1 Corinthians Lesson 5

1 Corinthians 1:10-13

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

In 1:1-9, Paul laid the foundation for everything that follows in this letter. The Corinthians (carnal, quarreling, immature as they were) stood identified as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," "called saints," "enriched in everything," and guaranteed to be presented "blameless" on the day of the Lord. None of this rested on their track record. It rested entirely on the faithfulness of the God "through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son" (1:9). That fellowship (κοινωνία koinonia) is a binding shared partnership and is the ground Paul now builds on.

Verse 10 marks a turn. Having established who they are positionally, Paul now issues the first direct exhortation of the letter. The pattern is one we have already seen elsewhere in Paul: doctrine first, then duty; position first, then practice; is then ought. Paul is not asking the Corinthians to achieve a unity they do not have. He is appealing to them to live out, in practice, the unity that is already true of them in Christ.

The occasion for the appeal was a disturbing report. Members of "Chloe's household," a household Paul trusted, reporting from there to him in Ephesus, had informed him of factions, quarrels, running through the congregation. The church had split into competing camps, each rallying around a favored teacher.

EXPOSITIONAL ANALYSIS: VERSE 10

"Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment."

The Appeal — " παρακαλέω parakalō"

Paul's word for "I exhort/urge/appeal to" is parakaleō, the same word Paul uses for his most passionate pastoral appeals elsewhere: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God" (Romans 12:1). It is a strong word, but it is not the language of a command backed by threat. It is the language of a father-figure pleading with family — earnest, warm, relational. Notice he addresses them as, "brothers." Before Paul says one word about their factions, he reminds them of the family bond that already exists. The appeal to unity is not a stranger's demand; it is a brother's plea.

The Basis — "through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"

Paul roots the entire appeal in Christ's name, not his own. This is a deliberate and pointed choice. Given that one of the Corinthian factions was marching under Paul's own banner ("I am of Paul," v. 12), Paul refuses to leverage his own authority or reputation to settle the dispute. He will not trade one form of personality allegiance (division around himself) for another (unity forced by his own personal weight). The only sufficient ground for unity is the name (the

reputation) and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The one name that belongs to no faction, because He is the one to whom the whole church belongs.

"That you all say the same thing" — τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες

This phrase, translated "agree" in most English versions, is literally "that you all say the same thing." In the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day, this exact idiom (to legein to auto) was the standard language of political concord — homonoia. Ancient orators used it when appealing to a fractured city to abandon factionalism and pull together for the common good.

Paul takes language the Corinthians would have recognized from civic life, where even pagan society understood that internal faction destroyed a city, and applies it to the local assembly.

If unbelieving Corinth knew factionalism was corrosive to a city, how much more should the church, united by the Spirit, refuse to tolerate it. "Saying the same thing" does not mean uniform speech on every subject; it means a shared, common confession — agreement in what is affirmed as true.

"No divisions among you" — σχίσμα schisma

Schisma comes from the verb "to tear, to rip." It is the word used for a piece of unshrunk cloth tearing away from an old garment (Matthew 9:16) and for the divided opinions of crowds debating who Jesus was (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). It does not necessarily describe a full organizational split into separate churches. It describes a tear within a single piece of fabric — factions, cliques, and rival loyalties existing inside one body that remains, outwardly, one congregation. The picture is not two churches; it is one church, torn.

"Made complete" — καταρτίζω katartizō

This is one of the richest words in the passage. "καταρτίζω katartizō" means to mend, to restore, to fit together, to put something into its proper working condition. It is the word used for mending torn fishing nets (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19) — nets that, left torn, cannot do the one thing they exist to do: catch fish. It is the word Paul uses for restoring a brother caught in sin, "restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness" (Galatians 6:1). It describes God Himself "equipping" the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:12) and "perfecting" believers for every good work (Hebrews 13:21; 1 Peter 5:10).

This is a periphrastic construction: ἵτε (present subjunctive of εἶμι) plus κατηρτισμένοι (perfect passive participle of καταρτίζω). This portrays a state or condition of the subject resulting from a prior action, with focus often on the subject's current situation rather than the action itself. The focus is not on the mending as a past action but on the condition it produces: mended, fitted together, in proper working order.

Paul is exhorting the church to be found in a condition of having been mended, like a net repaired and ready for use.

"Same mind... same judgment" — (*νοῦς nous*) and (*γνώμη gnōmē*)

Paul closes the verse with two nouns that are easy to flatten into synonyms but that carry distinct shades of meaning. "*νοῦς nous*" is the mind: the underlying faculty of understanding, the framework of thought, the doctrinal orientation by which a person interprets reality. "*γνώμη gnōmē*" is the resulting opinion, verdict, or practical judgment; the conclusion a person reaches and acts on. Put simply: *nous* is the operating system; *gnōmē* is the output it produces.

Paul is calling the Corinthians to unity at both levels, a shared theological mind, rooted in the truth of God (elsewhere Paul calls this "the mind of Christ," 2:16), which then issues in shared practical conclusions on the real matters facing the assembly. This is not a call for a hive-mind that erases every individual opinion; it is a call for a common doctrinal foundation that produces common direction on the things that matter.

THE DOCTRINE OF UNITY

What Biblical Unity Is Not

- **Not uniformity.** Unity is not sameness of personality, gifting, culture, or opinion on every matter. Paul devotes an entire section of this letter (12:4-31) to celebrating diversity within the one body, and elsewhere he makes explicit room for believers to hold differing convictions on disputable matters without dividing over them (Romans 14:1-5). A church that mistakes unity for uniformity will suppress the very diversity God designed into the body.
- **Not doctrinal indifference.** Unity is not "we can just agree to disagree about everything as long as everyone is nice." The "same mind" Paul calls for is not a lowest common denominator emptied of content; it is the mind of Christ (2:16), a shared confession of gospel truth. A unity purchased by silence about error is not the unity Paul is describing — it is capitulation.
- **Not institutional merger (Ecumenical).** Unity is not primarily about denominational structures, organizational charts, or forced mergers imposed from outside. It is a spiritual and relational reality that either exists or does not exist within the actual life of a local body, regardless of what letterhead the church uses.
- **Not personality-based loyalty.** This is precisely what was destroying Corinth. "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," "I am of Cephas," even "I am of Christ" (v. 12) — every one of these slogans elevated allegiance to a human figure, or a party badge wielded like one, above allegiance to Christ and to one another. Wherever a congregation organizes itself around loyalty to a personality (a favorite preacher, a particular leader, a preferred style or era) rather than around Christ, the tear has already begun.

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- **Not passive peacekeeping.** Unity does not mean never confronting sin or refusing to address real problems for the sake of appearances. Paul confronts the Corinthians repeatedly and specifically throughout this letter. Galatians 6:1 uses the very word “καταρτίζω katartizō” (“restore”) for confronting a brother caught in sin, genuine mending sometimes requires the hard, deliberate work of addressing what is torn rather than pretending the tear does not exist.
- **Not self-manufactured.** Paul does not command the Corinthians to build unity from nothing. He appeals to them on the basis of who they already are — sanctified, called into fellowship with the Son (1:2, 9). Ephesians 4:3 uses the same logic: believers are to “be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit” — a unity the Spirit has already created, not one believer must invent.

What Biblical Unity Is

- **Grounded in a shared position in Christ.** “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Before unity is ever a project to pursue, it is a fact already established by union with Christ. This is why Paul can appeal to it rather than merely legislate it; he is calling the Corinthians to become in practice what they already are in position.
- **Agreement in the substance of the gospel and sound doctrine.** “Saying the same thing” is agreement in what is confessed as true — the same mind that was in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:5), the mind of Christ Paul describes elsewhere in this letter (2:16).
- **A mended, functioning wholeness.** The picture of katartizō, a repaired net, a body whose joints are set and functioning, pictures unity not as static sameness but as a living whole in which every part does its proper work for the good of all (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:16).
- **Humility as the engine.** Every Biblical description of unity traces back to humility. Selfishness and empty conceit tear a body apart; regarding others as more important than oneself mends it (Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 12:3, 16).
- **Christ-centered, not leader-centered.** Verse 13’s rhetorical questions make this explicit: only Christ was crucified for the Corinthians; only into Christ’s name were they baptized. No human teacher — however gifted, however beloved — can rightly occupy the place that belongs to Christ alone as the center of the church’s unity.
- **Purposeful — unity has a witness.** Biblical unity is never only for internal comfort. It exists, in part, so that a watching world sees something true about the gospel (John 17:20-23).
- **Held together by love.** “Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:14). Every virtue that produces unity — compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness — is bound together and completed by love.

CROSS-REFERENCE STUDY

Galatians 3:26-28 — The Positional Foundation

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus... for you are all one in Christ Jesus." As in 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 9, practical unity is built on a positional fact that already exists for every believer, regardless of background.

Philippians 2:1-8 — The Fullest Positive Picture

If 1 Corinthians 1:10 states the appeal, Philippians 2 supplies the mechanic that makes it possible. "If there is therefore any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind [to *auto phronēte* — the very same "same mind" language as 1 Corinthians 1:10], maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others" (2:1-4). Paul then grounds the whole appeal in the pattern of Christ Himself: who, "existing in the form of God," did not grasp at His own status but emptied Himself, took the form of a bond-servant, and humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross (2:6-8). The connection to Corinth is direct: their factions were fueled by exactly what Philippians 2:3 forbids: selfishness and empty conceit, each camp elevating its own preferred teacher. The cure is the same in both letters: the self-emptying humility of Christ, not asserted rights or status.

Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16 — Preserving What the Spirit Already Made

Paul entreats believers to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling" with "all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1-3). Notice the verb: preserve, not create. The sevenfold basis follows — "one body, one Spirit... one hope... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father" (4:4-6). Later in the chapter, as each part of the body does its work, the whole "grows... and builds itself up in love, as each part does its share... being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies" (4:16) — conceptually the same picture as *katartizō* in 1 Corinthians 1:10, a body properly joined and functioning.

Romans 12:3-5, 16; 15:5-6 — One Body, Same Mind, No Haughtiness

"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ" (12:4-5). Paul immediately ties this to humility: "not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think" (12:3), and "be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind" (12:16). Later, Paul prays that God

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would "grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:5-6), unity's ultimate purpose is unified worship.

Colossians 3:12-15 — Love as the Perfect Bond

Paul lists compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and forgiveness, "and beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body" (3:14-15).

John 17:20-23 — Unity as Witness

Christ's own prayer for believers: "that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me... that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me" (17:21, 23). Unity is patterned after the unity of the Godhead itself and exists, in part, for the sake of the world's belief.

VERSES 11-13: THE OCCASION FOR THE APPEAL

Paul states plainly what prompted verse 10: "it has been made clear to me concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you" (v. 11). He then names the substance of the reports — four rival slogans, each rallying around a different figure: "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," "I am of Cephas," "I am of Christ" (v. 12). These were likely not formal parties with fixed doctrine so much as informal cliques, each preferring the style, background, or emphasis of a particular teacher — Paul's plain apostolic authority, Apollos's eloquence (Acts 18:24-28), Cephas's standing among the Jewish believers, and perhaps a fourth group using Christ's own name as a badge of spiritual superiority over the others.

Paul answers with three devastating rhetorical questions: "Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (v. 13). Each question expects the answer "no," and each strip away the logic of the factions. Christ cannot be divided into parts to be distributed among favorite teachers. Only Christ was crucified for them, Paul was not. Only into Christ's name were they baptized, not Paul's. The absurdity of the factions is laid bare the moment the church remembers who died for them and whose name they bear.

CONCLUSION: A CALL TO UNITY AMONG US

Paul's appeal to Corinth is worth putting to ourselves directly, as one body:

- Are we found "saying the same thing" — genuinely agreed on the gospel and the doctrine that matters, even while we make room for liberty of conscience on the many matters Scripture leaves open?

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- Are there any tears among us — cliques or camps that have formed around a personality, a ministry, or a preference rather than around Christ?
- Are we pursuing being mended together — doing the deliberate work of restoration where something has torn, or are we tolerating the tear because addressing it is uncomfortable?
- Is our unity Christ-centered? Remember Paul's questions in verse 13. No teacher among us was crucified for you. Into no name but Christ's were you baptized. Whatever affection or respect we rightly have for the leaders and teachers God gives us, none of them may occupy the place that belongs to Christ alone as the center that holds us together.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).