

Dealing With Division!

Our Text: **1 Corinthians 1:10–17** *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

- Quarrels are a part of life.
- We grow up in them and around them.
- Infants are quick to express displeasure when they are not given something they want or when something they like is taken away.
- Little children cry, fight, and throw tantrums because they cannot have their own ways.
- We argue and fight over a rattle, then a toy, then a football, then a position on the football team or in the cheerleading squad, then in business, the PTA, or politics.
- Friends fight.
- Husbands and wives fight.
- Businesses fight.
- Cities fight.
- Even nations fight—sometimes to the point of war.
- And the source of all the fighting is the same: man's depraved, egoistic, selfish nature

Scripture teaches nothing more clearly than the truth that man is basically and naturally sinful, and that the heart of his sinfulness is self-will. From birth to death every person tries to look out for *"number one"* — to be, to do, and to have what he wants.

If we're honest, we continually struggle with

- Self-will.
- Self-interest.
- Self-centeredness.
- And at the heart of sin is the ego, the "I."

Because of this, when two or more people are bent on having their own ways, they will soon be quarreling and arguing, and this will lead to conflict!

In fact, one of the main reasons that cults in our day have had such an impact on the world is their unity. Disharmony and dissension from the group is not tolerated! Yes, they are wrong in the methods that they use and the theology that they teach, but many are attracted to them because they represent a single cohesive unit.

Very few of us who have attended church for years have not seen a congregation where there was a split or at least serious quarreling and bickering within it. But this problem has existed in the church from its inception:

James 4:1-2 *Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.*

“Tragically—though it is forbidden by God, is totally out of character with our redeemed natures, and is in complete opposition to everything our Lord prayed for and intended for His church—fighting does occur among believers, among those who are called to be one in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What the Lord laments and opposes, Satan applauds and fosters. Few things demoralize, discourage, and weaken a church as much as bickering, backbiting, and fighting among its members. And few things so effectively undermine its testimony before the world.” John MacArthur Jr.

And because of this, Paul chooses to deal with this issue as the first of many in the Church of Corinth!

Let's dive in here . . .

We Must Agree On Doctrine!

1 Corinthians 1:10 *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Let's start by defining a word:

Plead = **παρακαλέω** = *parakaleō* = *To exhort. Admonish. To persuade.*

This Greek word *parakaleō*, comes from the verb root of *parakletos*, the “Helper” or “Comforter”.

John 14:16 *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another **Helper**, that He may abide with you forever—*

John 14:26 *But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

John 15:26 *“But when **the Helper** comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.*

John 16:7 *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, **the Helper** will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.*

Why bring this up? The basic meaning of Paul **“pleading”** is that of coming alongside someone in order to help. He wanted to come alongside his Corinthian brothers and sisters in order to help correct their sins and shortcomings.

But notice next Paul names the Person of the **“Lord Jesus Christ”**:

1 Corinthians 1:10 *Now I plead with you, brethren, **by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

Since they all had come to salvation in the same Person, **“Jesus”**, they now have a protocol to follow:

1 Corinthians 1:10 *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.***

Nothing is more confusing to new Christians, or to unbelievers who are considering the claims of Christ, than to hear supposedly mature and informed Christians tell conflicting things about the gospel, the Bible, or Christian living. And few things are more devastating to a church than everyone having his own ideas and interpretations about the faith, or of the congregation being divided into various factions, each with its own views.

Personally, I get irritated when I hear people say things like, **“Tell us what this passage means to you.” THAT IS IRRELEVANT . . . HOW ABOUT, “TELL US THAT THIS PASSAGE MEANS!!!”**

Therefore, in order for a local church to be spiritually healthy, harmonious, and effective, **THEY MUST HAVE DOCTRINAL UNITY AS A PRIORITY!!!**

And because Jesus name was just mentioned, **THIS DOCTRINE MUST BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH JESUS, HIS WORD, AND HIS WILL!!!**

Therefore:

- The **purpose** of unity is to glorify God.
- The **source** of unity is Jesus Himself.

We Must Be Loyal To Jesus, Not Men!

1 Corinthians 1:11–12 *For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.”*

- Paul had ministered in Corinth for a year and a half.
- He then sent Apollos to be the second pastor.

- And apparently a group of Jews in the church had been saved under Peter's (Cephas's) ministry.
- Soon, there were "**groups**" that developed in the names of each of those men.

Through the person of "**Chloe**", word gets back to Paul about these "**groups**":

- The first two groups each had their favorite former pastor.
- The third had a strong loyalty to Peter.
- The fourth, probably the most pious and self-righteous, seemed to think they had a special claim on Christ.
- *(They had the right name but it is clear from Paul's accusation that they did not have the right spirit.)*

Each group was vocal in its opinions and had its own slogan and believed they were superior to the other groups:

- "**I am of Paul!**"
- "**I of Apollos!**"
- "**I of Cephas!**"
- "**I of Christ!**"

Let's be honest, these were the great teachers of the early years, around whom people gathered and through whom they were given the saving message. People clung to the man who had evangelized and taught them.

We still do this today to a certain extent. When people ask me what my teaching is like, I name drop . . . "**Well, it's Holy Spirit driven and I green from, MacArthur, Wiersbe, and Gill.**"

The problem was that they pitted their group against the groups loyal to the other leaders . . . ALL OF WHOM WERE SOLID!!!

If you are a leader, **WATCH OUT!** When leaders do know of, and even encourage, groups that have a special loyalty to them, those leaders are guilty. They not only participate in factionalism but allow it to center on themselves . . . **AND THIS IS NOT OF GOD!!!**

John MacArthur said it well, "***It is natural to have special affection for the person who led us to Christ, for a pastor who has fed us from the Word for many years, for a capable Sunday school teacher, or for an elder or deacon who has counseled and consoled us. But such affection becomes misguided and carnal when it is allowed to segregate us from others in the church or to decrease our loyalty to the other leaders. It then becomes a self-centered, self-willed exclusiveness that is the antithesis of unity.***"

A true relationship with Jesus will result in humility and unity . . . But carnality produces pride and division! Therefore, the only cure for quarreling and division **IS A RENEWED RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS!!!**

We Must Be One In Christ!

1 Corinthians 1:13 *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

What a series of three powerful questions:

- ***Is Christ divided?***
- ***Was Paul crucified for you?***
- ***Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?***

Believers are supposed to be one in Christ and should never do anything that disrupts or destroys that unity. So let me say this plainly . . . **NO HUMAN LEADER, NO MATTER HOW GREAT A TEACHER, SHOULD EVER HAVE THE LOYALTY THAT CAN ONLY BELONG TO THE LORD JESUS!!!**

Remember, Paul began his letter by establishing his authority as an apostle . . . **BUT HERE HE CLEARLY IS SAYING THAT THE FACTION THAT HAS NAMED THEMSELVES AFTER HIM IS WRONG!!!**

His authority had been delegated to him by **JESUS** and therefore **IT IS JESUS WHO DESERVES ALL OF THE GLORY AND OUR ABSOLUTE LOYALTY!!!**

A Christian church that is divided is a contradiction:

1 Corinthians 6:17 *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

1 Corinthians 12:12–13 *For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*

Romans 12:5 *so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*

Ephesians 4:4–6 *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

TO BE DIVIDED IS A DIRECT VIOLATION OF GOD’S WORD AND OF JESUS’ WILL!!!

John 17:20–23 *“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

When we, the church, quarrel and dispute and fight, we are against the Lord before the world, we weaken His church, and worst of all we grieve and put to shame the One Who bought us — Who died to make us one in Him!

- The **Father** is one!
- The **Son** is one!
- The **Spirit** is one!
- And the **Church** is one!

Let's wrap this up . . .

We Must Prioritize Preaching The Gospel!

1 Corinthians 1:14–17 *I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.*

- **Crispus** was the leader of the synagogue in Corinth when Paul first ministered there and was converted under the apostle's preaching.
- His conversion led to that of many others in the city:
Acts 18:8 *Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.*

- Since the letter to the Romans was written from Corinth, this **Gaius** was probably the Corinthian "**host**" to whom Paul refers in Romans:
Romans 16:23 *Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother.*

What Paul clearly says here is that he had personally baptized only those two and a few others. *(This stands in direct opposition to the Church of Christ and others who believe in baptismal regeneration because these people would not be considered "saved" if Paul had only done half the work and not completed it by baptism!)*

Furthermore, Jesus did not baptize anyone personally:
John 4:2 *(though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples),*

To have been baptized by Jesus Himself would have brought almost irresistible temptation to pride and would have tended to set such people apart, whether they wanted to be or not. As an apostle, Paul faced a similar danger. But he also had another: the danger of creating his own cult; and so he declared, ***"I thank God that I baptized none of you."***

It's like Paul was saying, "**How could you even think of showing a loyalty to me that belongs only to the Lord Jesus Christ?**" He wanted no cult built around himself or around any other church leader!

Once again, it is not wrong to have special affection for certain persons, such as the one who baptized us, especially if we were converted under his ministry . . . **BUT IT IS WRONG TO BE PRIDEFUL IN ANY RELATIONSHIP WITH A CHRISTIAN LEADER EXCEPT JESUS HIMSELF!!!**

I also want to point something noteworthy out here . . . Paul was clearly not certain of the exact number he had baptized in Corinth:

1 Corinthians 1:16 *Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. **Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.***

This comment gives an interesting insight into the inspiration of Scripture:

- As an apostle writing the Word of God, Paul made no errors.
- But he was not omniscient.
- God protected His apostles from error in order to protect His Word from error.
- But Paul did not know everything about God or even about himself, and was careful never to make such a claim.
- He knew what God revealed— things he had no way of knowing on his own.
- What he could know on his own, he was prone to forget because he was one of us.

But notice the priority:

1 Corinthians 1:17 ***For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.***

Paul was not sent to start a "cult" of people who were baptized by him . . . But Jesus has sent him with a specific objective:

Acts 26:16–18 ***But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'***

PAUL'S PRIORITY WAS TO PREACH THE GOSPEL . . . AS OURS SHOULD BE ALSO!!!

IF WE HAVE THIS PRIORITY . . . WE WILL HAVE UNITY AND AVOID DIVISION!!!

Let's pray . . .