

4/7/2024

[Connection] Good morning Cornerstone! It is good to be with you this morning. Thank you for joining us this morning. If this is your first time worshiping with us, I want to invite you to fill out our connection card. It just lets us get to know you a little more and be able to connect with you more. If Cornerstone is home for you, you can use our app to check in and let us know you are here. There you can also fill out a prayer request so we can be praying for you throughout the week.

[Title] We are starting a new series this week, called a Church in Crisis. Where we are going to be going through the book of 1 Corinthians. We are going to be in this series for most of the year, but I think this is going to be really good. The church in Corinth was struggling with remaining set apart from their culture. Paul in this letter answers a lot of their questions and challenges for what they were doing as a church. There were many things that he addresses but I think that it is important for us to understand this book because we currently are living in a culture that is forcing its way to every aspect of life, especially the church.

For some of us we are seeing the church progressively blending with the culture. It is quickly becoming hard to see the difference between someone who calls themselves a Christian and anyone else outside of the church. Especially with some of the topics that we are going to talk about in this book. Things like marriage, love, sin, the identity of Christ and so many other things.

We as the body of Christ have to remain set apart and loyal to what the scripture teaches, even when it is difficult to understand, when it makes people uncomfortable or when it contradicts the popular opinion or even our own internal desires. We are going to start off with chapter 1 in 1 Corinthians where Paul deals with the issue of division in the church.

Today our scripture is going to be found in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. If you have your bibles go ahead and turn there, if you would like to follow along with us. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, let's read a part of our passage this morning together which comes from the book of 1 Corinthians 1:10. So let us stand as you are able, out of reverence for God's word as we proclaim the truth in the Scriptures.

[1] SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 1:10

"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment."

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

INTRO

[2] I want to start off with a little background on this church that the letter is addressed to. The city of Corinth was the third largest city in the entire Roman empire. It was at the heart of an important trade route in the ancient world. Because of this prime location of import and export it was a city that grew quickly and was a huge melting pot of various cultures and people buying, selling and transporting goods.

Like most cities that are heavily impacted by trade, there are other things that flourished in the city. Things like sexual immorality, religious diversity, and corruption. Paul comes to the city of Corinth around 50-51 AD. This account is recorded in Acts 18:1-17. We see Paul's ministry to the city beginning with him in the synagogue preaching to the Jews. This was a common strategy of Paul, since he was well educated and fluent in the knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures and knew how to use it to preach the name of Jesus and His fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

In the city of Corinth, Paul had some success. We see a man name Crispis, who is called the ruler of the synagogue, convert to Christianity along with a few others. However, most of the Jews opposed Paul and rose up against him. Paul even shakes his cloak, similar to what Jesus said in Matthew 10:14, he shook the dust off his cloak and moved on. Paul then transitions to preaching to the Gentiles. From there the church grew and Paul even receives a vision from Jesus¹, to encourage Paul to continue on in the city. Jesus tells him that there are many here that are his people.

Paul's main message to the gentiles was to be set apart from the world around them. The cultures that they were from, were often pagan and the world they know was saturated with pagan values and practices. We will often see Paul in these cities preach a similar message, so we can assume that is the same message that was preached to the gentiles in Corinth.

Paul stayed in Corinth a total of 18 months and then went to Syria and then to Ephesus. While in Ephesus, Paul hears these oral reports of how the church was doing back in Corinth and it wasn't a good report. We aren't 100 percent sure what was said in this report, but we know that it was bad enough for Paul to write a letter. Now we do not have this letter, but we know it existed because Paul refers to it in 1 Corinthians 7.

This first letter probably addressed the things that were told to him in the report. The church then responded with a letter back. We don't have this letter either, but we know again from Paul's response that it probably had some questions from the church as well as some challenges to Paul about his first letter. This could have been thing that they didn't agree with or that they were pushing back on what he had said.

This is where we come to Paul's second letter, our book of 1 Corinthians. This letter was probably written around 54-55 AD, so about 4 years after he planted the church and 2.5 years after he left Corinth. The major theme that runs through this book is this drive to live in Christian community. The church and the people in it should function as set apart from the rest of the world. Jesus lived and taught people to live in a way that was counter to the culture and Paul is remaining consistent with Jesus' teachings.

In this letter Paul is addressing the way that they have failed to live according to that set apartness. They had misguided attempt to live in Christian community. What we know from this letter, is that they let the world and the pagan culture of the city corrupt and distort their following of the teachings of Jesus. We even see Paul pointing back to the things that they should already know of living in unity as the body of Christ in his greeting.

BODY

It's almost as if Paul is pointing out what is the right values to have so that they can see the error of their ways before Paul even addresses the issues.

¹ Acts 18:9-10

[3] 1 Corinthians 1:1

"Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,"

Paul points that the authority that he possesses, is not based on his own will or desires, but that it is God that has called him to this ministry and purpose. It is an establishment that he is not coming in his own accord, but the authority that he has, has been given to him by God for this purpose. This was probably to head off any claims from the church that Paul is just saying this because of preference, or someone to claim that it is just what Paul thinks and not what Jesus actually teaches.

[4] 1 Corinthians 1:2

"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:"

Now highlight or underline this verse in your bibles because Paul will make reference to this principle multiple times in this passage. The word that Paul uses for 'church' is the Greek word 'ekklesia'. The people that he is talking to and addressing are those that believe and are in fellowship, so not a building, but those is fellowship under the belief of Christ. He clarifies this further when he says to those sanctified in Christ Jesus. This is the word 'hagiazō' which means to be made holy. This letter is addressed to those in fellowship that are made holy in Christ Jesus.

This church and this group, they are not the only ones that have responded to this calling. All those that are in fellowship and are made Holy in Christ are saints. All believers are unified, not just in this group in the city of Corinth, but they are unified in the universal church, all those in every city that have responded to the gospel. They are unified because that have all claimed Christ is their Lord.

[5] 1 Corinthians 1:3

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is a common greeting from Paul because it is summary of the gospel message. God's work through Christ (grace), brings harmonious relationship with God and one another (peace). Both of these things come from God, and they come through Christ, both grace and peace.

I think Paul again points this out intentionally, because as we know from this letter, they have accepted God's grace in salvation but peace is something currently the church is not exhibiting. They are a church in crisis and it is in grace that Paul is coming to them to confront these issues with them.

[6] 1 Corinthians 1:4

"I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,"

It is in grace that he is able to be thankful for them. He says this because he was probably disheartened by the reports and the letter that he received about them and from them. They have strayed so far from the truth in the 2.5 years Paul has been gone. He is thankful despite their immorality because they are still engaged in with the Christian community. By them remaining involved, it provides opportunity for them to change, which Paul is thankful for.

[7] 1 Corinthians 1:5-8

“that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

He wants them to be enriched in 3 ways, in their speech, in their knowledge and in the gifts of the Spirit. Speech being their testimony or words in action. Their knowledge or understanding, especially concerning Christ and the Holy Spirit, but also the gifts that come from the spirit. These gifts they received by the grace that is previously mentioned.

Paul knows that among them are those who are true believers. He says that the testimony of Christ has been confirmed among them. This points to 2 things. There are the genuine conversions that Paul would have witnessed while he was there planting and building the church. The second is reference to the vision that he received in Acts 18:9-10. This was the vision where Christ said that he had many of his people in the city of Corinth and Paul must continue on in his ministry there and not to be afraid.

This is all to show that Paul genuinely knows they are true converts. Being true converts, they have the Holy Spirit. That Spirit is using the gifts among them to continue to build the church as they are waiting for the revealing of Christ. This ‘revealing’ is in reference to the second coming of Christ. Something that all of them are waiting eagerly for, just as we are today. It is through Christ that they will be sustained until this second coming, when they will be presented to the father Holy and blameless, because of Christ.

They are to trust that this is true, and that this will come to pass because...

[8] 1 Corinthians 1:9

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

It is God that has called them into this fellowship. The word Paul uses is ‘koinonia’, which is a partnership, where they are helping each other, all because of the work of Christ.

So far, even in this opening statement from Paul, he is addressing things whether they realize it or not. He has pointed out the values and the principles that their faith and the fellowship within the church, the values that they are supposed to have. Paul points this out because he knows that these are the things that they are lacking in. By stating all of these things it now gives the church a baseline of the principles that Paul is working from to address the issues in their fellowship, and the issues within it.

This is where Paul dives into this issue of division in the church. The problem that is presented to him are these factions or groups that have formed. These divisions are based upon who the people are identifying as their leaders or by whose teaching they follow.

[9] 1 Corinthians 1:10

“I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment”

This appeal that Paul is presenting is similar to his initial greeting. The authority that these things are being addressed by is not Paul’s authority, but it is the authority of Jesus. The one that these people have confessed is their Lord. The word Paul uses is ‘kyrios’ which is used to describe someone that was a land

owner, Lord over the land they possess. It usually was in reference to a land owner that also owned slaves. They would have been identified, by the slaves, as the individual that is Lord over them.

In the same way these people, who are in the church, are a possession of Christ. They have willingly entered into this partnership or 'koinonia' as his servant. They serve him because he is their Lord. This ownership, and Christ authority as Lord, is the authority that should not only convince them, but should be enough for them to submit to the values that are going to be said in this appeal.

Christ's desire is that there should be nothing that separates one from another that are in this fellowship. There should be no divisions between them. They should be united by the same mind and judgement. Mind is the word 'nois' which is pointing to 'reasoning or intuition' and judgement is the word 'gnome' which is 'opinion or counsel'. He is saying that they should all have the same mentality and the same way of thinking, because they all have the same spirit within them, the Holy Spirit, and they all serve the same master. They should all be in agreement on how the Spirit works among them, as well as the type of values that Christ would have them to hold to. The values that Paul mentioned in verse 2.

[10] 1 Corinthians 1:11

"For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers."

This person mentioned here, Chloe, would have been someone that the church knew. They were probably someone with a business that dealt with the economic climate of the city and was probably traveling to Ephesus for business. This where they probably ran into Paul and delivered this report to him.

The biggest thing that Paul notices from this report is quarrelling among them. It was a 'strife, argument, or a rivalry' that was building among the people. Paul, I believe, intentionally addresses them as brother in this calling out of their bickering. Reinforcing this family bond that they should have. It should be the type of unity that should exist within a family.

This strife or rivalry has created divisions within this community, and it is based on who they are following.

[11] 1 Corinthians 1:12

"What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."

They are arguing amongst themselves because of the teachings of one person over the other. Apollos was a disciple of Paul that came to Corinth after Paul had left. Cephas is the Aramaic word for Peter after Jesus changed his name. Although there is no record of Peter ever coming to Corinth. These people were creating associations that were unnecessary and causing problems and arguments. Paul knew that these were about personality issues instead of theological issues. He goes on to say...

[12] 1 Corinthians 1:13

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

This is obviously a Rhetorical question; they should already know the answer. Of course, Christ is not divided. But he uses this question to make his point. It is Christ who is one with his body, so the church should be one with Christ as well, again pointing to verse 2. This could also be a critic to the church,

because they are making these affiliations and Christ is being reference in the same category as other church leaders, which he shouldn't. Christ is the head over the entire body², he is not one of the many teachers that he could be picked in comparison to Paul, Apollos, or Peter.

[13] 1 Corinthians 1:14-16

"I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)"

Paul points out this affiliation that they are claiming, is in reference to their salvation and their baptism. Salvation and baptism are not about affiliation or association. Which is why he said 'is it in the name of Paul that you have been baptized' in verse 13. Salvation and Baptism are about obedience and acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Which is why he said that he is thankful that he only baptized a few as to not create an unnecessary distinction between them, and he only mentions three people that he can remember. He says that these things are about the gospel, and no other conclusion should be drawn from it.

[14] 1 Corinthians 1:17

"For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."

Even though Paul did baptize people, he believed that his primary responsibility was preaching the gospel, as he says in multiple other occasions in his letters³. Then he says something that is a bit puzzling at first glance. He says that he is not going to preach the gospel with 'words of eloquent wisdom'. We might look at that and think 'well if you're preaching the gospel doesn't wisdom kind of happen by accident. I mean it is the gospel'. You would be right, but that is not what Paul means.

The word for eloquent here is 'sophia', which means 'highest intellectual gift'. He is referencing the enticing words of man's wisdom. In the Greek culture at the time, men would have prided themselves on their ability to be articulate and well spoken. It could often be used as a ruse to falsely portray wisdom. This is that guy that walks around and uses big words unnecessarily in order for you to think that he is really smart. We all know someone like that, some of you are pointing fingers.

What Paul is saying is that he is not going to preach the gospel to convince anyone with his words. He desires that they would be convinced and converted by the power of the gospel and not by the way he speaks. Paul goes as far as to say that preaching like this is to empty the cross of Christ of its power. If credit for the saving work of Christ were because of Paul in his words or excellent argument and speech, then it would diminish the power of the gospel and create false converts. They would have been persuaded by Paul and not by the truth of the gospel.

GOSPEL

[15] The gospel's purpose is to do what humanity cannot do on their own, which is free them from the sin and put them in right standing with God. Paul desires that the success of the gospel message be because it is true and not because of the art of his speech. He does not want to eclipse the gospel with his skill.

² Ephesians 1:22, 5:23-24

³ Rom 15:20; 2 Cor 10:16; Gal 1:8

Jesus died for our sins, so we must repent and believe. Plain and simple truth and that is the gospel. This is beneficial to those that might be intimidated by this idea of sharing the gospel. We don't have to do it with fancy words or skillfully crafted arguments. The truth needs no artificial dress. The plain preaching of the crucified Christ is more powerful than all the oratory and philosophy that the sinful world could muster.

APPLICATION

Paul in this passage, addresses the power of the gospel. The power they should know and live in, but aren't. He skillfully addresses this issue of division in the church by establishing the values that we are to hold to. Then he addresses the divisions that are being caused. He addresses them with the values of the gospel to put an end to the division. By being divided the church is compromising their testimony to the city they are attempting to minister to.

Now we can look at this and it can be kind of depressing to think about how far we have come. Look at the state of the church now. From the outside looking in there are so many divisions in the thing that is supposed to be united in one God and all the saints are united under one Lord, even just in our tiny town of Auburn. We have the Pentecostals, the Catholics, the Lutherans, Presbyterians, the Baptist and then us who are non-denominational. Which to some it appears like we just could choose a camp, so we sat on the fence. That is just a joke and another conversation for another time.

When it comes to the topic of division, we have to look at what it is that divides us. In the modern church there are 2 things that are the common causes of division. One is good and the other is not. There are Issues of theology and then there is personal preference.

When it comes to theology, these are issues that should be labored over. The bible instructs us to rightly handle the word of God⁴. We should absolutely stand firm on the things that are considered essential truths of our faith. Christians are charged to rightly handle the word of God, but elders and teachers are going to be judged more harshly⁵. This is because of the authority that is given to people in this position as they lead and guide the church based on the truth in scripture.

If we do not take an accurate and biblical stance on the essential truths in scripture they absolutely need to be called out, this potentially and appropriately could divide a church if it is not corrected. Now what are these essential truths? Here is a brief overview of each of these. If you would like a more detailed stance on these with biblical references to each statement, there is a print out on the resource folder hanging in the foyer.

[16] Scripture: It is the inerrant word of God. Without error written by the Holy Spirit by the hands of men.

God: There is one God, holy and pure, sovereign, omniscient and all powerful. He is a triune being existing as 1 God in 3 persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus: Is the son of God incarnate in flesh. He came to earth and died for the sins of the world.

⁴ 1 Timothy 2:14-16

⁵ James 3:1

Salvation: It is only through repentance and belief in Christ that someone can be saved.

The Church: It is the fellowship of people that believe in Christ and it is the bride of Christ of which he is the head.

These essential truths should be held rigidly and cannot be compromised on. If there is a theological compromise, there is a right way to handle it. We shouldn't just create an uprising and overthrow leaders. We talked about this last year but confrontation and the way it should be handled is outlined in Matthew 18:15-20.

[17] First you go to the person one on one. Talk with them present your evidence where they were you perceive they are in the wrong but you speak the truth in love⁶. This give the opportunity for you and your brother or sister to be reconciled and unified in the biblical truth. If they do not listen, then you bring 2 or 3 witnesses. If they still won't listen, you bring it before the elders. If they still won't listen, then it is brought before the church. Finally if they still won't listen, you are to cast them out of the fellowship and treat them as an unbeliever. Treat them as someone who is not united in Christ and someone who does not claim Jesus as their Lord.

These theological concerns should be confronted and evidence of these claims or compromises should stand on truth found in scripture. This outline provides an opportunity for sharpening⁷. It maintains the Christian fellowship that is the environment for change and the issues can be resolved with the intention of unity.

If theological issues can be reasons for division, what are the things that shouldn't? In short, it is everything else that is not an essential truth.

[18] These are the things in the grey areas. Things that are not solidified in black and white. These are things like Eschatology, or views on the end times, baptism, sprinkling or submersion, Matters of personal preference, personality differences and the biggest thing is conflict. None of these things should cause division in the church.

[19] What is worse is that division will spread like wildfire through gossip, and it will build resentment in people. If Joe and Jane have a problem, and Jane vents about this problem to Jill. Well now Jill is mad at Joe and they have a problem. If Joe and Jane talk and settle the issue. Things are not settled with Jill and the resentment builds. Which is why the Matthew 18 outline starts with, if you have a problem with a person you go to that person to handle it.

[20] Where it builds resentment, it also builds revolt. Conflict divides by creating sides. There is your side and their side. When you do not resolve the issue with that person and you gather people in agreement with you, now you have a faction and divisions. You have created a 'us verse them' mentality.

For Corinth, it was who they follow, Paul, Apollos, and Peter. For us it can be things that seem big like politics, democrats vs Republicans, Liberal verse conservative. Or it is something even smaller things like when something changes in the church, and we don't like it, and everything inbetween. Division can even be created by leaders. Pastors and elders in the church will abuse their power and position of

⁶ Eph 4:15

⁷ Proverbs 27:17

influence that comes with their position. It can divide the people that they have influence over. Or when we have conflict, misunderstandings or false assumptions, and we react instead of dealing with the issues, we create divisions.

We spend too much time drawing lines in the sand on the things that are preferences and interpretation and none of them are the essential truths. Anything outside of those core things, should not, and cannot be allowed to create division in the church. To abandon fellowship for any other reason than the essential theological truths, is divisive and does not promote sharpening, growth or unity within the body of Christ.

So, then what do we do when someone is being divisive or causing division?

[21] First we have to realize that we are all playing on the same team, we are to be united in the same mind and same judgement (1:10). When we apply that concept the first thing that we are to do is to point them to resolution, point them to the avenue of unity. The things that are preference can be important to an individual, especially when it involves a conflict, but we should make an effort not to be divisive and pursue unity. When we see this happen or it happens within us, we point them to the Matthew 18 model to go to them one on one and seek unity between them.

Do not entertain their gossip for the sake of protecting their feelings. Do not watch idly by as they gather likeminded individuals that are fueled by the conflict. There is no unity in that, but before we come down hard on people we perceive to be divisive, we come to the second thing.

[22] We have to recognize our need for Jesus. When we speak to each other we are united as family and should be to each other as such. Remembering Ephesians 4:15, we are to speak the truth in love. Paul reminds us in his opening greeting that grace and peace came through Christ and if he is our Lord, if the Holy Spirit is working in us to sanctify us and make us holy we should be a conduit of that grace and peace to others.

[23] The final thing is Jesus' desire. He does not want his body divided⁸. Jesus seeks as the groom to present his bride holy and blameless before the father⁹. If Jesus does not want his house divided we need to cut division off before it starts and can cause damage to the fellowship, the 'koinonia', the partnership that is between us as his church.

Division needs to be shut down if it is not an essential truth theological position. Even if it is, there is a right way and a wrong way to handle it. Because even if it is a serious theological issues, it should not create factions unnecessarily. It should not turn into, 'well I follow Joe' or 'I like Justin's preaching better'. We don't need to be separated, we need to be unified.

[24] We strive to unity ALWAYS!

We want to live in the principle that Paul laid out in verse 2 and 3.

[25] 1 Corinthians 1:2-3

⁸ John 17:21; Eph 4:1-3; 1 Cor 1:10

⁹ Eph 5:27

“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: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

COMMUNION