

1 Corinthians

Gospel-Centered Living in a Sin-Centered World

Section 1: Unity and the Gospel

The Necessity of Maturity for Unity

A Distorted Frame of Mind to be Corrected

1 Corinthians 4:6-13

Introduction

ILLUS:

Unrealized Potential, The Danger of Division, The Power of God's Wisdom, Call, Message, and Spirit, The Necessity of Maturity for Unity (The Food to be Eaten, The Field to be Planted, The Foundation to be Built Upon, and The Family to be Indwelt), but what they were in reality was A Dysfunctional Family that needed to be Confronted (because if they were busy Serving, Stewarding, Searching, Seeking they would not have time to be Judgmental), so Paul knew that they had A Distorted Frame of Mind to be Corrected.

This section began with Paul's Plea

1 Corinthians 1:10 (NKJV) — 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.

And ends with

1 Corinthians 4:21 (NKJV) — 21 What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

It is surprising to many believers to read in context because they are surprised to find such sarcasm in the Scripture. Granted it is sanctified sarcasm – but nonetheless – brutal and biting.

The Same Difference (6-7)

“These things”

While we don’t know all of what “These things” include, they certainly include the metaphors Paul used beginning in 3:5 concerning He and Apollos regarding the food, the field, the foundation, and the family.

“Figuratively Transferred”

Used only by Paul and 3 of those times in ...

2 Corinthians 11:13–15 (NKJV) — 13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. **14** And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. **15** Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into

ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

What Paul was saying is that I have been using Apollos and myself as examples – but you are who I am really talking about!

For 2 Purposes:

1. To learn not to think beyond what is written.
Is Paul referring to what he has written up to this point or to the Scripture he has quoted up to this point – the answer is yes!

Ultimately, Paul is saying that they should live according to God's Word – not taking away or adding to.

Deuteronomy 4:2 (NKJV) — 2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

“Godly respect turns into ungodly exaltation when we exceed what is written ... What God intends as a means of unity Satan turns into a means of division.” (MacArthur, 107)

“To live within the boundaries prescribed by Scripture, to live in a way consistent with what the Scripture has to say about human wisdom.” (Taylor, 118)

2. None will be puffed up one against another.

“Puffed Up” comes from the term meaning “a bellows.” It speaks of being inflated or full of air.

This is the first appearance of the word here in 1 Corinthians, but it will appear at least 4 more times. This indicates that the root of all the troubles in the church was pride.

Surely, Paul is referring to the factions within the church that coalesced behind he and Apollos.

“Paul has transformed the slogan ‘I belong to Paul’ (1:12) to ‘Paul and others belong to you’ (3:22) to ‘You belong to Christ’ (3:23) to ‘You don’t have anything that you did not receive!’ (4:7).” (Taylor, 120)

Who ... makes you differ from another. (God)

1 Corinthians 4:7a (CSB) — 7a For who makes you so superior ... (no one)

“The English equivalent ... would be, ‘Who in the world do you think you are, anyway? What kind of self-delusion is it that allows you to put yourself in a position to judge another ...?’” (Fee, 186)

What ... do you have that you didn’t receive

Why ... do you boast as if you didn’t receive it

James 1:17 (NKJV) — 17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from

the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

ILLUS: Young preacher asked, "Please pray that I will stay humble." The response. "Tell me, what do you have to be proud about?"

"The Fall has given us all too high a view of ourselves, with a correspondingly low view of others." (Fee, 185-186)

John 3:27 (NKJV) — 27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

For the members of the church at Corinth, as we will see in detail in chapters 12 and 14, instead of being humbled and grateful for their God-given gifts, they had become arrogant and prideful using them as a sign of their status rather than a means of service to God.

"There is a very close relationship between unbelief and pride ... Unbelief is a turning away from Jesus (or God) in order to seek satisfaction in other things. Pride is a turning away from God specifically to take satisfaction in self." (Piper quoted by Akin and Merritt, 84)

"There is no man that has anything of excellency from himself; therefore, the man that extols himself is a fool and an idiot." (Akin & Merritt, 86)

Are we different? Absolutely, but we have the same difference!

The Already Not Yet (8-13)

“Who, when he lays eyes upon me, does not feel that he is seeing his king and master? (Epictetus in Diatr. 3.22.49). The Corinthians believe that they are spiritually filled, abounding in riches, and ruling the world.” (Schreiner, 102)

You think you’re already full

“Full” here means “satiated” or “satisfied.”

“They were fully satisfied with themselves, satiated with their good opinion of themselves, smugly complacent.” (Phillips, 99)

You think you’re already rich

You think you’re king of the world

Were it not for the context, the Corinthians would have believed what Paul was saying because that is exactly what they believed.

They think they have arrived ... as did the church at Laodicea in ...

Revelation 3:17 (NKJV) — 17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

Yet, they had forgotten who they were when Christ found them ...

1 Corinthians 1:26–29 (NKJV) — 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. **27** But

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; **28** and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, **29** that no flesh should glory in His presence.

They had not arrived ...

And neither had Paul ...

Paul's trail to Corinth had led through Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, through Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. He had been imprisoned, stoned, whipped, and flogged all along the way. He had been mocked and maligned. He had been treated with utter contempt. He supported himself by plying his needle at the dreary and unpleasant task of tent making." (Phillips, 101)

He thought, I wish that you were reigning because we would be reigning with you.

This has eschatological undertones – if they as believers were really reigning it would be in Heaven and Paul and the apostles would be reigning with them. But that was not the case!

“To the present hour” and “until now” in verses 11 and 13 respectively note that all of what Paul is saying is his and (the apostles present reality).

But as it stands, God had put the apostles on display as a spectacle to the world (really to the universe – men and angels).

The term translated here as spectacle is where we get our term theater. It is an allusion to the killing of Christians as the finally of Christians at the Roman Colosseum.

“When the ‘main events’ were ended, then the poorest and weakest of the prisoners were brought in to fight the beasts.” (Wiersbe, 583)

“It might be well said for all believers that their lives in Christ become a public spectacle.” (Patterson)

Matthew 5:14–16 (NKJV) — 14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **16** Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

But not in the way that we would desire!

“If it came to rank within the church there was no higher rank ... than apostle ... If the apostles weren’t reigning, nobody was reigning.” (Phillips, 99)

of ...

Condemned Life

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV) — 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

Foolish Wisdom

You are “wise” – not Sophia but another term from wise with the root “to think.” They weren’t wise, they just thought they were!

1 Corinthians 3:18–19a (NKJV) — 18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

19a For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God ...

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” (Jim Elliot)

Strongly Weak

2 Corinthians 12:9–10 (NKJV) — 9 And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in

distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

"Strength that knows itself to be strength is weakness; but weakness that knows itself to be weakness becomes strength."
(Wiersbe, 584)

Distinguished Dishonor

There is a play on words here with "distinguished" coming from the Greek term "doxa" meaning glory and the preposition "in." They thought they were in the glory.

Dishonored is an alpha privative word meaning "not precious"

Satisfying Hunger

John 6:35a (NKJV) — 35a And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger ...

Quenching Thirst

John 4:14 (NKJV) — 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

Fashionable Rags

This was the apostles Sunday best

Victoriously Beaten

Romans 8:18 (NKJV) — 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Homeless Mansion

Hebrews 13:14 (NLT) — 14 For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.

John 14:1–3 (NKJV) — 1 “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. **2** In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Privileged Labor

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NKJV) — 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Blessed by Insults

Matthew 5:11a,c (NKJV) — 11a “Blessed are you when they revile ... **c** and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Thriving in Persecution

Matthew 5:11a, c, 12 (NKJV) — 11 “Blessed are you when they ... persecute you ... **12** Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Exalted in Humiliation

Matthew 23:12 (NKJV) — 12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Sanitized Refuse / Clean Dirt

To Purify Around and to Clean Off

Lamentations 3:45 (NKJV) — 45 You have made us an offscouring and refuse In the midst of the peoples.

Conclusion

“This is an admittedly difficult text to hear well in the contemporary church, especially in Western cultures ... we try desperately to identify with Paul, when in fact we are probably much more like the Corinthians than any of us dare to admit.” (Fee, 198)

If Paul had continued in his life as a Pharisee mentored by Gamaliel, he would have lived a privileged life.

“A life measured by the cross holds to a profoundly different standard.” (Taylor, 116)

“Paul is not calling for pity here. He's not playing the victim card ... What he is doing, without ever mentioning the word “cross”, is reminding them that at the heart of the gospel is the shamed, brutalized and humiliated Son of Man, who had nowhere to lay his head – and that Christians take their cue from him rather than from those whom the world elevates and admires.” (Wilson, 43)

John 13:16 (NKJV) — 16 Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.