

I CORINTHIANS
Chapter 1:10-17

VERSES 10-12 - INTRODUCTION:

In his appeal for change, Paul did not forget what he had previously written about the Corinthians. They were the church of God, sanctified saints that had been called unto the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore, Paul approached them as brethren. This was a loving gesture and approach. Paul was not stern with them as he was with the Galatians: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?" The use of the word "beseech" shows his soft approach. Paul did not command them; rather he exhorted or urged them. The authority for the appeal came through Christ. Paul's message or letter did not contain mere human counsel; rather what he wrote was the voice of Christ telling His church what they ought to do. Disobedience to the epistle would result in divine chastisement; obedience would bring the Lord's blessings. Satan is the author of confusion and wants to get ill feelings and false practice in every New Testament church he can. That was his objective with the Church at Corinth.

VERSE 10

The apostle writes in tenderness and grief because of the shameful behavior of the church. The enemies of the truth used this against Paul and said "He is a coward and weak and won't back up what he says". The pastor cannot fleece the poor, weak sheep every time and help it, he must deal with them in love and compassion to feed them.

Paul hoped to achieve three goals by his appeal in the latter part of verse 10. The first was their unity of speech. "That ye all speak the same thing", that ye hold the same doctrine". This exhortation evidently refers to their holding and expressing the same religious sentiments and is designed to rebuke that kind of contention (disagreement) and strife (conflict) which is shown where different opinions are held and expressed. To "speak the same thing", is opposite to speaking different or conflicting things and to being contentious.

Not everyone will ever see eye to eye and be in perfect agreement on everything, this can never be expected among men on the subject of religion any more than any other subject. Yet, on the great and fundamental doctrines of God's Word, Christians may agree to show a good spirit and disagree in an agreeable way even on those things they disagree on.

The second goal was the elimination of schisms. The Greek word of "divisions" is schismata, transliterated into the English as "schisms". The church was still a church but was marked by the internal strife. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth but he also was speaking to the individuals within the church. Paul wanted the schisms (divisions) to be removed that were in the church (Note: 11:18) and to remain without divisions after the problems had been solved. The divisions within the church were not what God had intended for His local church. I Corinthians 12:24-25.

The final goal was the unity of mind and judgment. The word used here, "perfectly joined together", means to properly restore, mend or repair that which is rent or disordered, or to correct that which is morally evil. Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19 give a great example of this word. The apostle's desire was for the church to be united as a well built machine with all parts having its place and purpose or as a human body with all parts working together for the common good of the whole body. Chapter 12:12-31 goes into more detail. The church was to be united, not divided. Considering the relationship in which Christians stand to each other in Christ, conflict among them is contrary to a spiritual relation with God and each other as conflict between the members of the human body.

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The Bible says, - “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment”. How can that be if we do not all see eye to eye? It would be a small church if everyone had to see eye to eye about everything. An old Quaker had left one meeting place after another and finally someone said to him, “Well what church are you in now”? He said, “I am in the true church at last!” When asked how many belong to it, his reply was, “Just my wife and myself and I am not sure about my wife sometimes.” It would all boil down to the fact if we could not have fellowship with any one except for those who see things exactly as we do.

Still the question, what about the, “same mind”? We have the mind of Christ. This “same mind”, is the lowly mind, the subject mind, the mind that was shown by Jesus Christ. You may look at things one way and I look at them another way, but if we have the same mind of Christ, we are not going to quarrel, but will get along in sweet and joyful fellowship considering one another and praying for one another.

What about “the same judgment”, what does it mean? We read that we are to increase in knowledge and in all judgment. This does not mean judging one another, but it means discernment (def. to make out clearly, to tell the difference, judgment).

Every believer has the Spirit of God dwelling within him to give him discernment and when things come up about which we differ, if we depend upon the guidance of the Spirit of God, He will give the discernment we need. Some of us never get very far in real discernment and the reason is that we neglect the study of the Word of God.

VERSE 11:

Paul had received a report which he regarded as fact and not a rumor and tells them exactly who brought the bad report. Paul would not have accepted idol gossip, “Now, I know such-and-such about so-and-so, but don’t dare tell them that I told you”. Paul as well at the church at Corinth knew the members of Chloe’s household. It was not gossip but facts and Paul most readily reported the sources of this information.

The report acknowledged that there were “contentions” within the church. This word means more than just a difference of opinion, it implies quarrels, or power struggles within the church. It is one of the works of sinful flesh, translated as “variance”, Galatians 5:20. The contentions therefore, were not quiet and subtle. The believers were acting and talking like unsaved men, (c.f. 3:3) not like children of God within the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

VERSE 12:

Paul now goes from the general to the specific. The phrase “Now this I say,” has the modern-day meaning, “This is what I mean”. The contentions were over personalities, not over principles. It appears as if all of the Corinthians were involved in this sin, (c.f. “every one of you”). The church members had taken sides, following one human leader to the neglect of others. Who were these leaders? Paul named four: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, (or Peter) and Christ. Certainly these four would not have condoned this spirit of favoritism which was contrary to the spiritual oneness with Christ.

Did the Apostle really mean Paul or Apollos when he wrote those names or did he use them symbolically? Note: 4:6. “I am of Paul” - - Paul, the teacher. “I like real Bible teaching, I do not have much use for this other kind of things. “I am of Apollos” - - Apollos was an eloquent man and mighty in scripture.

Some might say, “I like a man who can stand up and give me a wonderful oration, a man who can give a great sermon and winding up with a point that almost brings you out of the seat.

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That is the man for me. I am concerned about those dry Bible teachers, I want something to thrill my blood and stir my soul.”

Others say, “I am of Cephas”, “I like the practical man, the man who over and over again used the words, I stir you up”.

And the others said, “Well, you may have Paul and Apollos, and Cephas, but I am of Christ. I am not interested in any one else. I do not need any man to teach me that I am of Christ and I am holier than thou”. Have you ever seen such crowd? They are the most conceited of all.

In support of the literal meaning of the names, it is true that Paul, Apollos, and Peter had all visited Corinth - Acts 18:1, 24, 19:1; I Corinthians 9:5. Although they preached the same message, their methods and personalities were different. The Corinthians may have gathered behind those men whose ministries may have blessed them. What about the Christ group? They may have completely rejected all human teachers and simply held to the statement of Christ.

Now, personally, I believe, using chapter 4:6, Paul is saying, “You see, I have simply used this figuratively”. It was not actually Paul and Apollos, it was men in their own local group and they were saying, “Well, I am for this brother and I am for this other one”, and another, “I am of Christ and I am not interested in any of the rest of them”. And so Paul put in his own name and that of Apollos and Cephas to illustrate how wrong this was. In either case, the problem was laid bare for all to see and made aware of.

VERSE 13:

Since disunity was the major sin at Corinth, Paul devoted more time and space to its solution than to any other problem. Actually, the first four chapters - 1:13 - 4:21, are dedicated to the cure of this terrible condition.

The grounds of our faithfulness to Christ are: First, that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Second, that He hath redeemed us. Third, that we are consecrated to Him in baptism. All these grounds uniquely belong to Christ. To no other being in the universe do children of God have such a relationship and hold in common than with the Lord.

“Is Christ divided?” - Of course the answer is no. As Christ is incapable of division, as there can be one Christ, the church cannot be divided. It is contrary to its nature to be split into hostile groups.

His human body was not to be divided, a bone of Him was not to be broken, and the seamless garment he wore was not to be rent asunder: nor is His body, the church, to be torn in pieces by schisms and divisions; nor is any one part of His Gospel different from or opposite to another part of it. His doctrine is the same whether it is preached by one minister or another and is peaceful, uniform, and in agreement with itself. Folks, Christ is not divided nor should His church be divided.

“Was Paul crucified for you?” - No! He had taught them another doctrine: namely, that Christ was crucified for them, and He died for their sins and bought them with the price of His own blood. They were not to be servants of men, to call any man “master” but worship and give honor to the one whose blood had redeemed them. They were not their own but His and ought to glorify Him with their souls, bodies, which are His.

When Paul asked this question he expected an answer, of course, a negative answer. Faith in Paul cannot save. Paul, himself was a sinner, the chief of sinners by his own confession, I Timothy 1:15. How could he die as a substitute for sins? How could he bear the sin, guilt and penalty of other men when he could not even redeem himself? Note: Philippians 3:7-9. If men

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had exalted Paul for their salvation experience through his evangelistic preaching, they were wrong. This was the point Paul wanted to make. Trusting in a man will not save anyone, therefore, do not exalt a human leader no matter how much of a blessing he has been to you. Respect him, love him and follow him, but do not place him on a pedestal to the point that you forget he is just a sinner saved by grace.

“Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” No! You were baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The apostle did not pretend to be the author of a new revelation or the establisher of a new religion. Instead, he was a preacher of the Gospel, and administrator of the ordinances of Christ, to whom worship and service are devoted and not to the service of men.

Don't get the idea as some have, that the Apostle Paul was putting a slur on baptism, nor to imply that baptism was an unimportant event nor was to be neglected as an ordinance of the Lord's church. He is recognizing it as a very important thing. When you become a Christian, in whose name were you baptized? You were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore you belong to Him.

VERSES 14-16:

It was the duty of the Apostles to baptize – Matthew 28:19. Paul, however, rejoiced that he had administered the ordinance of baptism to only a few persons in Corinth, therefore no one could claim that he was making disciples to himself.

Crispus was the chief ruler of the synagogue in Corinth whose conversion is recorded in Acts 18:8. Gaius is mentioned in Romans 16:23 as the host of the Apostle during his visit to Corinth in his third missionary journey. Also, his house served as the meeting place for the church. Stephanas was one of the three church messengers who had brought a gift of money and the letter of inquiry to Paul, 16:17. His family was identified as the “first-fruits”, if not the first.

Paul was not after personal prestige. He pointed men to Christ not to himself. He baptized in Christ's name and not his.

VERSE 17:

Paul claimed that Christ did not send him to be a baptizer, but to be a preacher. Paul is in no way casting a reflection on baptism, for this would be contradictory to his previous and future teaching declaring it as the picture of the new life in Christ – Romans 6:26, but he clearly denies that he considers baptism essential to the remission of sin or the means of obtaining forgiveness. Thus, the gospel which “is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”, - Romans 1:16, does not include baptism as a necessary step to salvation. Paul did baptize 1:14, 16 and so did his some of his brethren.

Paul also knew that he was responsible to Christ not only for what he preached, but how he preached it. Content and method must harmonize. Faulty content is heretical and so is a wrong method. If worldly logic or non-scriptural reasons were used to move sinners to a decision for Christ, then the cross had been stripped of its divine importance. The faithful preaching of the cross results in men ceasing to put their trust in any human device and relying rather on God's work in Christ.

Thus, Paul wanted the Corinthians to see that the person of Christ had sent him to focus men's hearts on the cross of Christ. In the church there should be loyalty to Christ first and foremost.

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WORKSHEET

1. What does the word “beseech” mean?
2. What were the three goals that Paul hoped to achieve in writing this letter?
3. How important is it that a church be united?
4. What does being of the “same mind” mean?
5. What about the “same judgment”?
6. Paul declared there to be “contentions” in the church, what does “contentions” mean?
7. Describe the four divisions and the type of speaker or leader that each were.
8. What was the major sin at Corinth?
9. What does “vicariously” mean? Explain.
10. Verses 10-17 are very important verses to establish the fact that baptism is not necessary for salvation. Explain.