

SUBJECT :

Unity or Divisions

BIBLE BASIS:

Lesson Scripture: 1Corinthians 1:10-17

BIBLE TRUTH:

A house divided against itself cannot stand

MEMORY VERSE:

I Corinthians 1:13

Lesson Aim

**To teach believer not to be influenced by Cliques
and avoid decisive groups in the church**

Introduction

- Paul opens his letter to the Corinthians by noting reports of divisions within the church and spends the first four chapters of this book addressing this serious problem. A divided church cannot fulfill its purpose nor its mission divided against itself. Matt. 12:25
- We also have divisions outside our local churches among leaders. To establish unity among church leaders requires a paradigm shift. A paradigm is a way of thinking. In a city we have many congregations which must come together to represent one church or the Body of Christ. This kind of thinking is necessary for the church to start to win entire cities for the kingdom. Denomination, ethnic divides are demonic
- The welfare of our cities are in the hands of the Church. If our citizens and elected official are not prayed for and supported by the Body of Christ, we are giving the devil the upper hand in the institution that control the spiritual climate of our cities. Jer. 29:7, 1Tim 2:1-4, Ezek 22:30, 2Chr.7:14
- The church at Corinth was in a sad state. The fellowship among believers had deteriorated to such a degree that the church was about to crumble and collapse. This was not the only problem in the church, it was the first problem Paul needed to deal with for a house divided against itself cannot stand.
- Thank God there is an answer to every division, no matter how severe and threatening. We have been given the spirit of unity. Eph. 4:1-3
- You can only keep what you already have. The Church has been commanded to keep the unity of the spirit, but we have failed. Satan doesn't mind us going to Church. He just doesn't want us to get together. Why?
- Unity in the Body of Christ is Gods witness or a sign to the world that God sent his Son into the world. John 17:20-23

Together We Stand

- 1 Cor. 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. [11] For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.
- Paul opens his letter by reminding the believer of the wonderful blessings they have in Christ. 1Cor. 1:2-9
- He commends them before he reproves them for their sin; for they were living beneath their privileges as Christians. They were not walking worthy of their calling in Christ. Paul's number one issue with the Corinthians was a matter of church divisions. 1Cor. 3:1-3
- The sad new of their splits had come to Paul from the household of Chloe. Their were divisions and contentions in the church. 1Cor. 11:18-34,
- Why is it that bad new of church troubles spreads so rapidly, while the good new of the Gospel never seems to spread abroad?
- Paul begs them to be perfectly joined together which is a medical term that refers to the setting of a bone that was broken or out of place. When ever Christians cannot get along, the Body of Christ suffers and the ministry of reconciliation is crippled. 1Cor. 12:14-28

Divided We Fall

- [12] Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.
- Here Paul explains why they were divided: they had their eyes on men instead of on Christ. They were trusting in the wisdom of men; they were glorying and boasting about men. 1Cor. 4:6, 2Cor. 10:7, Jer. 9:23-24
- Paul proves that this infatuation with men is a mark of carnal living, and evidence that these saints were babes in Christ. 1Cor. 3:1-8
- There were four factions in the church. One group followed Paul. Paul was the apostle to the gentiles. He also was not a good speaker, but a great administrator, and teacher of doctrine, and establishing churches. Rom.11:13, 2Cor. 10:10,
- Another group followed Apollos, the learned orator. They probably were Jews which had Grecian background and loved his eloquent speech. Acts 18:24-28
- The third group, probably Jew, leaned toward Peter, the apostle to the Jews. His ministry was focused on preserving Jew customs. Gal 2:7
- The fourth group tried to prove it was more spiritual than the rest by following Christ alone. Paul explains Christ is not divided. 12:12-13.
- Christ died for us, not these men. We are baptized in the Name of Christ, not these men.
- Paul goes on to say that he is happy he did not baptize any more then he did in Corinth, lest the division be even worse.

Paul Speaks To The Clique

- [13] Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?
- In three short questions Paul shows the impact of divisive cliques at the core of the gospel.
- Cliques divide Christ. A clique always thinks it is right, no matter how divisive its position is, and it wants its way. Jesus Christ cannot be divided. There is only one Lord, only one Person who is called the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not two persons. He nor His will can be split into two divisive cliques. Eph. 1:22, 4:4-5
- Cliques elevate men to the place of saviors. Paul was not crucified for the Corinthians; therefore, he was not the savior of the Corinthians nor of any other body of believers. Believers do not owe their allegiance to preachers or leaders of cliques; we owe our allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. John 15:13-16, Heb. 7:25
- Believers are to support the servants of the Lord whom He places in our midst to minister to us. The Lord places ministers in our midst because he has a unique gift to offer to the church. Jer 3:15
- Cliques make a person a man-follower. In our baptism we *confessed the Lord* and gave testimony that we were committing our life to follow the Lord. However, when we join a clique, we disassociate ourself from Christ and the rest of the body; we betray our baptism and commitment to Christ, and give our loyalty to the leader or the position of a divisive clique. **Phil. 2:3-4 Micah 6:8**

Don't Need The Credit

- [14] I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; [15] Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. [16] And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other.
- Now note Paul's adamant denial that he ever attempted to secure a personal following of believers. He thanks God that he had not baptized but a few believers, for no believer can rightfully accuse him of seeking to form a following or a clique. Paul's associates in the ministry did the baptizing for him. However, Paul mentions only three individuals he personally baptized and they were:
- **Crispus:** the leading ruler of the Jewish synagogue at Corinth. He was led to Christ and was baptized by Paul personally. Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:14
- **Gaius:** Paul's host when he was in Corinth. Since Paul baptized Gaius, he probably led him to the Lord as well. for a man named Gaius who served as a missionary with Paul. It may be the same Gaius, although the name was a common name in the ancient world. Rom. 16:23
- **Stephanas:** one of three messengers who delivered the Corinthian letter to Paul 1 Cor. 7:1.
- Paul baptized all the members of his household. 1 Cor. 16:15

This Is My Job

- [17] For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.
- The *content* of preaching and witnessing is to be the cross of Christ. The *main subject* of our lives and conversation is to be the cross of Christ. All the other subjects of the Christian life are good but should never be substituted for the ministry of reconciliation. Preaching Daniel and the Lions den will not save. The story of David and Goliath is a good story but it wont save you. We must preach the Cross of Christ to reach a dying world. Rom 1:16-17
- The believer should never let the rituals of the church take the place of the cross in his ministry, no matter how important they may be, the central focus of our message and ministry is to be the gospel.
- The point needs to be constantly driven home to our hearts: the main focus of our lives, conversation, and ministry is to be the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is much easier to administer rites and ceremonies than to spend hours in diligent study and to preach the cross to a sin struke world that rejects the demand for self-denial. Matt. 16:24
- The demands upon the beleivers time by other functions of the church are often so consuming that he finds himself slipping from his primary call to study, pray, and preach the gospel. Luke 10:38-42
- The minister must keep his priorities straight: he has to do it for himself, for no one else will do it for him. Mark 16:15, 2Cor. 5:17-19

How Not To Preach

- [17] For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.
- The cross can be emptied of its power. How? By preaching the gospel with “wisdom of words.” This means at least two things.
- A preacher can become more concerned with eloquence than with the cross.
- A preacher can also become more concerned about the content of his message and its points and arguments than he does about proclaiming the cross. He can focus upon...having a good, dynamic, interesting sermon...presenting a new or novel idea.
- The man who preaches the gospel with “wisdom of words” makes the cross of Christ of no effect. He voids or empties the cross of its power. When people leave the service, their attention is not upon the gospel and the cross—their attention is upon the *preacher*. The cross is emptied of its power. No life has been changed, not by God.
- No preacher or teacher should set out to impress people with his style, delivery, fluency, charisma, ideas, or anything else. The minister and teacher have been called by God to preach the cross and the cross alone, not self and not the new and novel ideas and speculations of men. The minister and teacher of God must not forget the forceful declaration of Scripture: **1 Cor. 2:1-5, 1 Cor. 9:16**