

Splits and Quarrels in the Church

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Code: 1812

If you'll take your Bible and turn to 1 Corinthians Chapter 1, we'll look at verse 10 as a starting point. We have just begun for our visitors' sake, we'll say this, we've just begun a study in 1 Corinthians in the last couple of weeks having finished the book of Acts after 104 messages. And no telling how long we're going to be in 1 Corinthians. That doesn't really matter any way, it's all God's truth. We're having a great time. But this will be message number 3 and we're at verse 10.

We'll take verses 10-17 as a unit, and this section could easily be titled Splits and Quarrels in the Church. And that makes it a very practical passage, because that's just about what all of us can relate to. I wouldn't do it because I couldn't stand the pain, but if I were to ask all of you who ever been in a church where there was a split or a quarrel, probably 75% of you'd raise your hands. That's just part of what tragically occurs in the church. And it occurred from the very beginning in the church. It's really no different today, it just seems to be magnified because of the abundance of different local assemblies that exist. But it's a common problem and it's one that needs to be dealt with.

And apparently the apostle Paul felt that it was the primary problem in Corinth, because that's how he begins his exhortations. The first nine verses of Chapter 1, he states the identity of the Corinthians in Christ. It's positional truth. He identifies them as those that are saints, those who have been redeemed by Jesus Christ. Those who have been granted all of the benefits of sainthood and he thanks God in Chapter 1:1-9 not for what the Corinthians have done, but for what God has done in them. And having stated their position, he begins then in Chapter 1, verse 10 to beseech them to behave in accordance with their position. That's who you are, now I beseech you.

And from 10 all the way to the end of the book it's exhortation to alter their behavior. There really is nothing to thank them for. They haven't done anything thank worthy. It is only something to thank God for and he has done that and now he begins to try to change their behavior. And the first thing that he deals with is this whole idea of unity in the church. Now let me back up a little bit and just try to get a running start on the concept.

I think we all would agree, who understand the Scripture, that people are basically self-centered and that's part of depravity, selfish, dominated by their own egos, their own fancies, their own goals, their own ideals. All of us, I mean even those of us who are sanctified in Christ and set apart to justification still have problems with sin. And at the very heart of sin is the capital I, ego. And so

when you get to the church, you have a lot of sinners in the church. They happened to be justified sinners, but they're sinners as yet and so you have conflict because you have people with desires and goals and purposes and ideals that are generated by their own ego.

In James, for example, I think we get as apt an explanation of this as anywhere in Scripture in Chapter 4, verse 1. "From where come wars and fightings among you?" Why do you quarrel and ultimately, why is there war? "Come they not even of your lusts that war in your members." It is because that within you there are strong desires and those strong desires run in opposition to the strong desires of other people. You lust or you have a strong desire for and you don't have. So you kill. And then you desire to have and you can't obtain, so you fight and make war. And he goes on to say what you really ought to do is ask God who will give it to you if you ask properly.

But the point that James is making is that the reason there is war and the reason there is quarreling and the reason there is fighting is because all of us have selfish, independent desires. Quarrels are a part of life. We grow up understanding them. We're competitive. We're even taught to be competitive. Little children fight from the very beginning of their lives. You take a baby's bottle away, you get two little babies together and they're fighting over the bottle. The kids fight over the toys. They go to school and they fight over the games and the playground. They go to high school and they fight over the girls or the boys or the football. They go to college and they fight over the campus policies. They grow up and the fight over their business dealings. Then they become politicians and fight over policies of a government. Married people fight over whatever. And governments fight over land and economics. And that's war.

And James says it's because you have strong desires. And those strong desires are generated by yourself. You see man, because he is depraved, is selfish and egoistic. And that problem finds its way into the church and so we have fights in the church. Tragically, though they are forbidden by God, though they are totally out of character for transformed people, though they are in absolute opposition to everything our Lord prayed for and intended for His church, still they exist. And Satan eats it up, because it fosters his attempt to break down and destroy and degrade the testimony of the church.

And I couldn't even begin to recite to you all of the stories of conflict and trouble and fights and feuds that I hear constantly from other sources in other churches. Selfishness is a problem in the body of Christ because sin is a problem. And of course, the fractured kind of fellowship not only wipes out the joy of the believer, but it sucks the foundation from out from under the testimony of the church. God is dishonored. Christ is disgraced. Christians are discredited. And it isn't anything new. You're going to go all the way back to the beginning and you're going to find it there, because the church has always been made up sinners and Satan has always been active in it.

And so the problem as we come to Chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians is this problem, disharmony and division in the church. They were split. That's the word division in verse 10. And you'll notice in verse 11 the word contention. That is the word in the Greek that means quarrels. There were splits and quarrels in the church. And Paul begins his 16 chapters of exhortation by starting with this issue. And you know, that gives me some idea of how important this is to God.

Because from 1:10 to the 9th verse of the 16th Chapter, he just talks about the errors in the church. And some of them are really gross. For example, in the first section from 1:10 to 4:21 it's errors regarding division. From 5:1 to 6:20 errors regarding immorality. From 7:1 to the end of the chapter errors regarding marriage. From Chapter 8 to the 1st verse of Chapter 11, errors regarding Christian liberty. From Chapter 11, verse 2 to the end of the Chapter errors regarding the Lord's table. Chapter 12-14, errors regarding spiritual gifts. Chapter 15, errors regarding the resurrection. Chapter 16, errors regarding money. Now of all of those errors, immorality, marriage, Christian liberty, the Lord's table, spiritual gifts, resurrection, and money, the one that he puts at the very beginning, and those seem like bad enough areas to goof up in, the number one area is the area of unity in the church. That's the concern, because therein lies the credibility of our testimony and therein lies the joy of our ministry together.

Paul begins with this. Our Lord prayed to the Father in John 17 that the church would be one. He told the disciples to love one another that the world might know who they were. And a loving caring community of believers has a tremendous and profound impact on the world. In fact, it tells us in Acts Chapter 2 that when those people had singleness of heart and one mind and met together daily and shared in common love they had favor with all the people and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

So Corinth's first need was harmony, unity in the church, and I see that as our first need in the modern church today and the first need here. Paul then begins this Epistle, really, in its exhortation aspect by calling for unity in the church and the end of all splits and all quarrels. And I'm not going to be able in the time we have this morning to cover everything. I wish we had time for a question and answer period. But if there's anything that's unanswered in what I say in any particular dimension that you quite resolve in your mind, you pursue the study further in the word of God. You've got the same textbook I have and the same resident truth teacher. So if you really want the answer to the question, pursue it further than I'm able to this morning. And then if you get some answers that I didn't give, come and share them with me because maybe I didn't figure them out either.

All right, there are four basic emphases in the passage from 10-17. We'll use them as hooks to hang your thoughts on, the plea, the parties, the principle, and the priority. All right, point number is the plea. And Paul begins with a plea to the Corinthians. Verse 10, "Now I beseech you," the word now is a transition dat, it's just getting him from the previous thought to this one and "I beseech you,"

beseech is really a word that comes from parakaleo, which is the word that is the verb form parakletos, which is paraklet translated comforter in the gospel of John. It means to come along side and help. It's translated advocate other places. And what he's doing here is coming along side them. It's not a coming down with a club. He's saying now I come along side to encourage you brethren along this line.

And in Philemon there's a very interesting passage, verse 8 and 9 in that little one chapter letter of Philemon where Paul says, I could really come down on you hard Philemon. I could lower the old legalistic club and you know, sort of beat in your spiritual brains with this thing, but rather than that I am going to beseech you. And that was always the character of Paul, because law demands and love and grace beseeches. And so here he comes along and he even uses the word brethren, which in itself is a sermon because it moderates the harshness of the rebuke and it also reminds them that if they are brothers, they certainly ought to act in a brotherly fashion.

So he begins with a very coercive, a very comforting, a very exhorted kind of thing. "Now I beseech you brothers by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same thing. That there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Now there is the appeal that he begins in the passage. I want to just pull out one thought. It's amazing, of course, how some people study the Bible in disconnection. They pull a verse out of its context and use it almost as a pretext. Well, that is really in violation. Everything ties together. So to be fair with verse 10, we've got to read verse 9.

"God is faithful by whom you were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." God sovereignly calls us to identify in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. The word fellowship talks about common life and that becomes the premise on which Paul makes his exhortation to unity. If we were called by God into one fellowship with Christ, then we ought to be one, right, in practice. That's the point. All right, what is he saying then? He's saying first of all, that "I am beseeching you on the basis of," watch this, "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Really important. "By our Lord Jesus Christ," the great and primary reason people for behavior in the church. For anything that is called on the Christian to do, it is the fact that this is what the Lord Jesus Christ desires.

Whenever you see the term name in relation to the Lord or to God, it means all that He is and all that He wills. When it says to pray in the name of Christ in John, it simply means pray consistent with who Christ is and what He wills. And so as we've said to you before when I pray in the name of Jesus, it doesn't mean I ask whatever I want and say in Jesus' name, Amen, and that guarantees it. It means that I say this I pray because this I believe is what Christ would want, because this is consistent with His will as I understand it.

And here he's saying brethren, I'm asking you this for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, because of who He is and what He wills. Listen, your behavior as a church, your behavior as a believer has its

most direct relationship not to me and not to the elders and not the church as such, but to Jesus Christ Himself. For your life reflects more on Him than on anybody else. And you can go around and bellyache all you want about the church and it really won't reflect on your church. It'll reflect on Christ.

Some of us talk about the church in front of unbelievers and we run down the certain things that we may not like and we do it in front of unbelievers and we think that that has reference to the church when, in fact, in their minds that has reference to the Christ whom we really claim to love and adore. For the sake of Christ, speak the same things. It reflects on him. Everything you do in your life gets back to Him. That's the reason for everything. You know, I'll give you an illustration of it.

In Acts Chapter 20 where Paul calls from Ephesus to Miletus the Ephesian elders and he bids them that farewell and he says to them look, he says, "feed the flock of God over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers giving you the oversight. The flock which He has purchased with His own blood." In other words, he says to those guys look, if you ever lose your perspective remember those people are precious. They were purchased with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's how high they are in his estimation. That's their value. Now you take care of commensurate with how He values it.

Now your Christian life reflects on Jesus Christ. You take care of it in the relationship and your church people, this church, this local assembly right here reflects on the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul calls for unity because he knows it reflects on Him. Now let me hasten to add this. The emphasis in this passage is on a local assembly. When I'm talking about unity here and when Paul is talking about it, he is not referring to unity in a mystical sense. The broad unity of the church. He is not talking about denominational unity. He is not talking about that we ought to be one with the Baptist church over here or the Presbyterian church over here or whatever else. He is simply saying that within the framework of a local assembly there should be unity.

This is what he's getting at. There are other passages that deal with a broader base of unity such as the book of Ephesians. But here we are looking at a local assembly in Corinth and he is demanding of them a unity. And the message is directly related to those of us who are apart of this local assembly. Now let's look and see how he begins the plea. That you all speak the same thing. Now my friends that is a fantastic thing. You know when I started to look at that and I thought there's no way that you're going to get everybody in the church to talk the same way. But, you know, just because we don't cut it doesn't mean the standard gets lower does it? Have you ever found God accommodating His standards to us? Well, I know you mess up, but don't worry. No, no, it's...that violates everything about His character.

God said in Matthew 5:48 through our Lord Jesus Christ, "Be ye perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect." Left the standard there and never changed it. And Paul never changes at the end of the Corinthian letter, 2 Corinthians 13:11, he says to the Corinthians "be perfect." Sure, sure, sure. You

say we can't. That doesn't matter. It doesn't change the standard any. God's standard for His church is that you speak the same thing. You say, but we don't do that. Then you don't make the standard. We all are to speak the same thing. All right, what are we talking about?

Well, there's a lot to say about this and we're only going to be able to cover some of it, so you're going to have to think on your own a little bit. Basically, we are to agree in vocalizing. We are to speak the same things. There's nothing more devastating to the church than somebody to say well I don't know what they say or what they teach, but I'm convinced of this. Well, I don't know what the church has decided to do, but I disagree. I think this is so and so on and you get a little group of people going and it just splits off of little faction.

We've got to say the same thing. We've got to agree on the same things. You say well, what does this agreement involve? Number one it involves doctrinal agreement. Within the framework of any local assembly, there must be doctrinal unity. There must be. You say, but isn't this...isn't it good to have oh one guy teaching one view and one guy teaching another view and another guy teaching another view. It's good if you want confusion. Because you see when you've got the experts who don't agree what do you think the rest of the people are going to do.

You know, there are seminaries like that and you have people come out of the seminaries and you say to them, what do you believe and they say we'll I'm not too sure, but I know all the options. Well, a lot of good that does. What you do when you have all different things being taught is all you do is confuse the people who are not in the position to really know. And friends, you hate to admit it, but if there are two disagreeing viewpoints, one or both are wrong because God doesn't disagree with Himself.

So Paul calls for doctrinal unity. You say where? Philippians 3:16 will be the first place to look. "Nevertheless as to that which we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule. Let us mind the same thing." In other words, walk means behavior, rule means the standard. What was the standard? The standard was the apostolic doctrine which he himself had related to them. He says to the Philippians, look you know the doctrine that you've been taught, now all of you need to behave yourselves consistently with that truth.

And usually what happens in a church where there isn't this is that there's nobody really who teaches much doctrine anyway. Of course, in the church there is to be doctrine and it is to be doctrine that is agreed upon. Now we find also in Romans 16:17 a verse that I think is perhaps more directly related to this issue, it says this. "Now I beseech brethren," there's Paul beseeching again, "mark them who cause divisions and offenses," listen, "contrary to the doctrine which you have learned and avoided them." They're not really serving the Lord Jesus, they're serving themselves.

When somebody comes up with a different doctrine within the church, he is not serving Christ but himself. Now let me say this people, there are some basic cardinal, substantial, foundational doctrines in the church that must be agreed upon by everybody in that church. You must speak the same thing doctrinally. Now when it comes down to whether you want to be sub laps Arian or infer laps Arian or super laps Arian or a Labrador Retriever, it doesn't make a whole lot of difference. And whether you want to have the order of the decree inverted or whatever, diverted or whatever, that isn't an issue. Or whether you've got a little shade of distinction on a certain verse that could possibly have two or three interpretations because we don't have enough information to know which one was the one in the historical context. That isn't the issue.

But there are some basic cardinal truths that we must agree on. And I'd even go further than that to say that when there are some things that may be viewpoints that are agreed upon by the elders and that are taught in agreement by the elders, they should be agreed on as well or there will be confusion in the church. And people will line up with certain teachers. Do you see what happens? The elders agree on a certain thing. A guy comes along and teaches something opposite even though it isn't heresy, it's a differing viewpoint. Pretty soon he creates a group of followers. Maybe he's got another differing viewpoint and pretty soon you've got a little group over here that can only go to this guy. And a little group over here that are going over with this guy.

And then what you get is I am of Paul. I am of Apollos. I am of Cephus and so forth. You have to speak the same thing. There must be agreement doctrinally. Let me add another thing. I think there must agreement in the decision-making process of the leadership. I believe there must be agreement in the decision-making process of the leadership. Not just doctrinally and that is important. In fact, the last week, we sent out a questionnaire to every one of our teachers in the adult area, and that questionnaire is a lot of different pages. And I think there's 56 doctrinal questions. And we want to know from every teacher what they believe on everyone of those doctrinal issues. Now we believe we know, but we want to be sure because we want to be right according to the word of God. And it says that we're to all speak the same thing especially as teachers. And so we're concerned that all of our teachers state right in writing for us and for our elders to read and understand that we all agree to teach the basic cardinal truths of the word of God. And I'm excited about that kind of a commitment. We want that kind of agreement.

There are some churches where they don't care what the guy teaches as long as the class is big. We care. We are more concerned with the truth than anything else. But more than just that, I think that there is a responsibility for the church to agree with a policy or the activity of its leaders. There's a presupposition here. Number one, if you're not in a church where you have Godly leadership everything goes bananas. People say to me, well, what if you're in a liberal church. Well, if you're in a liberal church, you ought not to be in a liberal church.

Well, you say...somebody would say, well what if you're in a church where they don't believe in the Bible? Well, what are doing there? If you're in a church that don't believe in the Bible you're not going to church. No sense in hearing heresy all the time. I told you that I went to...our to Claremont Seminary. I had a year to finish a doctorate and the guy says your problem is you have too much Bible for a degree in Bible. He says, you need philosophy. He gave me 200 books of philosophy to read. Half of them were in English, the other half were in French and German. And I said to him, I said, thank you. I know the truth. I'm not going to spend the next three years learning error.

If you know the truth, error becomes obvious. You see if you're going to have a biblical pattern, then you've got to have the biblical pattern all the way. It doesn't function in a church that isn't following it. If you don't have a Godly plurality of men leading the church who represent Christ, Christ is the head of the church, He rules through Spirit filled Godly men, if you don't have those kind of men, then nothing else works. But if you have that then what happens is those men rule in the place of Christ as He rules through them and the congregation is called upon to agree with them in what they say. There is not to be a group of people saying well, I know they decided this, but I'm against it and we're going to do this. Or this is my view and then you get a little group having your view. That's in violation of the Spirit of 1 Corinthians 10 and also the direct statement of it, "you're to speak the same things."

You say well, where does it say we have to agree? Well, it says it 1 Thessalonians 5:12, there is not much Scripture in terms of volume in the New Testament regarding the congregation's role. Most of it's regarding the leadership, because if the leadership's right, then the congregation knows what to do. And we're not perfect by any means. I know you think that, but it isn't true. 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 5...well, let's look at 12 first. You know, leadership is...we stumble and we fumble along endeavoring to be obedient to Christ and as I told you last Sunday night, you know, we're more amazed at what God's doing than you are as we see His Spirit work. But there is a responsibility of the congregation as well as the leaders. "We beseech brethren," 1 Thessalonians 5:12, "to know them who labor among you and are over you in the Lord," there are some people over you in the Lord. That means they have the right to make decisions that regard you. They are over you in the Lord. "And admonish you. You should esteem them very highly in love for their work sake."

In other words, these rulers have the right to lead you and make decisions for you in the Lord and you are to love them and you are to respect them and the end of verse 13 says, "and you are to be," what, "at peace among yourselves." In other words, you peacefully agree. You don't stir up things. You don't stir up disagreement and you say but some people might. Okay, verse 14, "Now we exhort you brethren warn them that are," what, "unruly." Now here are the elders trying to rule. You're going to have some people who are unruly. That is they will not submit to rule. They have no right to do that and you who are submitting are to go to them and do what? Warn them. Warn them.

There's another passage that comes to mind. Hebrews 13:17, another thing that is stated to the congregation. Uses an interesting word here. The first word of verse 17 is what? Obey. "Obey them that have the rule over you," that is your elders, "and submit yourselves." You say why? Because they watch for your souls as they that must give an account. Our accountability is to God for you and if you will submit then we can do it with joy and not with grief. For if it's with grief, then that's unprofitable for you. If you grieve your leadership, if they get discouraged and distressed and distraught, they cannot minister to you effectively and you're the loser. It's unprofitable.

So the Scripture simply asks the congregation to obey just as it asks the child to obey his parents. Not to decide whether the parents are right or wrong, but to obey. To submit there must be unity. There must be unity in the church. There are to be no variations. Now you say all right, I get it. We are to speak the same thing. I'll do it. I won't say a word any more. But I'm not changing my mind. I'll be a hypocrite. Well, we don't want a hypocrite, but the rest of the verse deals with that. It's really terrific look at it. "That you all speak the same thing." You know that wouldn't work if it was ending there. If the period came there, we'd be in real trouble. If we all just spoke the...we had people going around with, you know, boiling inside. Ready to belch out all this stuff they're holding inside that they're not going to say.

So he says this, this is terrific. "That there be no divisions among you." That's interesting. The word divisions schismata means that literally in its physical meaning, there are two meanings, physical and a metaphorical meaning. A physical meaning it means to tear a garment. It's used that way in Matthew 9:16. To rip a garment. Jesus used it in reference to the attitude of a crowd after He presented a truth when He split the multitude. Some of them would be for Him and some of them would be against Him. The secondary meaning though, the metaphorical meaning, the secondary meaning is a difference of opinion, a split opinion. He says "let there be no divisions." Let there be no split opinions. He's obviously not talking about garments, but opinions.

Now listen people, not only are there not to be any vocal differences, there are not only to be that, but not only that, not even any differences of opinion. You say we mean we're all supposed to be like a bunch of rubber ducks that all quack the same way? No, we're all different and unique, but we're to all have the same opinions. You say how could you ever have the same opinions. Listen friends God only has one opinion on a two-sided issue, right? You're to get in harmony with that. You say, but how do you know the leadership's leading you the right way? Oh you have to trust the leadership. You have to trust them.

We have a principle in our leadership here. Twenty-four of our elders meet together for the decisions that we have to make in this church and we make all decisions on the basis of a unanimous agreement. It's not 21 to 3. It's not a small minority or majority. It's unanimous. Every single decision that is ever made in regards to the policy of this church in any way shape or form is made with absolute unanimity no matter how long it takes us to agree. Why? Because we know the Spirit

has one will and it's up to us to submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit until we get in line with His will.

So you can be confident of the fact that when it finally comes, it's through the time of struggle and the time of prayer that has brought us to that common knowledge, that common understanding. People say well, you know, we wanted this in the church and we wanted that. Why didn't the elders do that? We didn't do that because we really believe without question in our hearts that this was the will of the Spirit of God. Twenty-four men, 24 men agreeing completely that this is what God wants.

But don't you see, if you're going to have unity at the congregational level, you're going to have to have that kind of leadership. I thank God for that. And then people can say I submit to that because I trust that that's the mind of the Spirit even though I can't always see it. And I reserve my opinion to follow that opinion. We are to have the same opinions. Those are present tense verbs too. You are all to continually speak the same thing and all to continually allow no differences of opinion to come between.

Listen the Lord never wants a church split and he's prevented it by building into the church the headship of Christ which is one, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is one, the plurality of Godly leaders who are all directed by the same Holy Spirit and a submissive congregation. And if all of those things are what they ought to be, you can't have disunity. Whenever there's discord and disunity in the church there is carnality. And we'll get to that in a minute.

Now he goes further than that even. And he says at the end of verse 10, "But you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment." The word perfectly joined together, kartotizo. It's used in other classical Greek, extra biblical Greek and as well as in the New Testament to speak of mending nets, the mending of bones, dislocated limbs, joining something together that was torn apart, sewing a garment. It means get back together. Grow together again. You are to have the same mind. That's internal. The same judgments. That's the determination that comes from the same mind. So whether it's precept or principle or thought or attitude or opinion or deed or feeling or action, it is all to be the same.

This kind of unity is tremendous. You know one of the great impacts, people, listen to this, one of the great impacts that the cults have on the world is their unbelievable unity. They all, who are in those, totally agree with each other. And people just really can hardly handle the fact that so many people have exactly the same viewpoint. And they have no disharmony at that point. Yes, it's a big order, I agree. But it's God's will and goes way back to Psalm 133:1 where he said, "How blessed it is when brethren learn to dwell together in unity."

In Romans Chapter 15 at the end of the great section on Christian liberty in Romans, Paul says in verse 5, "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus." In other words, Christ is one. Christ has one mind. Christ has one will.

Christ has the same love for everybody. Christ feels the same about everyone else, so should you. Verse 6, "That you may with one mind," that's internal, "and one mouth," that's external, "glorify God." He says I want that Roman church to think with one mind and to talk with one mouth.

This is tremendously important. Not for our sake, not for the sake of the ego of the leaders, not for the sake of the ego of the elders, but for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, because He wants unity in His church. Now you go to Ephesians and what do you read? Where he says in Ephesians 4, he says, "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Did you know you can't create unity in the church? He already created it. All you can do is destroy it. The unity of the church is already done by the Holy Spirit. All we can do is mess it up or maintain it. He says maintain, keep that unity. Why? Because there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

He goes on to talk about one God and Father of us all, who is in all and through all. It's all one, how could we have discord. Look at Philippians 1:27 and a couple of other verses here. "Only let your conduct be as becometh the gospel of Christ that whether I come and see you or be absent I may hear of your affairs," now listen, "that you stand fast in one Spirit with one mind striving," what's the next word, "together for the faith of the gospel." You see he's calling on them for unity.

Now go down to Chapter 2, verse 2. "Fulfill ye my joy," and I can tell you this is the joy of any man of God, "that you be likeminded." That is having a mind like everybody else, having the same love. That means you love everybody else the same. Being of one accord of one mind. You say boy how do you ever get that kind of unity? The next verse tells you. "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory." Don't fight over anything. Don't ever quival. Don't ever squabble. Don't ever quarrel. If you have an issue, take it to somebody who needs to hear it and lovingly present it. Don't fight, no strife, and no vain glory.

Usually the thing that is the catalyst for factions in the church is that somebody wants to exalt himself. That's usually the thing. Vanity and self glory, "but rather in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves." And you go to verse 5 and it says "have the mind of Christ who humbled Himself. There's only one way to have unity people and that's to humble yourself. And humility means you think more of everybody else than you do of you. Then there's unity.

And you know it's possible. You say is it really possible to have that? Yeah, I really think in this church, more so maybe than any church I've ever seen in my life. We have that kind of unity and I praised God for it. I'm not blind to the fact that there is disagreement from time to time and I'm sure that's true. It ought not to be if it's vocal and if it's belligerent and if it's unsubmitive. We ought to submit to one another. It isn't to say that we'll make every decision, you have nothing to say. Maybe we need to submit to your viewpoint because maybe you're right and you need to share that with us and that's good and we'll do that if that's God's leading.

But it's going to be the mind of humility that makes it happen and it does happen. It can happen. It happened in Acts 4. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit in verse 31, "spoke the word with boldness." In verse 32, it says, "And they that believe were of one heart and one soul." And they had everything in common. It can happen. All right the plea. And what is the plea based on? Back to 1 Corinthians 1:11. The plea is based on the parties. He knew there were some parties, there were some factions there. And this is very simple. You say where'd he get the information? Verse 11, here's where he really dumps it on them. "For it has been declared unto me of you my brethren, by them of Chloe," Chloe was apparently some prominent person in the Corinthian church who had come to see Paul in Ephesus or had sent a relative or some servants. "Somebody from Chloe has told me that there are quarrels among you, contentions, eridies, quarrels, wranglings, hassles. They were splitting into factions, but not just silent factions, they were going at it fighting each other.

You notice that they were divided into four groups and they each had their shibboleth, they're on little slogan. Verse 12, "I say everyone of you saying I am of Paul, I of Apollos, I of Cephus, I of Christ." They had grouped into identification with various teachers. This is wrong. They were boasting around the excellency, the gifts, the ministries, the attainments of the men whom they identified with. You see the first pastor of the Corinthian church was whom? Paul. He founded the church, 18 months he was there.

And when he left, he sent back somebody to be the second pastor. Who was it? Apollos. So probably there were some people who identified with Paul initially. Some people who identified with Apollos and then there were probably some Jews who came over who had been brought to the knowledge of Christ through the ministry of Peter and they said we're of Cephus or we're of Peter. And then there were the others who just want to identify with Christ and I suppose if I was carnal and I was in Corinth I would have liked to have been with the Christ group because it's a lot more pious.

But they had split into factions. It isn't necessary people. It doesn't have to happen. You can have a Paul and Apollos and a Peter and Christ and not have to split into groups. The splitting into groups had nothing to do with Paul, Apollos, and Peter. All you have to do is go to 1 Corinthians 3 and he says this to them. Your problem is this, "are you not yet carnal? Is there not division and strife among you? Are you not saying I am of Paul and I am of Apollos?" The reason they said that was not because those men were different but because they were what? Carnal.

Carnality is that which produces faction rather than spirituality. We've had that in our church. I remember in the past and some of us can look back on it a time when there was some people who felt that the elders had made a misjudgment and they were protesting and they were carrying on a protest. And all that ever needed to be done was to point out the fact that they were carnal, because carnality breeds factions. And the elders simply shared the Scripture and read the Scriptures on carnality and it melted away the problem. And that's how it ought to be. It is not Paul's fault. It is not

Apollos's fault. It is not Cephus's fault or it's Christ's fault, and it isn't His fault. It's the fault of carnality. Identifying with humans.

Paul was the founder and some maybe were identifying with Paul and then Apollos, they were saying well Paul may have been all right, but Apollos was polished and eloquent. And he was. And some were saying yes, but Peter was one of the original twelve and he was from Jerusalem and he knows Judaism. And some of the Jewish people identified with him and then some others came along and said we're of Christ, you know. And in a sense they were right and he never mentions the Christ party again. He just goes on talking about Paul and later on Apollos.

The Christ party had the right idea. They should have belonged to Christ, but they had turned the belonging to Christ into a faction in group, and they got in the fight. And maybe, you know, they were saying we don't need human teachers we just follow Christ. There are people who've said that. I don't go to church anywhere. I just open my Bible and let Christ speak to me, you see. But they had these parties, these groups because they were carnal.

Those are the parties that Paul has to deal with. You know what happens, and this is something to point out, this can happen in a church and it's usually what causes splits, people make the splits, but you usually have somebody directing it. This is the reason I believe there has to be unanimity in doctrine. Let's say a person over here begins to teach doctrine contrary to what everybody else is teaching. Well, pretty soon some people begin to identify with him. Yeah, oh that's good. Oh I like that, hmmm, terrific. And then you've got a little group over here. See and this...maybe the disagreement isn't on the deity of Jesus Christ or the inspiration of Scripture or the sovereignty of God or whatever or whatever. Maybe the disagreement is on a particular interpretive thing, but it is in disagreement with something that everyone else agrees to teach. Well, pretty soon, you've got these people latching on and you've created a little separate entity over here.

Or maybe there's somebody who says well, you know, they decide this, but I think it ought to be this way and if they knew what they were doing this would be...well, sure you're right. And the guy's a leader and pretty soon you've got a little group over here, see. So they can identify around people. But just remember that kind of identification is an expression of carnality if it means that you disconnect from the fellowship in opinion or in attitude. It's important to note these things.

Now Paul goes from the plea to the parties to the principle in verse 13. The principle is really simple people. There is a really simple principle here that Paul wants to point out. "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Do you see what he's saying? He's saying looking disunity in the church violates a basic principle. 1 Corinthians 6:17 says "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." Ephesians 4:4-6, "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit, one body, one God." Is Christ divided? Absolutely not. Absolutely not.

In 1 Corinthians later on in the book in Chapter 12 he gets into this in real detail, Chapter 12, verse 12, "As the body is one hath many members, as the members of that one body being many are one body so also is Christ." Christ is not divided. Christ is one. If we are all one in Christ, then we are all one with each other. There can be no division in the body of Christ that is not violation of our very basic nature. Paul says look, you can't have these groups. You're in violation of a basic principle. Is Christ divided?

Jesus prayed in John 17:20 and 22, He said to the Father, "Father, I pray that they may be one as You and I are one." Christ is not divided. When you split, you reflect on Christ. The church is one because Christ is one and Christ is one because God is one. Deuteronomy 6:4, "The Lord our God is one Lord." He died to make us one. You read Ephesians 2 it says that He broke down the middle wall of partition to make of two, one new man. 1 Corinthians 12:25, I think it is, Paul says, "That there should be no schism in the body." One. The principle is in violation people. If church is one, Christ is one, God is one, the Spirit is one, the body is one.

No factions. Was Paul crucified for you? If you're going to identify around men, on what basis are you going to do that? "Was I crucified for you?" And notice he uses himself and not Apollos or Peter or people would have said yeah, he's trying to knock the other parties, but not his own. So he uses his own. "Was I crucified for you? Are you going to stand up and say I was a sinner until Paul died for me?" Oh that's blasphemous. Your union isn't with me, it's with Him. And He is one.

Were you purchased by Paul's blood? Were you redeemed by Paul? Ludicrous. Are you going to stand up and say we are Paul's? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Did you stand up at your baptism and say I confess Paul is Lord? Now listen to this, you want to make this really practical. Just imagine you got a faction in the church. You know what Paul would say to you? Let's say your faction is being led by a man, Joe. Paul would say are you going to stand up and say I've confessed Joe as my Lord? Boy that's bad isn't it?

Or let's say in the case of Euodias and Syntyche in the church at Philippi, you would stand up and say I was purchased by the blood of Syntyche. I was baptized and confessed Euodias is Lord. You say it's terrible to think of that. That's exactly what Paul is saying. You see how stupid it is? Who is the head of this church? Grace Community Church, who's the head of it? Christ is the head of it. So to whom is your allegiance? To Christ. How does Christ minister through His church? Through Godly leaders and submissive congregations.

When you disconnect you're in all violation of the unity that is Christ. You see the principle does not allow for this unless you're going to violate the principle. All right, that's pretty practical. Let's go to the last point. The plea, the parties, and the principle, and then Paul brings up the priority in verses 14-17. He says, listen, I know my priorities. "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and

Gaius." Crispus was the first ruler of the synagogue and Gaius was another fellow. Apparently Paul stayed in his house for a while according to Romans 16. But Paul says "I'm so thankful. I didn't baptize anybody but Crispus and Gaius." You say well, didn't they get baptized? Sure but they had other people doing it.

Very often that was the case. You remember that Peter at Cornelius' house didn't do the baptizing actually. He commanded that they be baptized. Remember our Lord Jesus? In the gospel of John it records that the Lord didn't do the baptizing, but He had others do the baptizing. And there was a reason for this. The reason was it would be so easy for people to go around bragging about who they were identified with because of who baptized them.

I mean, it's nice to be baptized by a wonderful beloved pastor, but you weren't baptized in his name. You weren't baptized in the name of John MacArthur just because I baptized you. But you can imagine people would say well Christ baptized me. Well, only baptized me. That wasn't the point. Or Peter baptized me and he got water up my nose. But you see, that isn't the issue. It isn't the issue. Paul says I didn't baptize anybody but Crispus and Gaius because "lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name, lest somebody would say that I was baptizing some people to make them followers of me. I didn't do it."

Don't you see how wise he was? He purposely let somebody else do it so they would not identify with him. And he wouldn't build a party around himself. They can't accuse him of that. And then I like this, this is terrific, because it's a great insight into inspiration. Verse 16, oh he says, "I also baptized the household of Stephanas," almost forgot him. And let's see, "besides that I can't think of anybody else." You say well, now wait a minute, aren't the Bible writers supposed to know everything? This is a beautiful insight into inspiration. Listen to me people, biblical inspiration ensures, hang on to this, ensures the infallibility of the author not his omniscience. You see the difference. When Paul wrote the word of God, he never made any mistakes, but he didn't know everything. He was free from error, but he was omniscient, but he says I baptized Crispus, Gaius, Stephanas, and his household and let's see, I can't think of anybody else. And that's what the Holy Spirit wanted him to say.

And he says, I'm so glad I didn't because somebody would have accused me of making a party after myself. Listen, that isn't the priority. Verse 17, "For Christ sent me not to baptize." You read my commission in Acts 26:16-18. He didn't say to baptize. That wasn't the major point. Sure in Matthew 28 it says "go and preaching, teaching, and baptizing," but the priority of the commission wasn't go and baptize people, it was go and preach the gospel. Acts 26:16, "I've made you a minister and witness of these things delivering you from the people from the Gentiles unto whom I now send you to open their eyes to turn them from darkness to light from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me." And he says, "And I wasn't disobedient to the heavenly vision." He told them to preach. Baptism followed along, but the priority was preaching.

He says look, "He sent me to preach the gospel to make all men one, not to baptize to create a faction." The only reason he says this is to strongly point out the priority to build the church, not to make followers of men. His priority was to preach the gospel and this throws him into the next section where he gets into the preaching of the cross. That was his priority. People, we're in the church to work, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and His will. To preach the truth, not to create parties. If all of us have the right priority to honor Him and to preach His truth and we walk in the Spirit and not carnality, we'll see a blessed unity here that'll magnify our Lord and that'll draw to Him those people that are coming to Christ. And this is a priority. And it's our prayer that it maybe true of this church that we are one in Him in what we say, what we think that He may be honored. Let's pray.

Thank You Lord for our time this morning. Good times to just reflect on this important and very practical area. Father, I want to thank You first of all for the wisdom of Godly men that have been placed to lead this church and I want to thank You for the joy of just being able to follow their leading. To see how the Spirit works so beautifully. I want to thank You for a submissive and sweet congregation. And yet Father how thankful I am too that this word is sent to us to remind us of that which we should do for Your sake, for Jesus' sake who loved us and bought us with His own blood. Oh Father, gives us a sweet spirit of humility and love to one another. That we may be one that the world may know that the Father sent the Son. We pray in the Son's name, because we know this is what He would want in His church. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).