

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians – Part 3

I. Exposition of Chapter One (continued).

A. Verse 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.”

1. “Now I plead with you, brethren...” – The word “**plead**” means; “**to ask for something earnestly and with propriety**”¹ Other translations use words like “**urge**” or “**appeal**”. Paul now begins to urge the believers to not allow divisions to prevail in the church. The word “**brethren**” is not meant to address only male members of the church. The word, “**refers specifically to fellow believers in Christ**”² Greek scholar, Dr. William Mounce defines it as; “**a brother, near kinsman or relative; one of the same nation or nature; one of equal rank and dignity; an associate, a member of the Christian community**”³

2. “...by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...” – This should be understood as “...by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again, Paul is emphasizing the fact that he is speaking on behalf of the Lord and it's not just his admonition. Dr. Bob Utley adds;

“In Jewish life the name represented one's character and authority. Here the Phillips translation catches the essence with ‘by all that our Lord Jesus Christ means to you.’”⁴

3. “...that you all speak the same thing...” – Grant Richison helps us to understand this when he writes:

“The phrase ‘all speak the same thing’ is a classical period expression used to refer to political communities that had no faction but friendly relations. It is an appeal to party unity because disunity reduces strength of party. The argument is harmony and peace, not unison of abstract thinking.

Harmony of thinking rests on standards of divine truth....A church should have unity of testimony based on principles of the Word. The church should speak the same thing about the truth. No church with a smorgasbord of belief can be effective in ministry. The church should have unity of vision and philosophy of ministry. This does not convey the idea that rigid dogmatism is the norm. The agreement is agreement based on the Word.”⁵

a. When we refer to the Word of God and Divine Truth as being that which we should be speaking the same thing on, it should be recognized that there are foundational truths which we all should agree on in terms of being Biblically sound, (e.g. The Divinity of Christ, salvation in Christ alone, etc.) but there are other Biblical subjects that we may differ in terms of specifics, (e.g. eschatology) but remain in unity regarding the general theme (e.g. Jesus is coming again). A quote attributed to Augustine is; “**In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.**”

b. Biblical Unity is NOT compromising essential truth in order to have agreement with people. There are some churches who believe that we need to have unity at any cost. This is not the will of God!

4. “...that there be no divisions among you...” – The word “**divisions**” means; “**a division into opposing groups, generally two... to cause people to be angry at one another’ or ‘to cause people not to like one another’ or ‘to cause people to think of one another as enemies.**”⁶ This has always been one of the greatest weapons of our adversary, the devil. The saying, “**to divide and conquer**” certainly applies. This is what Satan did when he rebelled against God (cf. Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:11-19; James 3:14-16). Once again, Grant Richison writes;

“The secular Greek used the word ‘divisions’ for tears in a garment. Divisions in the church were like a person walking down the street with unsightly torn garments. The Corinthians fought over differences of opinion and fell into three parties. The divisions at Corinth were not about doctrine but about preferences, style and personalities.”⁷

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 407.

² Ibid., 124.

³ William D. Mounce, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1072.

⁴ Robert James Utley, *Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church: I and II Corinthians*, vol. Volume 6, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2002), 18.

⁵ Grant Richison, *Verse by Verse through the Book of 1 Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2007), 1 Co 1:10.

⁶ Louw and Nida, 493.

⁷ Grant Richison, *Verse by Verse through the Book of 1 Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2007), 1 Co 1:10.

5. “...but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” This, of course, is in contrast to divisions. The words, “...perfectly joined together...” are one word in the Greek and mean; “**to adjust thoroughly; to knit together, unite completely**,”⁸ Dr. Stanley Horton in *The Complete Biblical Library Commentary* writes: “**Katertismenol** is also used in Mark 1:19 of ‘mending fishing nets. In the same way that torn fishing nets could be restored and mended, the factionalized people at Corinth were to be knit together...Paul wished his readers to be restored to a rightful condition of love in Christ,...It is possible to hold someone in regard and love and treat him as a brother, without agreeing with him on everything. Without unity, the Church cannot present an effective witness to the world around it.”⁹

B. Verse 11 – “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.”

1. “...those of Chloe’s household...” – This is the only time Chloe is mentioned in the New Testament. It’s believed that she was probably a Christian woman who lived in Corinth and certain one’s of her family had traveled to Ephesus to report to Paul. Apparently, Paul thought it necessary to state who had told him about the problems so there wouldn’t be any opportunity for denial.
2. The word “**contentions**” could be translated as the word “**quarrels**.” (cf. NLT and NET).

C. Verses 12-13 – “Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas,’ or ‘I am of Christ.’ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” It’s important to mention that groups of believers in Corinth met in houses. So, it seems the different “house churches” had their favorite preacher/teacher and they emphasized their devotion to them rather than consider the ministries of others. Later in this letter, Paul makes it clear that all the members of the Body of Christ need each other (12:12-28). In this passage, Paul also makes it clear that it’s Christ we’re to follow first and foremost (see 11:1). Ralph Harris writes;

“One group followed Paul, with whom we are familiar already; one followed Apollos, who differed not in message but apparently in method, having a more rhetorical, eloquent style. His method of presentation was very popular with those of Greek background. One group followed Cephas or Peter, the ‘hero’ of Pentecost and a true apostle (these were probably conservative Jewish-Christians). Another group said they followed Christ. These may have been ultraconservative followers, or individuals who were trying to satisfy their ego by convincing themselves that their religion was more pure and spiritual than anyone else’s.”¹⁰

D. Verses 14-17 – “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.”

1. From **Acts 18:8**, we know that Crispus was the chief ruler of the synagogue who got saved under Paul’s ministry, along with his entire household.
2. Gaius hosted Paul in his house in Corinth and had a house church there. **Romans 16:23**.
3. Stephanas was one of Paul’s first converts in Corinth and were greatly involved as leaders in the church (16:15).
4. Note Paul’s statement; **“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel”**
 - a. For Paul, preaching was more important than baptizing, though he was certainly not opposed to baptism. Yet, we can see by this that baptism is not essential to salvation. If it were then Paul could never thank God that he baptized so few in Corinth, and he, as an evangelist, could *never* say **“Christ did not send me to baptize.”**
 - b. The fact that Paul did not regard baptism as essential to salvation is also seen by the fact that he did not keep careful track of those he baptized: **“Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.”**

⁸ William D. Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1184.

⁹ *The Complete Biblical Library: Acts – Revelation, Volume 2*, (Empowered Life, Tulsa, OK, 2016.), 501.

¹⁰ Ralph W. Harris, ed., *Romans–Corinthians*, The Complete Biblical Library: Study Bible (WORDsearch, 2009), 267.